

Text: Philippe Echelle - Photos: Nicolas Claris – Philippe Echelle



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A catamaran sized for blue water cruising

In 2010, the Dean 5000 became a big hit at the La Rochelle boat show. The ups and downs of the South African builder came right for the brand in the end. Phoenix Marine, a major South African manufacturer (in the composites fabrication and shipyard sector) bought the rights to the plans and asked architect Rudolf Jonker to take up the project and design a completely new boat within the existing lines: the Xquisite X5.

A functional design

The curvaceous style of the boat is fluid and aerodynamic. The forward face is composed of a vertical windshield in two sections which is cleverly designed and offers a great view, and the split between the lateral port lights in the coachroof is innovative and provides a remarkable panoramic view, with great quality of light, thanks to the use of high-strength, tempered laminated and glued glass. So, no more expansion, sources of leaks or the crazing associated with Plexiglas). Having them inset creates a protection against the harmful effects of UV light. The sleek sailplan shows this to be a robust and quick cruising boat. The helm station is well integrated into the overall lines, and is protected by a clever convertible bimini. The large archway after seems a little out of place and is easier to accept or when you understand the program. The cutaways for the topside hatches extend the functional style, also making use of high-strength glass.

Top of the range deck fittings

The usual guard wires have been replaced by a rigid stainless rail, 75 cm (2'5") high which is much safer than the current recommendations require, and the solid rail can also be used as a step. Access on board is either aft via the sugarscoops, or via a very well-designed pivoting lateral cut-away. The side decks are wide and ringed with handrails on the coachroof. Space is increased by a raised area which is not fitted out, but which houses lockers (watertight with carefully draining hatches) concealing the furling lines. Very flat, with a good non-slip surface and lacking in any trip hazards and line-ends, this design choice illustrates well the philosophy of the boat. It is streamlined with the installation of a proper blue-water anchoring station. A first locker gives access to the 1,500W windlass while a second reveals the chain lead as far as the pivoting bow roller. The general design of these vital elements for anchoring highlights that nothing has been

forgotten. The attachment of the indispensable bridle is done here in perfect safety. This neat device also allows the Harken furler for the staysail and the big reacher to be clipped on. It's also this which takes the strain from the anchor and not the forward beam. Its structure conceals the two furling lines. The sail-handling station is at the heart of the X5: the two big Harken 60 electrical winches are powerful tools which can be used for everything. The solid frame of the windshield is used to support the removable bimini, which has articulated battens on mini bearing cars - a formidable solution which allows a perfect panoramic view to be maintained for maneuvering, combined with unrivalled all-weather protection. Other clever ideas include a rain water catchment using the drains incorporated in the coachroof, as well as the 900W solar power station fitted in the roof, whose panel are adjustable in angle. The South African Sparcraft mast with only one set of spreaders has two diamonds stays, and lateral forces held by lower shrouds and capshrouds. The anodizing on the mast, and the way the hardware is secured to it such as some parts being welded, all indicate a remarkable build quality.

A refined interior

The majority of catamarans these days have a cockpit which serves as additional living space, a kind of multi-purpose balcony with many different uses forced upon it. The X5's response to this a traditional one (bench seating around a large table, spacious lounge opposite and an adjustable bench seat aft), but this whole area can be quickly enclosed. In fact, the cloth



screens are permanently fixed in the recesses in the arch, and it only takes a few seconds to set them in place! The bimini roof has a nice headlining and is well lit with LEDs, and this creates a great atmosphere in this outdoor saloon. A wet kitchen and a refrigerator perfectly complete the setup - you can heat things up (or cool them down) as necessary! The galley is brilliant: set in an L-shape to port around a central island, it is a superb, well-finished installation, with some neat little touches. The lounge in the saloon is really comfortable, and is alongside the nav station, which is the nerve center of the boat, with everything accessed via an iPad on a stand. The quality of the woodwork is remarkable, as is the choice of domestic equipment and materials. Everything is a well-built, solid and entirely suitable for marine use. The lime-washed oak trim comes from the well-known Dutch supplier Leewenburgh and is used over sandwich construction. There is excellent light in the hulls, which have a pretty finish and plenty of storage. The utility room in the starboard hull is really designed for long-term

used and the bathroom is quite simply perfect, with refined detail, comfort and quality. The two guest cabins to port offer are equally neat facilities, with really well-designed bathrooms. All the plumbing and cabling is run in separate galleries beneath the floor, and not in the bilges.

Real-time information

The cabling is fire resistant and the whole installation is insulated. All the sockets are US and European compatible, with the voltage being programmable. The whole of the Mastervolt charging and inverter system is run by an easy-view controller, accessed along with the rest of the technical systems aboard, using the tablet supplied. Access to all the main information about the boat is instantly available and can be saved at any moment by the yard's design team for diagnostic purposes. The screen also displays reminders for maintenance.

