



Lady *Platine*

French builder Jeanneau has revitalised its brand with a range of all-new Sun Odyssey performance cruisers. The 439 – the only one in New Zealand so far – is a hot looker and brimming with innovative design. She's also very, very fast.

Words **Lawrence Schäffler** Photos **Will Calver**

At a glance ▶ loa 13.34m beam 4.24m ▶ draft 2.20m ▶ displacement 9640kg ▶ test engine 54hp Yanmar ▶ cabins three ▶ price \$390,000 till Dec 31



Test conditions ▶ 10-15 knots with a gentle swell



CLOCKWISE from top: Even with her modest sail plan, *Platine* eased upwind at nearly eight knots. Twin helms make it easy to monitor the tell-tales. The plumb bow looks great but retrieving the anchor requires caution; Trimming the sheets is a push-button affair; The integrated boarding platform's a classy piece of engineering; OPPOSITE: Easy access from the water flows through the transom into an expansive cockpit; Happiness is...

"This is a happy, balanced equation offering long periods of hands-free sailing."



Jeanneau yachts are often described, perhaps unfairly, as being the bland cousins of the other, more glamorous European marques: solid and reliable, but nothing that would stress your pacemaker.

Well, that's about to change. The new 439 is a radical advance on bland. She's the bigger sister of the new Sun Odyssey 409 (the first model in the revamped range) which was voted the 2010 European Yacht of the Year, and it's not difficult to see the 439 making a similar trip to the podium.

Both are from the pen of speed wizard Phillipe Briand, and the 439 is a particularly magical brew. It's hard to single out her best feature, but sharp performance, ease of sailing, glorious lines and overall aesthetics are all contenders. This is one classy vessel.

Platine belongs to Auckland's Peter Lavelle, a sailor with decades of racing and cruising experience who says she marks his "return to sanity". His previous vessel was a large launch, but noise, smell and vibration proved too much for his sensibilities. He began surfing the net in search of a new yacht, chanced upon the





439, and fell in love.

She's only been in the country two months (her graphics were added minutes before our test sail) so Peter is still getting acquainted with *Platine*, but his impressions so far can be gauged by the width of his smile.

Easy sailing

Options abound for 439 buyers, and given his typical cruising arrangement (himself and his partner), Peter ticked all the easy-handling features. My favourites among them are the self-tacking jib and the electric winches (and more specifically, their location).

The standard foresail is a 140-percent roller-furling genoa. Selecting the self-tacking option adds a 106-percent working jib to the wardrobe, with an athwartships track mounted just forward of the mast.

Platine points particularly well (30°) with that little jib and fully-battened main, and flicking from tack to tack with zero fuss is immensely satisfying. Her twin helms mean it's easy to monitor the tell-tales but it's hardly necessary. This is a happy, balanced equation offering long periods of hands-free sailing.



Her primaries are Harken 46 electric rewind winches. They're mounted at each helm and cater to a continuous main sheet (and the genoa sheets).

Main sheets are typically controlled from a single coachroof winch and as a result many helmsmen are like flies, constantly interrupting conversation with orders for adjustments. When ignored, they scramble forward to do it themselves. On the 439 civility rules: you sheet in or out at the press of a button.

A pair of Harken 40s on the coach roof

(one electric, one manual) takes care of the self-tacker's jib sheet, halyards, boom vang and reefing lines.

Performance

Platine is super-responsive and a joy to helm. The wind gods delivered perfect conditions for our test sail, and with the conservative sail plan she slipped downwind at 9.4 knots. Peter has a gennaker (still unblooded) and its impact on a broad reach would be interesting. Next time...

When upwind, with around 18-22 knots apparent, the speedo hovered close to eight knots and climbed well over that in the gusts. In 'race mode' with the dodger and bimini removed, she'd be a serious competitor.

Part of her speed can be attributed to the reduced wind resistance on deck. Flush-mounted hatches, sheets and tracks that run in recessed channels, and grab rails moulded into the cabin top all add up to a low-drag profile, and also keep the running rigging super-tidy.

Unravelling Jeanneau's explanation of the hydrodynamic tricks Briand has employed requires an unhealthy intimacy

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"...the stand out feature is the saloon table, an engineering masterpiece."



Folding acrylic doors divide the shower and toilet



Platine's powered by a 54hp Yanmar



Double berth and ensuite for the master cabin



Nav station offers modest but adequate working space

with calculus so you'll have to settle for my simplified version.

