Launching the X4 and X6 simultaneously was a bold decision. Toby Hodges tests X-Yachts’ new double act.

Yachts builds dependable cruisers—right? Reliably built performance yachts that get regatta results—not gilty trendsetters? Well, with its dual launch heralding an all-new line this autumn, there appears to be change afoot.

The Danish brand certainly likes to keep its Southampton-based design team busy. It designs everything in house and, in the last eight years alone, has brought out new ranges of both Xc cruising yachts and Xp performance yachts.

It therefore made for unexpected and exciting news when X-Yachts announced the X6 in 2014, revealing a powerful new raised saloon cruising yacht with aggressive lines, wraparound coachroof windows and a mainsheet arch. It seemed a radical move for this level-headed brand, but it wasn’t a one-off. X-Yachts has now created a whole new ‘X’ line by launching the X4 simultaneously this summer.

However, I couldn’t help but wonder whether there is room for a third model run.

“Many clients feel that the Xp models are too race-oriented while the Xc boats are too heavy and classic-looking,” X-Yachts’ founder Niels Jeppesen explains. “So we went back to X-Yachts’ roots to design a very good, fast cruising yacht.”

The new ‘X’ line has similar modern lines to the Xp performance models, but with more volume and increased payload capacity. It is slightly heavier than the Xp but with the same T-shaped keel, rudder and ballast. ‘X’ models have vacuum-infused epoxy hulls, as per the Xp, but include X-Yachts’ renowned steel grid for stiffness.

“The X range is for those who want a sexy, modern-looking boat, but whose priority is cruising,” says Jeppesen. With 14 of the X4s selling immediately, this range has had a flying start. So I went to Haderslev to test them both.
The rod rigging meets stainless steel chainplates that are covered to maintain a clean toerail line. The mirrored windows on the first boat have been changed for tinted versions. Cockpit shelter can be enhanced by an optional sprayhood and fixed windscreen. Most of the control lines are smartly concealed under the deck and led aft to clutches on the coachroof.

The X4 that we sailed is yet another open-transom design with only two aft guardrail wires. In response, X-Yachts has now improved the aft pushpit design to include a third lifeline. An optional swim platform is lowered and raised using a simple rope purchase.

Conditions off the Baltic coast of Denmark were ideal, with 18–25 knots of gusty wind in cloudy conditions that partly obscured the sun. This first brand new X4 was decidedly quick to charm as we headed off on a long upwind leg on starboard. I quickly realised the X4 has a definite and rewarding sweet spot. Put the bow down a little, feel her heel and accelerate, then edge back up so she flattens off slightly onto her soft chine. The leg should then quickly pass by a third of a knot as she settles into a groove. Over-point and she’ll drop back down to 7 knots; get it right and she’ll point high and maintain admirable grip on the rudder. As in the upwind mode, there was an ideal amount of feedback with a touch of weather helm if and when pressed. It was really impressive stuff for a freshly launched model – but I guess that’s what you come to expect from a pedigree yard used to building performance boats. The X4 may be slightly fuller in her hull sections than this builder’s past cruiser-racers but she retains that addictive agility. The excellent control line set up including traveller, jib tracks, vang and cunningham encourages regular sail-shape tweaks to help get the best out of her. The leads are particularly neat, with jib sheets led under the deck, and mainsheet led through the aft coaming down to the traveler. Mainsheet winches are buried neatly into the coamings, with primaries mounted on top – all Harken Performas. The deck is also kept very clean, with flush, frameless hatches.

The test boat’s sails and deck gear were ideally set up for maximum performance. We carried full sail throughout the test with cunningham and, later, backstay cranked on. The black Kevlar/Spectra sails proved stiff enough to handle the bullets of wind that brought 30 knots over the deck without needing to resort to a reef. Admittedly, North Sails’ Peter Westfal was doing a fine job trimming the main. The excellent control line set up including the mainsheet winches nestle in the coamings. Headsail sheets emerge from beneath the coachroof.
ON TEST: X4 & X6

Above: The optional oak Alpi decor. “We are being asked more and more for light wood finishes,” says X-Yachts’s founder Hans Jeppesen.

Far right: Aft cabin double berth.
Right: The three-cabin version includes an extra chart table.
Below: The master cabin bed has plenty of stowage beneath.

Interior
Heading below, my first impressions were a little anticlimactic following such an enjoyable sail. It just seemed a last place I have seen the ‘oak Alpi’ look used a lot across production yachts recently and it seemed out of place for a pedigree Scandinavian yard like X-Yachts (although the standard finish is still teak).

