



Killer cool

Combine Humphreys Yacht Design for outstanding sailing performance and Studio F A Porsche for some quite outrageous good looks and the result... let's just say it all works rather well

We've seen before what happens when mainstream design and automotive styling find their way into production yachts, from Bertone to BMW via Philippe Starck – let's be honest, the results have been mixed. When Elan announced a partnership with Studio F.A. Porsche for its new GT6 many were excited by the prospect, but some had their reservations. That said, it's got a Humphreys hull and sailplan, which is always good.

Seeing the GT6 in the flesh, she looks very good indeed. The chines in the hull's aft quarters are cleverly disguised in a stretched trapezium-shaped groove that contains the tinted hull windows. The foredeck is clear and flush. Aft of the mast the low coachroof rises with black windows and a narrow line of white GRP underneath to lighten them visually. The coachroof sweeps past the companionway with high cockpit coamings to protect and shelter the cockpit. The contrast between the white hull and black bowsprit, mast and windows boosts her rather assertive marina presence.

The design is excellent. The visible control lines that create visual clutter – like adding a roof rack to a car – are gone. The lines from the mast are all led under the deck, not the coachroof, to emerge just forward of each helm station. There are small panels to access the fairleads beneath the deck. The only visible

lines are the main and jib sheets and a handful of vertical lines at the base of the mast. It's an achievement in design and practicality.

Does her performance live up to her styling? In a word, yes. In conditions where most cruisers would be itching for the engine controls and racers would be stepping lightly across the deck, the GT6 was not only able to sail but enjoyable too. The test boat was fitted with a Onesail IFS (Integrated Furling Structure) A-sail. Stored in the forward sail locker abaft the anchor locker, it's an easy and quick job to attach it to the carbon bowsprit and get it hoisted and drawing. With around eight knots of true wind speed (TWS) we were getting an apparent wind speed (AWS) of 6.3 - 6.5kts at an apparent wind angle (AWA) of 100-110° and boatspeed of just over four knots. Hardening up, we carried the asymmetric sail to 65° AWA getting boatspeed of five knots in eight knots apparent – more than you'd expect in a comfortable cruising yacht.

The stylish wheel pedestals rise out of the cockpit sides with ample space on top for instruments. Forward of each wheel there are two winches: a Harken 50ST (electric on the port-hand side) close to hand for the German mainsheet system, and a 60ST for the jib further forward. These make light work of taming the sails. There is no mainsheet traveller,

Above: with a flush foredeck and unusually sharp styling, Elan's new flagship GT6 is likely to turn heads in almost any marina. But underneath the elegant skin, it's a Humphreys design that performs just as well under sail as you might expect with twin rudders delivering ample grip at any angle of heel

so twist is controlled via the vang and backstay. The clutches for the ducted deck lines are within reach of the helm but can also be easily operated by the crew. There are rope bins to manage stray lines. Forward in the cockpit, there's a table on each side and the high coachroof is a good windbreak. The outboard leaf of each table can be raised horizontally, then slid down to make two large sunpads. Between the two tables is a locker deep enough for a liferaft. Under the aft helm seat to port is a bbq, while to starboard is a fridge.

Coming onto the wind, the boom is safe and high over the cockpit. Standing on the seats, you'd have to be over 1.8m (6ft) and jump at the wrong time to hit your head. When the apparent wind reached over nine knots (eight knots TWS) she came alive, began to heel and her speed picked up. At 40° AWA in 5.3kts TWS she was making 4.7kts. When the TWS increased to 6.3kts she accelerated to 5.4kts. We managed to squeeze her up to 30 degrees AWA and she made 4.7 knots in 5.6kts TWS. Given a bit more breeze, say 12-15kts TWS, her performance would shine.

Twin rudders and Jefa steering keep the helm light and she was responsive to small adjustments on the wheel. With her sporty looks and good light wind performance, it's easy to forget the comfortable interior she carries with her.



