



A FOREIGN LEGION

A powerful yacht built to exacting standards, the Passport 545 was our judging team's unanimous choice as the top overall boat for 2016.

In a contest where the eclectic new-boat fleet was dominated by vessels crafted on distant shores, and imports reigned victorious in all seven categories, it was perhaps fitting that the overall winner of the 2016 Boat of the Year competition traveled the farthest to earn the top prize. Made in China yet built to sail all oceans, the worthy champion is the Passport 545.
Story by Herb McCormick, Photos by Billy Black

Every year, it seems, *Cruising World's* annual Boat of the Year contest develops its own unique personality, and for the 2016 competition, the trend continued with a distinct accent all its own. Call it what you will — a mariner's melting pot, the United Nations of new yachts — but the fleet of nominees that gathered last October at the U.S. Sailboat Show in Annapolis, Maryland, had a decidedly international flavor. Actually, it was much more than that, as no fewer than 19 of the 20 BOTY entrants were

fashioned in faraway lands. So we'll begin with a shout-out to the Floridians from Marlow-Hunter, who arrived on Chesapeake Bay with a truly nifty 31-footer. Without the Stars and Stripes fluttering off the transom of their innovative cruiser, Uncle Sam would have been left out of the competition entirely.

Part of it, surely, was timing. Hinckley Yachts debuted its new Bill Tripp-designed Bermuda 50 last summer — the company's first new sailing model in many years — but last-min-

ute scheduling issues prevented the boat from participating in BOTY. And several other American builders have major projects in the works in various stages of completion, including Island Packet's eagerly awaited 520 and a new 42-footer from Catalina, among others. If you're in the market for a new model with a "Made in the U.S.A."

THIS YEAR'S GROUP OF NOMINEES WAS COMPRISED OF BOATS BUILT IN 10 DIFFERENT NATIONS.

stamp, there are choices looming on the horizon.

However, the BOTY finalists for model year 2016 were nothing less than a foreign legion, with a fleet represented by boats built in 10 different countries: China, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Turkey, South Africa, Sweden and the United Kingdom. On multiple levels, it was an unprecedented showing.

As always, our independent panel of judges (see "2016 BOTY Judging Team," p. 56) reviewed the boats in two stages over a 10-day period, conducting both dockside inspections and sea trials. Over the next 14 pages, we'll detail their findings; announce the winners of their respective classes; and present detailed specs, performance figures and contact information for the entire BOTY field. It proved to be a fascinating competition. Read on to discover why.



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