

# THE X FACTOR: FAST, FUN CRUISING



Perhaps no category in the 2016 BOTY field was as beguiling as this four-boat class of yachts ranging in size from 45 to 49 feet, and in price from \$525,000 to over a million dollars. Two entries ([HALLBERG-RASSY MKIII](#) and [OYSTER 475](#)) were from long-established builders with deeply

loyal followers. Another ([AZUREE 46](#)) was from a fresh BOTY player entering a highly contemporary yacht. The fourth ([Xc 45](#)) came from a company long revered for its racing boats, now establishing an impressive presence among cruising sailors.

Of this quartet, the [AZUREE](#) was the least expensive, but it also boasts a fine pedigree: Renowned English naval architect Rob Humphreys is the designer, and one of the company's principals was for many years a key mem-

ber of another fine British institution, the Camper & Nicholson's yard. The Azuree is manufactured in Turkey, a nation with a long-standing boatbuilding tradition. "Azuree has made some big investments in CNC machines and are able to do a lot of high-tech production," said Tim Murphy.

"The Azuree 46 is very sleek, with twin rudders and other go-fast features," noted Alvah Simon.

Still, it was a far different boat, from Sweden, that impressed the judges with its notable sailing ability, particularly in light air. "The [HALLBERG-RASSY](#) exhibits a high build quality in many ways," said Murphy. "It employs vinyl-ester resin in the laminate, ensuring true osmosis protection. They're also using Divinycell closed-cell foam in the core, which helps explain how this ample cruising boat did perform so well. They've succeeded in keeping excess weight out of it."

Coincidentally, Rob Humphreys was responsible for a second fine yacht in this category, the [OYSTER 475](#).

"What I've loved about Oysters from the beginning is that they seem to be true seamen's boats," said Simon, seconding that notion on the 475. "Every time I look for a safety feature, there's a padeye here, a jackline there, a handhold where I need one, a little higher lifeline. They have a lot of standard equipment that comes with the boat, which I appreciate."

Yes, the judges felt an affinity for certain features in each boat in this division. But the panel also felt that everything really came together in the nominee from Denmark, which is why they unanimously recognized

the [Xc 45](#) as 2016's **BEST FULL-SIZE CRUISER UNDER 50 FEET**.

"This was interesting because in the past, we thought of X-Yachts as very racing- or performance-oriented," said Murphy. "But the lowercase 'c' refers to cruising and is really meaningful, as they're doing something very different from what they usually do. Their goal was to create a long-range cruising boat, so they built in the volume in the hull for the tankage and storage you need for the long haul. But they've also preserved one of their landmark techniques, which is a steel grid in the heart of the boat with everything like chainplate loads attached to it. So you've got a very strong, stiff boat that also sails well. It's sort of the best of both worlds."

"This one was a surprise to me," noted Sherman.

"At least in my experience with X-Yachts, this is their first serious attempt at creating a nice, dedicated cruising boat," he said. "And I think they did a great job with it."



The category for cruising boats ranging in size from 45 to 49 feet boasted a quartet of strong contenders, The Oyster 475 (bottom left) and the Azuree 46 (below) are both from the board of Rob Humphreys. The Hallberg-Rassy MK III (bottom right) performed admirably in light air. But when the votes were tallied, the class winner was the sweet-sailing Xc 45 (above).