A lively catamaran which is fun to sail

The amount of torque available from the 80hp Yanmars is very comforting, with three-bladed

1: All the X5's windows are in toughened laminated glass. No more leaks or expanding.

2: The Xquisite X5 is a luxury catamaran capable of producing good performance. It goes very well in light and medium airs.

3: The rear arch is not very attractive, but it houses some interesting features which make it easier to accept. The anchoring set-up is exemplary. Note where the anchor launches beneath the platform.

4: The split sailplan (self-tacking solent / big, overlapping reacher on furlers) and the choice of sailcloth (North Sails membrane) show a level of excellence.



- ◆ Build quality and standard of equipment
- ◆ Remarkable deck layout
- ◆ Ease of use and suitability for the program

- ◆ Unconventional profile
- ◆ Enormous rear arch
- ◆ Saildrives as opposed to shafts or V-drives



Maxprops really biting the water, giving great directional control for maneuvering on the dock at low revs. With no experience of handling the boat astern, I had no problem getting into our slip with 18 knots of wind on the beam. On the day of our test we enjoyed good winds, starting with 5 knots from the NE picking up to 18 knots from the NW for the majority of the day over a run of 32 miles. Once clear of the dock, I hoisted the mainsail from the helm station using the electrical winch. Being totally unfamiliar with the boat, I asked Tamas Hamor to stay close by and keep an eye on me to make sure I didn't foul anything up. 30 seconds of explanation was all that was required to have a good understanding of the deck layout which is exceptionally well-designed and built. Everything is led back to the cockpit through three tunnels, whose outlets have sacrificial polished stainless anti-chafe sections carefully installed. The 14 Spinlock clutches are generously-sized and are all ergonomically within reach. Everything is clearly laid out, and each line (colors and characteristics carefully selected depending on their job) is identified on an engraved plate at the deck organizers. With of the cover stowed in 3 seconds, I had a perfect view as the main went up between the lazy jacks. Once it was set, I bore away and cut the motors. After a slight adjustment to the mainsheet car and a little bit in on the mainsheet, I unfurled the reacher. I checked the color of the line at the furler, released the clutch of the lazy sheet and

pulled. Straight away had the feeling that I knew the boat and would be able to react immediately and make any adjustments with ease and dexterity. The quality of the development of this hull number one is absolutely remarkable. The wind was backing, but then quickly settled in the NW and was picking up. With this amount of sail area (183m² - 1,970sq ft), the boat starts to move in just four knots of wind. The quality of the North membrane sails, combined with a faultless deck layout, made for a nice surprise at the start of our test. A good breeze was now blowing across the water, leading us to another exercise: I rolled up the reacher in a jiffy by bearing away and giving a bit of a lee from the main, easing the sheet with one hand and operating the furler with my foot. Fantastic doing this on your own compared to a gennaker! The self-tacking staysail was quickly unfurled and once set for a close reach, I turned my attention to reducing the mainsail. With the traveler out and the sheet eased, the sail is empty, but it doesn't flog. Thanks to the engravings for the lines, there is no confusion and I don't need to ask Tamas a thing: ease the halyard, hook on the strap at the mast and re-tension, making a visual check (thanks to the hatch in the cover) that nothing has caught, and we're off again! This magic deck layout gives me great confidence and I imagine it would be the same for any sailor. The feel of the helm is good for a hydraulic linkage, and checking the mechanical parts (welded stainless connections and rudder stock) inspired respect. The X5 is agile for such a well-equipped model, it tacks perfectly, accelerates through a bit of a chop and knows how to keep up good average speeds between 8.5 and 10.5 (our maximum speed on the day) in 15-18 knots true. In the conditions we encountered I found it to be a very stable platform with a gentle passage through the water.

Conclusion

The X5 is a total success. This "turn-key" catamaran is attractive with its rigorous specifications, fall top of the range equipment and exacting quality. The ease of use by a short-handed crew is undisputable, and the watchkeeper has no need to panic at the prospect of changing a headsail or reefing the main.



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Builder: Phoenix Marine (South Africa)
Naval Architect: Rudolf Jonker
Length: 15.44m (50'8")
Beam: 8m (26'3")
Displacement: 18-22t (39,700-48,500 lbs)
Bridgedeck clearance: 1m (3'3") in lightship condition
Mast height: 21m (68'11")
Air draft: 24m (78'9")
Mainsail area: 100m ² (1,080 sq ft)
Reacher area: 83m ² (895 sq ft)
Furling jib area: 33m ² (355 sq ft)
Engines: 2x80hp Yanmar
Fresh water: 4x215l (4x57 US gal) + Spectra Newport 400 60l (15.8 US gal)/h 12v watermaker
Fuel: 2x395l (2x104 US gal)
Price: \$1,200,000 ex-tax

5: The cockpit comprises three clever areas (outdoor saloon, angled sofa and aft lounge). The wing houses the cockpit enclosures in a recess, allowing them to be deployed quickly.
6: The quality of the panoramic view is remarkable. The nav station is particularly successful