This is a sore point for this builder, as in the past, X-Yachts has been criticised for being too conservative with its traditional teak interiors. However, my reservations are about more than simply the choice of veneer. The interior of the X4 – the quality of the finish – didn’t come across as a cut above the mass production yards. In essence, it lacked that feeling of luxury.

Some of this can be put down to her size – at 43ft there is only so much you can do with the space – but the doorways, for example, stilts fall unecessary narrow (although X-Yachts have now improved the frame detailing to make them wider) and offered just 5ft 7in headroom. In comparison, the interior of the X6 (overleaf) has more ‘wow factor’ than any other production yacht I’ve seen recently.

The X4 has a conventional three-cabin two heads layout. A two-cabin layout will be available in 2017, which I think would work better for this size and target market. The Ossianar blinds, optional indirect floor lights, and illuminated LED light switches are smart design touches and there is good all-round access to the engine space.

Saloon
The test boat lacks a dedicated navstation hence the saloon feels extra roomy. In this three-cabin format, there is only the option to build in a minimum-size chart table adjoining the aft part of the starboard sofa. The two-cabin option will have a dedicated forward-facing navstation.

It’s a smart area with plenty of natural light. The flip-top table with integrated wine-bottle storage is large enough for six. There are four raised lockers each side of the saloon, but with tanks located beneath the berths for optimum weight placement, storage space is a little limited in the saloon.

Galley
The galley is smart and functional. It has a light, practical layout with adequate storage, a Corian-fitted worktop, double sink and top-opening 90lt fridge. A front-opening second fridge is optional, as are accessories like a Nespresso machine and microwave. A double bin slides out from below the sink.

Forward cabin
Dock through the doorway and you’ll find a light and inviting cabin. The optional en-suite in place of an extra wardrobe seems to make the best use of the layout. The forward-looking coachroof window is a stylish touch to go with the hull portlights and the large deck hatch. Headroom of 6ft 4in is carried up to the island berth, which is somewhat elevated with generous stowage beneath. The berth lifts on gas struts for easy access.

Aft cabins and heads
The aft cabins have a conventional layout with a long double berth, small wardrobe, long double shelf and a hull window. In the heads, a swing door divides the wash area and heads itself, but also reveals the main entrance to the aft cabin. The heads converts into a wet-room and there is a shower on a stand with a mixer tap.

Above: Raw contemporary appeal sets the X6 apart and moves X-Yachts into new and exciting territory.

Build
X-Yachts has a facility in north Poland with 110 workers where the initial hull and deck lay-up for both the X4 and the X6 is done. The rest of the assembly, including quality control, takes place in Haderslev, Denmark.
Stowage – there is room to store a RIB facing forward on a roller-launching system that hinges down, as the aft deck lifts up – help identify her as very much a scaled-down superyacht.

Twin rudders are unusual for X-Yachts. The X73 in 2001 was the first model to have been rudders – making room for the tender garage. “We don’t do it on smaller models because of prop walk,” Jeppesen explained. “But at this size you have a stern thruster.”

The X6 has very similar hull lines to the X65 I tested in 2009, seven of which were produced. She has a similar price and specification but her interior design is a quantum leap ahead.

Interior panache

To descend the bare teak steps of the shallow companionway is to witness a new dawn for X-Yachts. Yes we’ve seen a lot of raised saloon models before, but this has lashings of added panache. Stand in the saloon and you are at the perfect height for near-panoramic views, including that most prized angle looking forward over the flush foredeck. The amount of natural light in the saloon and galley is phenomenal.

Lift up the floorboards in the saloon and you’ll find high-calibre engineering: X-Yachts’s galvanised steel grid immediately imparts peace of mind; the tanks and batteries are all centrally positioned for optimum weight management and the hoses and wires booms are housed in metal cradles to keep them neatly together and out of the bilges. The plywood soles are thicker than those used in my house. I’m told that matching the walnut veneer in those lengths was somewhat tricky. The predominant trim is light oak Aipi again, but this has been brushed when bare for a more tactile finish.

By providing a modular layout to the three-part accommodation plan, X-Yachts can offer a variety of options. The test boat had a four-cabin format (two Pullmans and two double cabins). The choice of an extra Pullman forward reduces the size of the sail locker and removes the space for a forepeak crew cabin. The aft Pullman is ideally placed for a professional crew next to the walk-in engine room and galley, although the addition of an en-suite here would make it more practical for crew use.

