

CATANA

Through hard work and dedication Catana Catamarans have built an enviable reputation for producing great sea boats with a turn of speed.



The Catana 65



his attracted a loyal and at one time large client base who liked to cruise, race and rally with like minded individuals all over the world- does this new direction stay true to the tradition of Catana

– we visited to find out!

I count three brand new Catana 50s in build, one 3 year old 50 being stripped for design development, plus one 58 on hold (no payment, no work). The new-to-the-range Catana 46 brings the tally of boats in construction up to 6, in front of which a support frame is being craned together to build an even-newer-to-the-range Catana that we can't yet talk about. The individual hulls of the second Catana 92 sit shrink wrapped in the outside compound, awaiting an owner, yet touch wood (and there is plenty of that in a Catana) there has so far been no need to lay off or half-time any of the staff.

The public holding company Groupe Poncin Yachts, own Locwind, White Shark, Sea Hawk and Harmony Yachts as well as Catana Catamarans. While the monohull market for Harmony



Yachts is 'almost dead' according to marketing director of the group, Serge Paillard, Catana with her 150 workers in Perpignan and 80 in the factory in La Rochelle, looks set to survive 'la crise,' at least, for now. On hearing news of the French superyacht builder, Couach going under protection of the Tribunal de Commerce in Bordeaux for failure to negotiate restructuring of its debt and employee redundancies at Beneteau, Catana's directors believe that the new Catana 46 will be Catana's key to future success. At present, Catana Catamarans turns over an average of more than €35 million per year, where each boat, bar the 65 and above, averages 1 million euros.

Started in 1994-5, the original Catana was an Australian, Lock Crowther designed 40 footer. With daggerboards and a short coach roof, the Crowther Catana had hulls that canted inwards, to spread the load and bring the weight central. Paillard refers to this as 'the DNA of the first Catana boats.' Sitting in the water opposite the Catana compound are a couple of examples, since the Atelier PHISA shipyard bought the moulds and continue to produce the early design under the Pôle Marine brand.





The Phisa 42

At Catana, the specification has evolved and the Christophe Barreau/Frédéric Neuman design team have added Twaron (Kevlar) to the make-up, to compensate for the weight of high-tech systems which have gradually crept onboard. In this respect, the Catana brand philosophy too has changed and in doing so tapped successfully into a new market, that of a different type of client, one who has had large power boats and is used to another level of luxury. Aware that the finesse de coque (boat speed) and thus performance directly corresponds to the weight carried onboard, Catana have increased the wetted area in their larger designs and are experimenting with a 3 year old ex-demo boat 50. While this 50 was the first in the new range of Catana 50s, it still weighs in at 16.5 tonnes. Down on the shop floor, 2 tonnes of interior furniture and 'extras' are currently being removed, to test for any change in 'sea keeping' and motion

a-float. As yet, the verdict is undecided. In light to medium breeze, the boat was not considered to have made a significant gain in performance. She surfed more readily in heavier air and now the object of the team is to find the right balance.

Designs change roughly every 3 years, so the economics of investing in the tooling for injection molding which is 2.5 times more expensive to fabricate than the infusion molds currently in use, may be unfounded. Catana are looking to find out and so are using the present period of lower production to consider this development, with a hopeful view to injection molding Catana 41s. The benefit principally governs weight, since the structure is bonded as one with no glueing together of the various parts or additional filler required since the gel coat is pre-laid into the rigid molds. As a result, the mechanical characteristics are more controllable.

On the mezzanine level of the main hall, Catana have an expansive wood working area. Directly below and in an adjoining annex are more machines for wood cutting; preparing and finishing the Catana interiors and the place is buzzing with skilled craftsman. Everything is done in house including the launching and commissioning. Marketing director, Serge Paillard believes that this is 'the only way to control quality and delivery time,' as each boat is custom. After working with a prospective owner on their boat's interior design, the last stage before construction is their approval of the CD ~ a virtual reality tour of their boat in 3D.



Catana 50 in build – note composite bulkheads everywhere



Catana 50 deck in build



Catana 50 note the detailed interior engineering



Catana manufacture much of their woodwork in house



Privilege 615

'It's very important that they sign off, so that there is no disagreement later.'

Right now the maximum number of new-builds that Catana Catamarans can accommodate per year is 30. They built 28 last year. The 2009 sales target for the Catana 65 is 2.5 per annum, alongside 12 new Catana 50s. To make up the numbers, Catana management feel that they need to offer a boat between 50 and 65 feet with more accommodation and outside crew quarter access, since the 58 is no longer in production. Paillard speculates that a 57 footer may fill the gap, but that it will depend on the demand, as Catana only build to order. For any first hull over 50ft, the commissioning client must pay half the cost of the new tooling and in the case of a 73ft catamaran, this obligatory cash flow amounts to €1.5 million and so a total bill of €4 million including the boat. While there may be interest in a 70 something footer, the expense doesn't stop there. The size puts the vessel in a high EC category for safety equipment regulations and in transportation terms it is classed as a small commercial vessel.

The Privilege 615 is regarded as the most direct competitor to the Catana 65, but with a more roomy interior and no daggerboards you might expect less performance from the Privilege, particularly upwind. When we test sail the Catana 65 in May, we should know more. Top features to look forward to on the new Catana 65 include: the height of the nacelle, (central body of the catamaran) above water, the simplicity in rigging of the carbon mast, the control of all lines led discreetly aft and the hydraulic dinghy hoist with remote control!

Catana is making great strides forward, significant investment has been made in

new models which has seen the 50, 65, 41 all launched in the last three years. Later this year the 46 will be launched and the start of development of a new model were hinted at in our visit. These are bold and exciting times. The new boats, designed by Christophe Barreau with sophisticated interiors, appeal to a wider client base than the previous models. There is more interior volume and proportionally more weight than hitherto but also clever engineering and a lot of power and now a determination to

reduce build weight in the quest for more performance that will bring this famous name back to its roots.

The Catana range is currently:

Catana 41	Euro 490,000
Catana 46	Euro 730,000
Catana 50	Euro 989,000
Catana 65	Euro 2,300,000
Catana 92	individually priced

More details from: www.catana.com



Catana 65