



Over 15 years, Catana has made a name by building cruising catamarans that favor performance ahead of plush comfort. The 472, adding layers of luxury to the same fast hulls, marks a departure for Catana.

**BOAT TEST** BY TODD SCANTLEBURY

## Euro-Elegance Meets Cruising-Cat Performance

With its new 472, Catana adds layers of luxury to the boat that won *CW*'s award for Best Multihull in 1999

MAYBE YOU'RE IN SEARCH OF A stately 25- by 50-foot live-aboard home with dueling Pentium computers, a king-size master stateroom, and Bose indoor/outdoor speakers. Or maybe you're after a performance bluewater cruiser that will slice a fine angle to windward and propel you at

double-digit speeds, grinning and laughing like a kid on a roller coaster. Or perhaps, today, you're just a hull kicker with a lusty sparkle in your eye and big hopes for a burgeoning bank account. Regardless, you'll want to check out the Catana 472.

In the early 1980s, designer Lock Crowther's first Catana earned the company a reputation for sturdy cruising performance but not for interior finish. The Catana 40 sailed like a sports car but sported the sparse interior of a Coleman camper. Increasingly affluent owners liked the performance but begged for polish and extras. In the mid-

1990s, with direction from the late Henri Wauquiez, Catana's wash-and-wear designs gave way to comfort and aesthetics that earned the Catana 471 *Cruising World's* Best Cruising Multihull award for 1999. Inspired by its success and encouraged by owners seeking yet more luxury, Catana last year introduced the 472—the same award-winning hull, but it's now finished in varnished teak and cherry and filled with what used to be all the extras.

The question, as we stepped aboard *Duchesse*, Catana 472 hull number one, was whether they could deliver the weight of luxury without sacrificing sailing performance.

### Into the Atlantic

We left Newport, Rhode Island, bound for Annapolis, Maryland, on the cusp of an early-season cold front that put 20- to 25-knot winds and 5- to 7-foot seas on our nose. While these conditions shouldn't intimidate a sailboat of *Duchesse's* size—mono or multi—still, the confused angles and cresting seas in the shallow waters off Long Island are no cakewalk. With a reef in her main, the self-tacking jib fully unfurled, and daggerboards half engaged, *Duchesse* made good progress: 8 to 9 knots of boatspeed, 45 degrees off the wind. She pleased us on one other count

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as well: little to no bridgedeck pounding, a boon for any pasagemaker looking to make speed but get occasional shut-eye. The helm, though hard to feel through hydraulic steering, was balanced by the daggerboards and made light work for the autopilot.

Farther south, off New Jersey, the wind came around to our beam and lightened to 10 to 15 knots. With all lines led to the cockpit, we easily furled the Spectra jib and unfurled the Mylar triradial-cut genoa from a separate roller. After we raised the daggerboards (no longer necessary off the wind), *Duchesse* presented less wetted-surface area and continued to make good speed. Despite full loads of water and fuel, we were pleased with the 472's progress under sail and motor. Her folding, three-blade props on twin 50-horse-

power Volvo engines provided 9.5 knots cruising at 2,500 rpm and 10.5 to 11 knots topped out at 3,500 rpm.

Our other concern was rocking-horse mania. Whenever cat designers, or owners, improperly load their boats fore-and-aft instead of amidships, they create an annoying and sometimes dangerous hobbyhorse effect. With *Duchesse's* heavy equipment (her twin diesel engines astern, an 8-kva/220V genset under the cockpit, and a rigid dinghy with steering console and 50-horsepower four-stroke hefted off the transom), we wondered whether we would Howdy Doody our way to Annapolis. But Catana has cleverly placed loads like the two 93-gallon water tanks low and centered in the hulls. Diesel stowage is midship around the pod. By providing watertight crash compart-

ments forward, they essentially prohibit loads in the forward fifth of the boat. *Duchesse's* only excessive load, the rigid dinghy and oversized outboard, did make us ride a bit low in the stern,

much like a Buick overzealously loaded for a family vacation; owners who choose a lighter dinghy package could avoid this problem.

The 472's lowish, 22,000-pound displacement allowed

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The 472's interior is a lightweight composite of cherry veneer over a foam-core sandwich. The berth is square, 6 feet 6 inches per side.

her to respond easily and quickly to the wind. Catana uses light foam-core-sandwich construction throughout its boats; even filled with seawater, each component is designed to float. The 472's carbon-fiber mast and boom reduce weight aloft, as do Kevlar shrouds. Overall, despite the weight of new frills, Catana has once again built another lively and comfortable performer by properly centering the loads and sticking to its design standards (a short bridgedeck and hulls that sit high on the water).

## On Deck

I was impressed by the sweep of the 472's deck. As with the 471, Catana has kept side decks wide and clean with only one hatch forward on each hull. Potential U.S. owners should be forewarned that this cat's 25-foot beam won't squeeze into many marina berths, nor will her 70-foot rig fit under the Intra-coastal Waterway's fixed 65-foot bridges.

The 472's carbon mast is held in place with a ball-and-socket mast step that allows natural twist. All running rigging is led aft to electric winches along the transom or just outboard of the vast cockpit. Lines from the mast travel beneath the bridgedeck in an

enclosed channel and emerge at the transom—which may be tidy or troublesome, depending on whether you ever find yourself below in your dinghy sorting out a snag. The genoa furler is projected forward on a bowsprit, and the self-tacking jib sets from an inner stay.

