



# Outremer 5X

## A very hot 60-foot catamaran

Up until now, all the attempts to create big cruising catamarans with superlative performance have been exceptional prototypes (Magic Cat) or have remained restricted to confidential families (Gunboat). With the 5X, Outremer has launched a challenge to the multihull community: build a 60-foot production boat which meets this ambitious specification.

Text and photos: Philippe Echelle



### FAST OR FURIOUS?

Dick Newick sensibly maintained that no multihull could be at the same time spacious, very fast and financially accessible. In his mind, it was above all a question of rationalising his non-negotiable approach to pretty trimarans with amazing dynamic qualities, but awfully Spartan, which only a brotherhood of Benedictine monks could build...almost voluntarily. Times have changed; 20 years later, the multihulls which were seen as crazy machines in the 80s met a

ponds to the expectations of the majority of purchasers. Moreover the success of this formula has made this orientation hegemonic, reversing the original representations. Flirting permanently with being offside, defining a boosted, inevitably elitist machine, is a headache! It implies convincing wealthy, enlightened customers who are young enough to enjoy the boat and appreciate the speed; having real expertise, the tooling, therefore ad hoc financial foundations, and finally, rigorous conceptual piloting, to be sure that the boat lives up to its promises without proving to be uncontrollable! This is



generation which liked two-figure speeds and stable platforms as their daily fare. At the boat shows, we have certainly seen galloping inflation of the size of multi-yachts, but the number of boats designed exclusively around the radical, 'fast first' equation has not increased much.

the path taken by Outremer for the 5X.

### ARCHITECTURE AND CONSTRUCTION: THE FRENCH TOUCH

The 5X is a purely French product, which from its design to its manufacture, calls on a network of locally-based skills, made up of small, experienced and creative units which are bursting with talent. From the idea to the first sketches, the structural calculations to the performance predictions, the moulds to the large patiently infused parts: all this is car-

### A VERY RISKY MARKETING NICHE

It is tempting to use the catamaran's floor area to fit audacious accommodation, especially as this corres-



ried out with passion in a small country made up of ungovernable tribes which make 400 kinds of cheese! The fastest architects' office in the world (GROUPAMA III, BANQUE POPULAIRE V, BMW ORACLE) was entrusted with the design, taking as their target the bogey of this microcosm, the Gunboats!

### SAILING VERY FAST IN A COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT: NOT WANTING TO CHOOSE!

Water is 700 times denser than air; getting rid of its friction without resorting to too exotic solutions is a challenge, maybe a fantasy, in any case it is the dream of a few people. Gérard Danson had made an impression with the Outremer 40-43' by daring to approach this goal with democratic ambitions; there remains something of the sports car in the blue stripes of the 5X project, even though the result in the car park is closer to the Porsche Panamera.

### HYDRODYNAMICS AND WEIGHT: SQUARING THE CIRCLE!

Being nautically "light" means not sinking the hull

into the water, otherwise the wetted surface area increases and causes drag. To sail quickly, a multihull must offer little resistance, and the "motor" must generate a maximum propulsive force. Numerous architectural solutions answer this equation, but in the present case, the essential liveable (and visual) volume and the important constraints linked to the cruising program (engines, fuel, spares...) must be integrated. The worst tonnes are the last ones, but they are integrated from the start; the equipment will only aggravate the negative spiral. A challenge! VPLP's answer is a hull almost 18 m long, with spectacularly harmonious U-shaped sections and extremely limited depth. The frontal perception of these ultra-tight hulls is marked by slenderness and an admirable balance; the lines aft are delicate, despite sugar scoops of a good useful width. The 7 metres free of all superstructure, forward of the coachroof, offers progressive penetration, a spatula effect, the support necessary at high speed and is indicative of the rigour of the weight centering. The coachroof, which on my first visit to the yard had seemed



- 1 : The latest boat from Outremer during one of its first outings. A beautiful object, which is elegant and...fast!
- 2: During our test, we fought each other to steer with the superb tiller: a real pleasure!
- 3 : Pretty lines and a high-performance hull designed by VPLP, the fastest architects' office on the water...
- 4 : The N°1 (the one we tested), "Addiction", is already available for charter in the Western Mediterranean...for an amazing cruise!
- 5 : The (very comfortable) helmsman's seat and the carbon tiller. A must!

quite prominent, is well integrated into the silhouette, despite an imposing objective volume.

