

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Designed to be as sleek and fast as a monohull motor yacht, Aquila's new flagship 70 also offers the enormous living areas of a large powercat, while luxurious, semi-custom interiors and advanced technologies further open the doors to a new level of clientele.

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Following feedback from clients, Aquila designed its new flagship powercat to have a similar profile and performance to motor yachts

When charged with creating the Aquila 70, J&J Design was faced with an unusual challenge: design a new 70ft powercat that looked fresh, unlike anything on the water. It had to lose the usual boxy look of most big cats and instead have a sleek, contemporary profile that would match the yacht's top speed of 27 knots.

The Slovenian firm, which has created new designs for more than 50 builders around the world, also had to make sure the new boat had a luxurious interior and smartly designed exterior.

J&J has been designing for Aquila since the latter was founded in 2012, with the brand's other models including the 32, 36, 44 and the new 54, which was unveiled in February along with the 70. But the flagship had to be a special design, aimed at a much more exclusive client.

"The aesthetics and handling had to be the main drivers of this boat," says Lex Raas, President of Aquila and co-founder of the brand with Bill McGill and Sino Eagle's Frank Xiong.

"But we also needed to focus on a yacht-quality finish. At this upper end, you're talking semi-custom rather than production, so you need to give the clients quality and choices."

Owners do have the option of customising the 70, including choosing interior amenities and number of staterooms. Other choices include at least two completely different layouts for the main-deck interior, the galley up, down or both, and an open or enclosed flybridge.

MONOHULL PERFORMANCE

Aquila has strong competitors in the 65-75ft power cat segment including Sunreef, Lagoon and Fountaine Pajot, but Raas was really aiming at motor yacht builders like Azimut, Sunseeker and Princess.

"A lot of these powercats may only do 15 knots and have boxy shapes," he says. "We surveyed the owners of those yachts and they told us that's what they don't like about big cats. We understood we needed performance and looks. They have to have a reason to change."

In profile, the 70 could almost be mistaken for a monohull, with the sleek shape, trendy window patterns and sharp forefoot. "Everyone is blown away by the lines," Raas says.

With the twin 1000hp Volvo D13 inboards, the boat not only has a stated top speed of 27 knots but also proved it on a recent test off Clearwater, home to the MarineMax headquarters in Florida.

On our short run into the Gulf of Mexico, which involved running a gauntlet of crab traps, the boat handled well, hitting 27.4 knots without hesitation. The friendly cruise is 21-22 knots at 2,000 rpm. Running a cat feels different than a monohull, especially when it comes to sharp course corrections, but the Aquila felt solid in the minor chop.

It's clear that much thought went into the exterior design, from the wide passages along the main deck to the bow, to the centreline steps from the bow to the Portuguese bridge and up into the flybridge itself.

Aquila made sure the 70 can be navigated from multiple positions, so



The aft platforms (above) provide a beautiful setting by the water's edge; the large foredeck (below) can be accessed from the side decks or the flybridge, and offers two sofas and large sunbathing areas



The central aft platform (left) carries and deploys a 13ft Aquila tender; the flybridge (right) has an enclosed lounge and an aft deck with outdoor galley





Natuzzi furniture and Gaggenau kitchenware feature in the main-deck interior, which has a lounge and dining table on port side, and a bar and large galley to starboard

besides the full helm in the flybridge, there are wing stations with joystick controls on both sides of the Portuguese bridge as well as in the saloon.

The enclosed section of the flybridge, with three comfy Stidd helm seats, offers excellent visibility of the water, and there's a lounge and dining table behind. The open aft section is also partially protected by the hardtop and has a Kenyon grill, Isotherm fridge and stainless sink, so is ideal for cooking and drinks before or after meals, with plenty of space for loose furniture.

Aquila has even created its own tenders for the 70 as well as the 54. On the 70, the 14ft multihull tender fits in a special lifting platform at the stern, so it sits flush with the boat and above the tunnel, rather than hanging off the back on davits, like many tenders. This way, it's more secure and won't impact the performance.

Multihull specialists Morelli & Melvin, known for America's Cup designs, created the tender, with greater buoyancy and carrying capacity than a same-sized monohull. When the tender's out, the transom works as an outstanding multi-level beach club, with enormous areas for lounge chairs and sunbathing right by the water.

REFINED INTERIOR

Of course, any cat's secret weapon against a monohull is interior volume. In the case of the Aquila 70, its nearly 27ft beam gave the designers 300sqft for the main saloon.