Dual hydraulic-steering stations with full B&G instrument displays and engine controls are perched aft and outboard on each hull. Catana promotes these steering locations for improved visibility when maneuvering in tight quarters; its reps suggest that open-water steering is usually by autopilot. We liked the vantage but worried that a broken autopilot or big sea would force the helmsman out to an exposed and potentially dangerous location. The steering stations also leave little room to move between cockpit and foredeck; at sea, we found ourselves rolling over the cockpit seats on all fours to go forward safely.

Like past Catanas, the 472 has a double mainsheet system that holds the boom firmly within an infinitely adjustable mainsheet triangle. We like the control of this system, which obviates a boom vang and, since the sheets can be attached to port and star-

board along the boat's full 25-foot beam, prevents accidental jibes.

All hardware is oversized and top grade. The large deck cleats are backed with sturdy steel plates. The hull is Twaron and carbon fiber built to scantlings designed so that the boat can be picked up by a crane attached to the chainplates. Rudder skegs and "MagicLeg" bow levelers (much like the extending pipe levelers on an RV) speak for Catana's intention that this sturdy vessel be beached.

### Step Inside This House

Nautical jargon would normally dictate that the interior of a vessel be called "below," but the spacious interior and bay-window wraparound view in *Duchesse's* saloon had us saying "inside" whenever we stepped from her patio-sized cockpit into her elegant, elliptical saloon. We couldn't get over the impression that we were entering a Carmel beach condo. From the solid cherry, fold-down saloon table and cabinetry to the teak sole, the 472 is warmed by gleaming, varnished wood. Marinized leather upholstery, a suede overhead, and Corian counters add modern chic, al-

though the irony of saving over 1,000 pounds with foam-core furnishings, then installing Corian countertops, wasn't lost on us.

Clean, curving European lines provide a relaxing ambiance one of our crew called "simple elegance." From the king-size master stateroom with wraparound full-length shower massager in the starboard hull to the spacious, L-shaped galley with separate fridge and freezer, the design aspects of stowage, work space, and ventilation were well conceived. We had trouble thinking of any extras when standard equipment on the 472 includes accoutrements like a washer and dryer, a 32-gallon-per-hour watermaker, and a Bose quadraphonic music center.

The 472's electronics are comprehensive. Until you've had considerable time with the manuals, they might even be daunting. The autopilot can be controlled at the steering or nav station; repeaters provide full navigation readouts at all three locations and on a large analog display over the companionway. With the GPS and all other nav stats routed into the nav-station computer's charting system,



A marinized Pentium computer interfaced with Brookes and Gatehouse nav equipment, Furuno radar and GPS, and Mini-M satellite communications is at the center of the 472's nav station.

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there is little to do but watch the boat's icon traverse the screen. All of *Duchesse's* vitals could be read off the computer (networked with the master-stateroom computer) and the attached Furuno 821 radar. Our only worry was how to separate functional readouts, like the GPS, in case of a computer meltdown. Again, time with the manuals would provide insights, such as where the GPS actually lives (we couldn't find it). *Duchesse's* centralized computing was impressive, even if it gave us technophobes forebodings of HAL from *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

The aft engine rooms, with watertight crash bulkheads, are well organized; plumbing and wiring is clearly labeled. Access is astern through the lifelines on the sloping sheer of the hull transoms, so engine checks and repairs might

be tricky at sea, but the engines' locations provide quiet operation, and there's ample room to swing a wrench.

## Open Your Checkbook

Say you've decided on a 47-foot Catana: You'll still want to compare the 471, which continues in production. Although the 472 offers weight-saving carbon-fiber, self-tacking jib and separate genoa on a bowsprit, a sail upgrade, and a solid bimini and a few other niceties on deck, the real differences are inside. Varnished wood, leather, Corian, and electronic extras like the satellite phone, the flat-screen DVD players, the heat-pump climate controller, and the Pentium computers account for much of the nearly 250,000-Euro difference between the 471 and 472. That's a hefty part of the 472's overall 805,000-Euro price. Which is,

you might ask, exactly how many U.S. dollars?

Good question. Although the Euro was meant to go one-on-one with the U.S. dollar, it's fluctuated since its inception. Historical exchange rates have varied by 20 percent, so depending on when you buy and how deftly you dance the foreign-exchange tango, you could realize a significant savings (or loss). For a benchmark, at the U.S. Sailboat Show in Annapolis, Maryland, last fall, the 472 cost \$720,000. *Bon chance, mon ami!*

## Form and Function

As the boat-design adage goes, you can have either a spacious interior with all the fixings and wrap a slow hull around it, or you can have a performance boat and shoe-horn a sparse interior into it. Catamarans provide a partial exception, with the proviso

that even these cavernous boats have a point at which every pound of luxury will eat away at performance. On our test boat, *Duchesse*, despite a few weight compromises and minor design distractions, we found Catana has created another sleek and seaworthy bluewater performer that will thrill owners while delivering high technology and elegance. Aboard a Catana 472, as the computer steers you quickly and comfortably over the ocean, your biggest concern will be whether to relax with a chilled glass of chardonnay beneath the glow of a DVD movie or to unwind beneath the kneading warmth of the full-length shower massager dialed into delirium.

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