CONSTRUCTION UNDER SURVEILLANCE.

Unlike the Gunboats, built in pre-impregnated Nomex/carbon, like the racing prototypes (a material whose use constraints are not very compatible with cruising use), Outremer has chosen a medium-tech process in a foam/glass/vinylester sandwich whose resistance to puncturing is greatly superior. Mastery of the infusion technique is obvious; examination of large complex parts (deck) shows a high level of application and attention to detail. Under the guidance of Christophe Comar, Outremer's build quality has not ceased to develop positively; the improvements in hygiene and safety conditions linked to new technologies of infusion have allowed feminisation of certain positions demanding attention to detail, and younger tradesmen. The manual assemblies of the deck-hull joint or the laminated fillet on both sides of the bulkheads show particular care.

ACCOMMODATION AND LINES: DESIGN CONSULTANTS TO THE RESCUE.

Patrick le Quément is an unknown in the nautical world, but an emblematic figure in car design. He exercised his talents at Ford and Audi, then in the style department at Renault for 22 years (until 2009); he

took part in the aesthetic definition of the 5X. Franck Darnet leads a research and development office specialising in fitting out yachts. After a course of study at the prestigious Bouille school, he designed for the Finot group, then Beneteau, then left to cruise around the world. He created his own office in 98 (Nantes, then Miami), collaborated with Outremer for the 49', then took responsibility for the 5X's interior design.

GENERAL ERGONOMICS AND LIFE ABOARD

Not being a specialist in styles of furnishing, I confess to a quite philistine approach to these areas. I appreciate simple comfort, with no artefacts, in short, functional – which doesn't mean lacking in formal elegance. I like the design to be quite instinctive (a word dear to Patrick Le Quément) and directly serving its use. The definition of the 5X was everything I could have wished for. During these 2 days we spent little time inside, but the intelligence of the volumes, the nautical character and aesthetics of the materials struck me. The warm, friendly presence of an unostentatious interior, a sober and readable atmosphere and the abundant light convinced me. I liked this efficient, direct style which expresses the 5X's strong personality. Our test version (the no.1) had all the "right" options, with a superb Lorima rotating carbon mast, and a suit of sails in Cuben Fibre (at a shameful price!). These technical, ergonomic and design ele-



ments participate in the immediate perception of an exceptional Gran Turismo atmosphere.

VROOM...

The 5X's deck plan and rig are rational and modern, calling on the resources of latest-generation fittings (lubricated rings, furlers on textile forestays...). In their order of reduction, the forestsails are: gennaker, jib, staysail or ORC. The choice of two steering wheels which can be disengaged (on the coachroof bulkhead) in favour of carbon tillers is a superb idea, perfectly realised. With 4 knots of wind, we headed out to sea at a steady speed, sailing round a fleet of monohulls on the start line of their race. The committee hesitated for a long time before they gave the start gun – we were already far away on the horizon! The breeze picked up; 5, 6, then 7 knots; the log's liquid crystals increased symmetrically, and the readings approached the predictions of the designers – almost always equal or superior to the true wind speed. The pleasure of dominating this superb machine with the fingertips established itself and didn't leave us until the next day. We went out to sea to meet a runaway westerly airflow, and spent several hours playing with the 5X, its mast, its superb sails, at between 60° and 100° to the wind. Sailing fast over a barely rippled sea was a superb exercise. The

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Architects: Marc Van Peteghem and Vincent Lauriot Prevost  
Interior design: Franck Darnet  
Design consultant: Patrick Le Quément  
Builder: Outremer Yachting  
Length: 17.98m  
Beam: 8.58m  
Unladen weight: 13.2t  
Laden displacement: 15t  
Maximum displacement: 18t  
Centreboards: 2 daggerboards, fixed rudders, can't be beached.  
Mast height: 23.45m  
Mainsail area: 122m²  
Jib area: 59m²  
Asymmetric spinnaker: 260m²  
Code O: 105m²  
Jib: 24m²  
Gennaker: 174m²  
Engines: 2 x 55hp sail drive/ 2 x 75hp as an option  
Diesel: 2 x 336L  
Water: 2 x 336L  
Black water tank: 60L, to starboard  
Batteries: 12V, 4 x 105A domestic + 2 x 90A for engine starting  
Bilge pumps: 6 (2 in each engine compartment + 1 per hull)  
Anchor equipment: 1700W windlass + 50m of 12mm chain, 32kg Delta anchor  
Price: 945,000 euros exc. VAT  
Main options, exc. VAT:  
Grand Large Pack (electronics, watermaker, bowsprit, gennaker...): 93,800 euros  
Gennaker fittings: 9,500 euros  
Longitudinal beam, if staysail and jib: 9,400 euros  
Rotating carbon mast: 91,400 euros  
Square-headed Hydrant mainsail: 7,500 euros  
Folding, 3-bladed propellers: 4,000 euros  
4 electric winches: 17,000 euros  
Tillers (which can be disconnected): 14,000 euros