Discerning viewers of the accompanying images may notice the hull's hard chine aft. Its purpose is two-fold: it lengthens the waterline when the boat is heeled (length equals speed) and creates extra buoyancy and stiffness. An added bonus is more room inside.

Briand shifted the bulb keel (Peter opted for the deep-draught, 2.2m performance version) forward to optimise its relationship with the high-aspect rig (better centre of effort), and a deep spade rudder keeps

things pointed in the right direction.

A nicely-muted 54hp Yanmar drives her to eight knots at 2400rpm (in flat water) and at full throttle she can be coaxed to nine knots. It's mated to a sail-drive with a folding three-blade prop. She manoeuvres with easy agility and is beautifully predictable reversing through marinas into a tight berth.

Cruising

'Performance cruiser' is a somewhat hackneyed but entirely appropriate phrase for this vessel. Despite the speed-oriented

design, she carries plenty of features tailored for stylish but easy living. The transom's fold-out boarding platform is a classic example of her attractive yet supremely practical features, a true form-and-function piece of engineering.

But it's below decks that the 439's refined living is really appreciated. It's a large-volume interior, and the layout and contemporary decór continue the crisp, clutter-free theme from the topsides. Sunlight streams through well-positioned hatches giving a heady sense of airiness and space.

She's available with three or four cabins. Peter has opted for a master cabin in the forepeak with island bed, writing desk(!) and ensuite, and two identical quarter berths aft (double beds) sharing a second bathroom on the port side.

But the standout feature is the saloon table, an engineering masterpiece. In sailing mode it's a compact but sturdy brace to aid your passage across the saloon. For dinner it unfolds into a generous surface that will seat eight guests in comfort.

But when Bill the Boozer disgraces



himself and can't get up the companionway, let alone find the way back to his boat, the table folds up then lowers to form a large double bed. Use the spare cushions to mute his snoring.

I like the strip-lighting along the saloon floor, a pragmatic solution for anyone making bleary-eyed watch changes in the dark. Particularly stylish are the grabrails recessed into the ceilings, which are unobtrusive, yet their moulded profile offers a perfect handhold.

The Lewmar deck hatches are also slick pieces of design. Each carries built-in concertina shades (and insect barriers) for creating the perfect ambience. The main hatch above the saloon is also particularly clever, dividing into two separate openings (fore and aft) for optimal ventilation.

Any chef would relish the well-appointed galley. Fastidious sailors will welcome the folding acrylic doors in the aft bathroom that separate the shower from the electric toilet – no more soggy loo paper. A diesel heater extends the cruising season.

Working room at the nav station (port side saloon) is modest but perfectly adequate. Most of the navigation duties fall to the multi-function Raymarine EgoW unit between the helm stations. The repeater at the nav station displays wind speed, wind direction and depth.

Peter opted for electric winches so chose to beef up the battery department (440 amp-hours, with a separate start unit). LED lights throughout the boat trim the load, but two 45-watt solar panels mounted just forward of the dodger help to keep the batteries satiated. They're low-profile models, so drag is negligible.

There's also an 1800W Xantrex inverter to drive the toaster, satellite dish and his partner's hairdryer. A glamorous boat needs a glamorous woman!

And her name? Thought you'd never ask. *Platine* is French for platinum and follows a naming tradition Peter established with his previous boats (*Pure Platinum* and *Platinum Plus*). *Platine, mon cherie*, is a rare, noble metal, given to things of fine beauty and grace. ■



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Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 439

technical



BOATING'S VERDICT

A lot of boat for your money. Briand's design flair and experience have delivered a beautiful, clever, efficient vessel. It's perfect for extended cruising in style and comfort, and easily up to the task when the speed demons start hammering in your chest. I loved it. The Sun Odyssey 439 has a base price of \$404,000, but the agent, Auckland's Orakei Yacht Sales, is offering a discounted price of \$390,000 until the end of 2011. Ask to see the table!

PROS

■ Saloon table (the designer deserves an award), electric winches at helm station (smart thinking), self-tacking jib (perfect tacks, every time)

CONS

■ Love the plumb bow, but retrieving the hook in a lumpy anchorage could be awkward. Extended bow roller?

Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 439

> loa 13.34m (43'9") > lwl 12.00m (39'4") > beam 4.24m (13'10") > standard draft 2.20m (7'2") > shoal draft 1.60m (5'2") > max displacement dwt 9640kg
> engine 54hp Yanmar > fuel 200 litres > water 530 litres > cabins three > berths six > sail area 104.2m² > CE Category A10/B11/C12
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