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Down the companionway, she shares some good features with the GT5: light golden oak interior with more solid wood that her price tag reflects, long saloon seating and sturdy saloon table to port, seating with a concealed chart table to starboard. Forward, the galley is low down and amidships for the least motion at sea. Studio F.A. Porsche has brought an extra dimension of finesse to this boat: large saloon windows allow the light to flood in and the polished headlining curves and flows organically – it's smooth, untextured and clean. The trapezium-shaped hull windows that run the length of the seating on each side are recessed into the thick white hull sides. It's a neat concept, light entering from any angle is bounced and intensified.

To port, the three-seat sofa hides Elan's innovative up-and-over chart table. Grab the seat back and lift, the seatback raises and rolls 90° inboard to form the top of the chart table, which can be used facing forward or aft, with chart stowage down the outboard side (formerly the seat base). Outboard of the chart table is a beautiful anodised aluminium SImarine switch panel and battery monitor. The matching SImarine light switches have a blue illuminated ring around the button to help you find them at night.

The galley, down a step, runs across the full beam of the boat. The forward worksurface is 1.76m (5ft 6in) wide. The deck level lockers (all with gas struts) from the saloon continue uninterrupted around the galley, only the entrance into the forward cabin breaks their path. The forward saloon seatbacks create the divide to the galley, on the port side there's a glasses locker and a drawer fridge/freezer, while on the starboard side a rise-up television can be fitted. On the starboard side of the galley there are twin sinks while to port is a two-burner stove. Forward of this is a pantry locker or a rise-up microwave. Stowage is good.

Forward is a bright owner's cabin with the same deep (18cm/7in) recessed trapezium-shaped hull windows that are so effective in the

Right: the GT6 carries its maximum beam all the way aft, helping to create this exceptionally spacious cockpit. The deck plan looks clean with control lines ducted beneath the sidedecks and through the coamings. Above: the interior is a successful blend of ergonomic styling and seagoing know-how. Right: design motifs in the large cockpit include gull wing-style steering pedestals and there's also a handy garage for an inflatable tender



saloon. The more you look around the cabin, the more attractive detailing you see. The grain pattern matches from locker to locker at deck level – both sides meeting at a trapezium-shaped enclosed shelf on the forward bulkhead. The headboard, forward, mimics the aperture shape of the enclosed shelf above it. The berth sits on an aft-slanted base; the lower edge is further forward. It's unusual to see, as it costs more to produce, but the result is a wonderful impression of space. The quality stands out too. The solid oak surround of the berth and outboard shelves creates a fiddle above and a shadow line below. There is an en suite heads with outboard facing toilet and separate shower compartment.

The main heads compartment is to starboard at the companionway, it has a separate shower with a glass partition, rather than the easily scratched plastic favoured by cheaper brands of yacht.

This boat had the twin aft cabins option. The port aft cabin is standard, its berth is 2.0m (6ft 7in) long and 1.5m (4ft 11in) wide. The berth of the starboard cabin is slightly narrower, but still a good size at 1.3m (4ft 3in) wide. Both cabins share nuances in styling with the rest of the yacht: the flowing GRP moulded headlining, trapezium styling cues (in the windows, their surrounds and the cave lockers), bright and deeply recessed windows and a good standard of finish – better than one

would expect at this price point. Lying on the berth, you can see out of the windows – something that many manufacturers fail to grasp.

Conclusion

Much has been made about the connection between the GT6 and Studio F.A. Porsche. While that partnership has resulted in an innovative and modern design, it would be easy to forget that she is above all an Elan and remains true to the brand's values: easy and rewarding to sail at a very competitive price, especially given the standard of finish. Getting a world-renowned name involved makes a good boat even better.

This is perhaps where the GT6 is most notable. It's not because of the styling, it's that the styling has worked so well. It hasn't lost touch with what the cruising sailor wants or the ethos of Elan. The cockpit layout, the saloon and galley arrangement, the layout of the cabins and the smooth untextured headlining all work very well. The fact it can look clean, stylish and modern yet still be practical is where the GT6 succeeds. This was reflected in her nomination for European Yacht of The Year. Without the Studio F.A. Porsche styling, the GT6 would be a good yacht. With it, let's just say we're glad we're not her competition.

At the time of writing sail trials are available in the UK, Florida, Turkey and Portorož, Slovenia. www.elan-yachts.com