these conditions. A sudden inspiration made us gybe and return towards the shore, looking for a vein of north-easterly at the end of the afternoon. At 130° to the wind, with the gennaker freed off and full, the 5X pretended to surf on the little swell coming from the open sea! The speed remained very dynamic; whilst the wind remained below 10 knots, the log indicated a stable 9 knots. The Cuben profiles drew perfect

The log's liquid crystals increased symmetrically, and the readings approached the predictions of the designers – almost always equal or superior to the true wind speed...

volumes on the blue sky; there were no tensions to readjust, we just had to trim, steer, accelerate and take care not to restrain the profiles in this kind of weather. These high-tech sails are the nec plus ultra from all points of view; the way they keep their shape is amazing. The end of the afternoon rewarded us with a long series of runs, the north-easterly breeze increased to around 15 knots, and it was a pleasure to sail around the stadium, on a close reach, under mainsail-jib at 13 – 14 knots, then speeding downwind, with the gennaker unrolled, at 17 – 18 knots in the gusts. The helm was light and precise; the atmosphere was exciting. The final whistle went in Aigues Mortes Bay, where we were pursuing the most bracing gusts; 23 knots of wind, 22 knots on the display, and believe me, there was more to come. The next day, a sea breeze (south-westerly, with a choppy sea) livened up the stretch of water; spurred on by the previous day's experiences, I really enjoyed myself at the helm. It is always very nice to note that you get your bearings quickly, that

control of the interaction between the main and the genoa and the traveller positions becomes more intuitive, and that the figures on the log increase until they indicate the right score for the target range. There were quite a few of us aboard (8-9), as against 4 the previous day, but we didn't notice any effect on the platform's reactivity. The boat took off on request, and reached 17 – 18 knots easily when bearing away.

CONCLUSION

The test conditions didn't allow us to observe the 5X in a rough sea, but within the limits of our experience, I liked everything! Its strong point is obviously based on its out-of-the-ordinary dynamic qualities, but it also appeals through its balance and coherence of use. This catamaran appears to be able to do everything; I didn't note any range where it was weaker. The 5X displays a kind of almost indecent ease on all points of sailing; it can sail fast if you push it, but never shows any aggressiveness. Shorthanded (you will have to have all the relevant options, and not skimp on the electric winches), both uses, sport and comfort, will be an inexhaustible source of satisfaction: 2 reefs-staysail at night, full main-full speed during office hours! Outremer has succeeded in its gamble of putting a perfectly useable exceptional catamaran on the market; I hope that one of the purchasers will dare to order a totally complex-free colour presentation which would suit the machine's character.



6 : A cockpit where conviviality, relaxation, sailing the boat and trimming are not in opposition, but merge into a shared pleasure...

7 : Simple, functional comfort with no artefacts, but a formal elegance and well-chosen materials.

8 : Even though we are in a 21st century boat, the chart table remains important, and here, particularly aesthetically pleasing.

9 : Inside, the cabins are well-ventilated and bright...

10 : Even the bathroom is 'designed'. Beautiful, well-finished and practical in use...

- +

  - Balanced design
  - Exciting personality
  - Build quality
- - It is essential to draw on many options
  - Maintenance when not in use
  - Biomechanics of the sheet winches perfectible (manual).

THE COMPETITORS

| Model                    | TS 52'        | CATANA 59' | ALIBI   | MC2 60     | GUNBOAT 60 |
|--------------------------|---------------|------------|---------|------------|------------|
| Builder                  | XL CATAMARANS | Catana     | Alibi   | Mc Conaguy | Gunboat    |
| Windward sail area in m² | 132           | 202        | 155     | 175        | 195        |
| Weight in t              | 7             | 18         | 8,5     | 9          | 16         |
| Price in euros, exc. VAT | 754 000       | 1 399 000  | 745 000 | 1 600 000  | NC         |