



CLUB MARINE

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CLUB MARINE

TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

See inside for details



Me-wow! Clever cat

Built to outlast the rigours of charter hire and equipped to house a cruising family in comfort and style, the Aquila 44 has 'wow factor' in spades.

"Was @ show yesterday looking over sailing cats and came across the Aquila 44," chirped a phone text as I sat gruesomely grid-locked in Sydney traffic. "Wow, wot a lot of boat. Worth a look if you get chance."

The message came from a sailing acquaintance for whom 'hype' is a foreign word and powerboats a no-go zone. By sheer coincidence, I was driving to the Sydney International Boat

Show to test the very craft he'd picked out of the 184 on display.

Finding the Aquila was easy, with its cream gelcoat standing out among the flock of bright white.

"Wow!" said a woman walking into the saloon. Another 'wow' emanated from the owner's cabin. "Check this out," uttered a male voice from the cockpit. I glanced around, half expecting to find an

infomercial film set with toothy actors, but these were regular boat-show visitors.

As power catamarans go, the Aquila isn't particularly ostentatious or avant-garde ... yet apparently it has that indefinable, inexorable aura otherwise known as 'wow factor'. It resonates in the space and grace of a classic European design, rendered with casual elegance and excellence by its American builder in a China-based yard.

The Aquila range also comprises an evergreen 38-footer (formerly the Leopard that Sino Eagle Yachts built under consignment) and a chunky 48 that's oriented at the Caribbean charter market, where size matters. By comparison, the 44 gets the looks and brains in the family.

the 44 gets the looks and brains in the family

Its length was determined by both price point and practicality, yet it boasts big-boat features like a full-width master suite. According to agent Andrew McLeod from Multihull Central, some international buyers have bought an Aquila 48 for work and a 44 for pleasure.

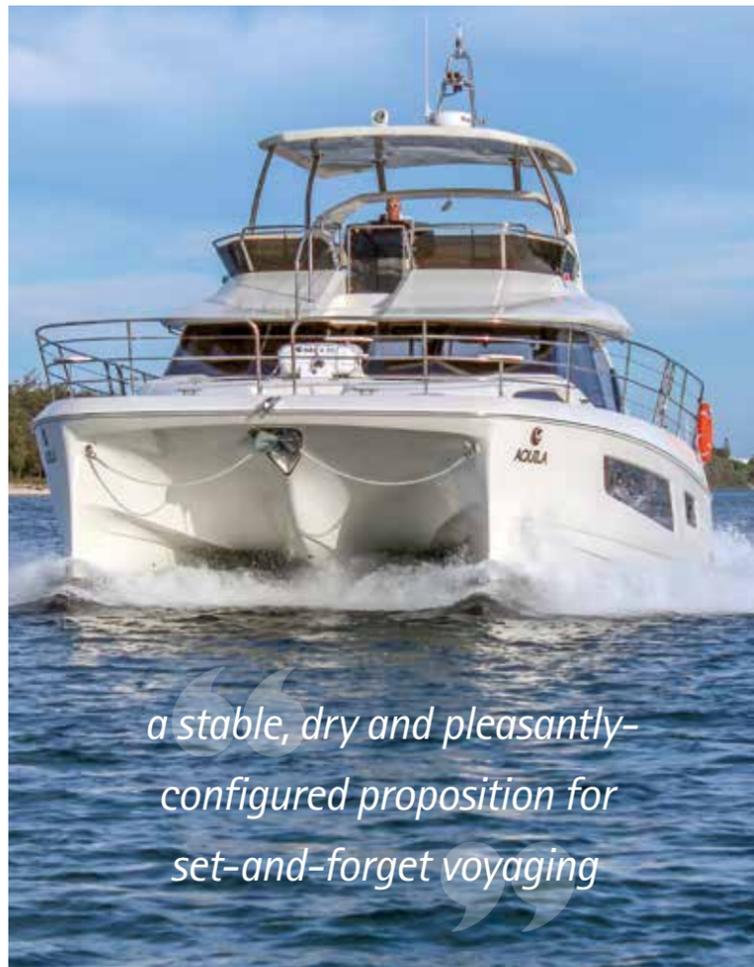
Andrew and wife Deidre had previously imported Privilège sailing cats, but left the marine industry to pursue other interests – until they spotted a 44 model in Multihull Central's marina office and then flew to Fort Lauderdale Boat Show for a sea trial.

"When people came aboard at the boat show in the US we found the word most used was 'wow,'" says Andrew.

Deidre's favourite features were the open galley with servery and the social environment created by items like cockpit bar stools. They specced the boat to IE survey for 20 passengers plus two crew, although the stability book has been approved for 36 passengers. It also complies with Class 2C (6 passengers and two crew) and Class 4C (8 persons).

