

X Marks the Spot



With this year's aforementioned diminished nominee list, it was impossible to break down the fleet across the board to fit each boat into a neat, tidy category. One of the two notable exceptions was the Performance Cruiser class, with three strong entries: the Arcona 435, the Beneteau Oceanis 40.1 and the X-Yachts X40. We'll get to the Arcona and the Beneteau in the pages to come, but for 2021, the clear winner in this class of sweet-sailing racer/cruisers was the X40. It clearly met the criteria for being the top performer in its stated design brief: a boat that will compete strongly—and well—on the racecourse, yet be comfortable and fun for coastal cruising.

With the X-Yachts, we've

seen this figurative movie before. The Danish brand has taken home BOTY hardware four times in the past five years.

Murphy, our resident boatbuilding whisperer—he's worked closely with the American Boat and Yacht Council writing textbooks and creating curricula—was emphatic when it came to the quality of the X40's construction: "X-Yachts has built 5,000 boats since they went into business in 1979. So they have a good, long track record. They're probably best known in performance circles, so when we board an X-Yacht, we expect the boat is going to sail pretty well, which this one certainly did. As far the build quality, this is one of the top two yachts in this year's fleet (the other is the HH 50 cat, which we'll get to). It's an epoxy hull, which is the best resin you can use to build boats, in terms of both strength and resilience. It also has a galvanized-steel grid. In years past, there have been questions about the long-term integrity of that grid,

but they're unfounded. My feeling is that the massive steel structure is not encapsulated; it goes on top of the fiberglass structure, and it's not an issue. I think this boat is straight-up wholesome. It's a really, really lovely sailboat."

Pillsbury found the efficient deck layout to his liking: "This boat was one of few we saw this year that actually had enough winches on it to sail it like a proper boat. We climbed on several others where a clutch was used to service several lines from a single winch. Sometimes it was hard to remember which clutch to open and which clutch to close, which took away a lot of the joy of sailing. Here you can just load up a winch and know that your line is going to be there, that you have quick access to it. I really liked that. It was also one of only a couple of boats that had a full-on traveler, which to my mind, when you carry a lot of sail, as this boat does, if you can't really control and trim that mainsail,

it's a problem. And here's another trend we saw for 2021: a below-deck furler for the headsail, which makes for a nice, clean deck layout."

Our X40 sea trials were also heavily influenced by the father/son owners who will be using the boat very differently, but who also made it quite clear that it will address and serve both of their sailing

AS FAR AS THE BUILD QUALITY, THIS X-YACHT IS ONE OF THE TOP TWO FOR THIS YEAR.

ambitions very well. Son Ryan is an avid inshore and offshore racer who has a Sydney-Hobart Race under his belt, who plans to campaign it hard; he'll put the racing element into play. Doublehanded racing, especially in these socially distanced times, is becoming ever more popular, and the X40 should be ideal for those venues.

Ryan is a sailmaker, so there will of course be a full quiver of racing sails aboard. But the boat is also set up for his dad, Mike, and his wife to sail efficiently, with a self-tacking jib for cruising forays. (It also has a bow thruster and the electric furler for the jib, which added some weight forward and isn't the ideal setup for racing; we'd guess Ryan and Mike had some interesting conversations about those features.)

But at the end of the day, the family wound up with a yacht that will be ideal for everyone in the household: a racer/cruiser that is every bit both. So, fair winds, Ryan and Mike. You've got the one boat perfect for the two of you.