The luxurious interior is the yacht's highlight, with the open saloon being the primary focus. The 9ft headroom and wide beam deliver a sense of openness, but Aquila did a fine job creating a spacious chef's galley to starboard, then populating the saloon with a lounge, entertainment centre and eight-person dining table forward.

Combining top brands, such as a Gaggenau cooktop, oven, microwave, espresso machine and wine chiller, with details like a touchless faucet and leather-wrapped stainless handles, gives a sense of refinement.

The Natuzzi décor comes from the Italian designer's Herman collection and includes the lounge seating, coffee table, bar chairs, dining table and chairs. Electric blinds, Denon HEOS surround-sound system and controllable LED lighting also add to the high-end sensibility.

Forward is another showpiece room – the full-beam master suite. The large windows and king-sized bed, along with a lounge, are the first signs



Storage on the starboard side of the full-beam master suite

that this is a special, private space. It just feels big, with two adjoining areas down steps either side taking advantage of the cat's width.

On the port side is the ensuite bathroom, with two sinks, glass-enclosed shower and private head, while to starboard is a dedicated storage area with six pull-out drawers, cabinets and walk-in closet. The room's overall storage area is equivalent to three walk-in closets, a big draw for owners who live or spend significant time on their yachts.

The four-stateroom design includes a VIP suite on either side, each offering a spacious, light-filled cabin and an ensuite bathroom, while there's a surprisingly large rear crew cabin.

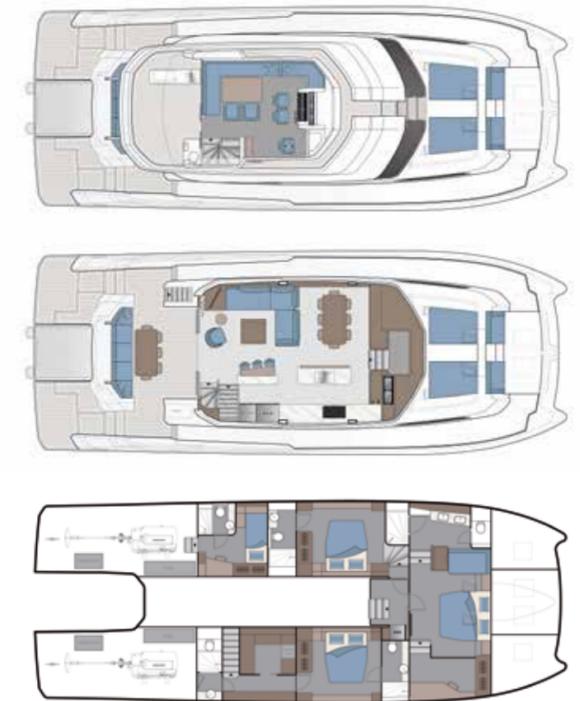
Another big draw is the engine room. Aquila made it large and functional, with stand-up headroom and good working space around the Volvos, with equipment like Kohler generators, Marine Exhaust Systems underwater exhausts and Webasto Blue Cool V77 air-conditioning. These are part of a longer list of name-brand equipment chosen because of their worldwide service networks.

Insulated to limit noise and vibration, the engine room is accessed via a watertight door to the crew cabin and day head. A C-Zone Digital switching system sits in an adjoining room, next to monitors for engine functions and navigation. In short, it's a serious, yacht-like setup.

In the end, the Aquila 70 is a winner for Aquila and J&J Design, with the luxurious interior of a yacht, but also filled with thoughtful, useful details for real-world boating. ☺

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DECKS & SPECS



Length overall 21.26m (69ft 9in)	Fuel 5,480 litres (1,447 US gallons)
Waterline length 20.55m (67ft 5in)	Fresh water 1,560 litres (412 US gallons)
Beam 8.20m (26ft 11in)	Black water 740 litres (196 US gallons)
Draft 1.45m (4ft 9in)	Engines 2 x D13 1,000hp Volvo Penta diesel
Light displacement 50 tonnes (50,000kg)	Top speed 27 knots
Loaded displacement 60 tonnes (60,000kg)	

One of the Aquila 70's signature offerings, the full-beam master suite is just a few steps down and forward of the saloon



The cockpit (left) offers a covered outdoor area for al fresco dining; the indoor dining table (right) is opposite the galley, which can be visually separated by a raised panel