But barely had their 44 landed than it was on-sold. While the new owner has no commercial aspirations, he was impressed it had undergone survey requirements with upgraded fire systems, guard rails, DC systems, bilge sensors and the like. He's a keen angler

By Mark Rothfield



a stable, dry and pleasantly-configured proposition for set-and-forget voyaging

whose wife refused to set foot on a gamefishing boat.

“When she saw the Aquila she wouldn’t get off until he bought it,” Andrew says.

The choice of 300hp Volvos over standard 225 models satisfied the buyer’s need for coastal performance. They run four-blade props through V-drive transmissions for a more efficient ride.

BULBOUS BOWS

The 44’s hull now sports two radical underwater appendages that have lifted the performance to a new plane. Jutting forward almost a metre are two bulbous bow pods, countered aft by additional flotation under the swimplatforms. The shape was developed from torpedo technology for straight-line tracking, but received some added ‘vee’ to prevent slapping. Being fully sealed and self-contained, they’re sacrificial in a collision.

The Aquila is said to be the only production cat with bulbs as standard, though they weren’t on the drawing board when J&J Designs, from Slovenia, penned the original shape. The former hull had a top speed of 9.4 knots (17.4km/h), which



is adequate for a charter role. After the waterline modifications it clocked 16.1 knots (30km/h) with the same 225hp diesels, also gaining fuel efficiency benefits amounting to 70nm at 3200rpm.

In another nod to its charter heritage, water and additional fuel are carried up front and the motors sit well aft so as not to intrude on cabin space. Only the batteries are located amidships; they’re beneath the saloon floor, adjacent to the wiring junctions.

QUICK AND STABLE

Any preconceived concerns about pitching disperse in the Aquila’s wake once the throttles are planted, with the additional buoyancy levelling the ride.

The test boat took 13 seconds to accelerate to 15 knots (28km/h) from a standing start and kept going until a top of 23.1 knots (43km/h), carrying a bellyful of fuel and water. This was achieved in bucketing rain and windswept, 3m seas off the NSW coastline.

Not once did the 44 deviate from its course under autopilot, even when the windward hull lifted slightly to oncoming chop, and the steering



remained equally mellow through turns and across side swells. Chine deflectors kept spray at bay and custom-made clears did the rest.

A lively, dynamic sports machine it ain’t – more a stable, dry and pleasantly configured proposition for set-and-forget voyaging with a small crew.

SOCIABLE FEATURES

It’s a pleasure to helm from the functional and sociable flybridge. A rear camera via Raymarine chartplotter assists with berthing, and the starboard transom can be seen from the helm.

Opposite: Internally or externally, the 44 is all about people and social interaction.



Foredeck access is through three forward-facing windscreen steps, as well as by traversing the moulded cockpit stairs and side decks.

The skipper won't be lonely – the wheel is flanked by lounge seating and there's a U-shaped dinette and barbecue console aft.

It has a second alfresco table in the cockpit along with an internal dinette. The L-shaped portside galley is convenient to both. To starboard in the light-filled saloon is the nav station and a longitudinal bench hiding a retractable TV.

Accommodation space is outstanding for a 44-footer, with generous double guest cabins and private bathrooms in both hulls, and a full-width owner's forward stateroom with a queen-sized double on the centreline, en suite to port and desk to starboard.

Options include a utility room with work-bench, washer/dryer, and an extra freezer or dive-gear storage.

The test boat married satin-finished cherrywood with black Corian benchtops, and it bore no scars from having a thousand people filtering through at the show. Light ash and white Corian is proving popular with buyers, while a high-gloss finish with additional soft furnishings can also be specified. From the cleats up, the Aquila's bright work is beautifully engineered. Every weld is polished to perfection.

It's hard to believe this isn't a luxury cruiser around the 60ft mark – it's a 44-footer that comes with a base price tag of \$1m. Optioned with air-conditioning, genset, extra tankage and safety equipment, it still comes in at just \$1.25m. 



Above: Stable and spray-free at speed – a quality cruiser.

Right: Bow pods provide performance – and are a bolt-on replacement if damaged.

AQUILA 44	
LOA:	13.44m
Beam:	6.53m
Draft:	1m
Displacement:	18.3 tons
Fuel capacity:	1100lt
Water capacity:	680lt
Capacity/berths:	6 + 1
Power as tested:	300hp Volvo D4
Price from:	\$1m
Price as tested:	\$1.25m
More information: Multihull Central, tel: 1300 852 620. Web: MultihullCentral.com, or: AquilaBoats.com.	