



Yachting World

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'Solo racing is what I do. Why would I stop?'

NEW YACHTS

from Annapolis

Elaine Bunting reports from the US sailboat show

After several quiet years, visitors to the Annapolis Boat Show are back in numbers and there's a sense, as in Europe, that boatbuying could be picking up again. What struck me at the show was how many multihulls there were and, in the other corner, how many new sportsboats. There is no single obvious trend here; racing has splintered; cruising, too.



MORRIS OCEAN SERIES 48G

Even on an afternoon of intermittent drizzle, nothing could dampen the eagerness of visitors to Annapolis to see on board Morris Yachts' new Ocean Series 48GT. Every day people waited patiently in line for their turn to have a look.

The new cherry red yacht they were queuing for was a show-stopping mixture of tradition and modern ideas. Morris yachts appeal to the traditionalist, and exude seakindliness and quality.

But while the new GT keeps the proven Chuck Paine-designed hull, it marks Morris's intention to revitalise its range of performance cruisers. So the new 48GT has a deck saloon and a bigger sail area, as well as sportier performance thanks to a carbon mast 2m taller than its predecessor's. It also sports a self-tacking jib for easy short-handed sailing.

The boat on show had been built for an owner who wants to cruise south during the winter before returning to New England and going racing. Changing modes will mean more than stripping off the furling gear, barbecue and sprayhood; unusually, this boat will be returning to the yard so that the shoal draught cruising keel can be swapped for an 2.4m draught keel.

In its present form, the yacht had been

set up for ease of short-handed cruising, with a hydraulic cunningham and vang, and a hydraulic ram to dump the traveller, set on the coachroof and operated by a foot button at the wheel.

This is a real sea boat and one that makes you feel safe as soon as you step on board. The cockpit is deep, secure and well sheltered. There is a very substantial twin stemhead fitting, lots of good handholds and the guardrails and pushpit are high and solidly made. On this boat, Morris Yachts had even shaped the pushpit beautifully to wrap round a stern-mounted barbecue.

Down below, the joiner work has a gorgeous mellow gloss varnish finish, and the deck saloon is a snug retreat from the cockpit with views all round. There are other improvements, such as a spacious round-shaped shower in the master cabin forward, and everywhere you look the details and finish are unimpeachable.

On the 48GT these details speak volumes about build quality and practicality, whether they are in plain sight or not. The cockpit drains are capped with a stainless steel grating in the shape of the Morris Yachts logo. Wood floorboards in the saloon are locked down with flush-fitted brass locks. Ask to look in the bilges – I always do;



A mix of tradition and modern ideas in a quality package make Morris Yachts very sought after

it's a very rewarding hobby – and you find the fuel manifold and filters all easily accessible and every skin fitting with a soft wood bung attached beside it. Behind the switch panel all the electrics and wiring are meticulously labelled.

To cap it all, Morris Yachts provides each yacht with a large leather-bound owner's manual. Everything you need to know is in this Bible-sized book: complete as-built drawings, manuals and photos of this yacht's equipment and systems. Everything about the Morris 48GT tells you she's been built carefully and unstintingly.

The Morris 48GT costs around US\$1.4m. www.morrisyachts.com