The telescopic coffee table in the saloon is an odd, over-complicated device with four diagonal folding leaf sections to seat a maximum of seven. Combined with a small cockpit table, this restricts the options for hosting any kind of slap-up meal from the wonderfully light and large galley, the size and quality of which is a real selling point of the boat. It has a phenomenal amount of locker space and cold storage, plus space for extras like a trash compactor, coffee machine, dishwasher, and microwave.

The owner’s cabin forward, with over 7ft of headroom, is again well lit and

Above: The option of a Pullman cabin aft makes for a practical sea berth, or, situated next to the engine room and galley, it is ideal for professional crew

Above: The owner’s cabin forward has 7ft headroom and plenty of natural light through the hatch and the portlights

Above: The smart bookshelves on the forward bulkhead have indirect lighting

Above: The interior of the X6 sparkles with natural light, her design and layout outshining all other recent production yachts

Above: More design features: stylish porthole-style barometer and temperature display

Above: A nice mix of contemporary design and semi-custom finishing
inviting with a distinct impression of luxury. The double aft has a corridor-style entrance adjoining heads.

Twin rudder power

Anyone familiar with X-Yachts will not be surprised to read that this is a slippery, powerful beast. In just 5–7 knots of breeze, there is no doubt that the X6 will make a formidable passage-maker. And if the wind does dip below 5 knots, the standard Yanmar 160hp engine with three-blade Flexifold propellers her at 7.4 knots at 1,700rpm, consuming just 5.6lt of diesel per hour. It was a potent and commanding performance. The inhaulers make a notable difference, adding five degrees to her pointing. An X-Yacht is consistently a delight to sail upright, but the twin rudder grip offered on the X6 encourages you to push a little offwind. In 10–15 knots and with the Code 0 deployed, we maintained a steady 9.5 knots at 55–80º (apparent). This felt to me more steadily than exhilarating and I noted excessive drag off the keel rudder and wash off the windward rudder in this mode. Jeppesen said they had been taming the rudder angles to get the best orientation. The loaded helm when reaching was little offwind. In 10–15 knots and with the twin rudder grip, the active helmsman, without needing multiple trim it and tune it properly: it’s a yacht to delight you, it’s a look reminiscent of the showpiece designs have to stand out. The modern styling of the X4 is certainly backed up with the performance of a cruiser-racer and the manageability of a cruising yacht. You can feel it, trim it and tune it properly: it’s a yacht to delight the active helmsman, without needing multiple crew. If the difference between a standard production yacht and a premium performance cruiser is unclear to you, then you need to get behind the wheel of the X4 in a breeze. However, for a boat that blows me away. It’s a prime example of how, if you’re prepared to pay for the extras, the step up to this size level brings the sort of customisation and systems design most typically associated with the superyacht world.

Design: X-Yachts design team

Sail area disp 23.7
Fuel 1,200lt 264gal
Sail area trimaran 97.3m² 1,049ft²
Berths 4–7
Engine 40hp Yanmar saildrive
Water 340lt 77gal
Fuel 200lt 44gal
Sail area disp 23.3
Shop x3 170
Price (ex VAT): €1,279,000
Test boat (inc VAT): £2,770,000

Design: X-Yachts design team

Specifications: X6

Length overall 13.09m 42ft 11in
Beam (max) 5.40m 17ft 9in
Draft 3.00m 9ft 10in
Sail area (100% foretriangle) 97.3m² 1,049ft²
LWL 11.31m 37ft 1in
Draught 2.20m 7ft 3in

Specifications: X4

Length overall 20.23m 66ft 11in
Beam (max) 5.80m 19ft 4in
Draft 3.00m 9ft 10in
Sail area (100% foretriangle) 222.3m² 2,399ft²
LWL 17.85m 58ft 7in
Draught 3.60m 11ft 10in

Conclusions

The X4 strikes a delicious balance between the performance of a cruiser-racer and the manageability of a cruising yacht. You can feel it, trim it and tune it properly: it’s a yacht to delight the active helmsman, without needing multiple crew. If the difference between a standard production yacht and a premium performance cruiser is unclear to you, then you need to get behind the wheel of the X4 in a breeze. However, for a boat that makes you feel like royalty on the helm, the interior comes across as a little plain. It will come down to personal taste – and X4s have already been sold – but for its price, I think the X4 could do more below. The X6 is perhaps more ‘in the sweet spot’ for this sort of mode, as the 55-80ft sector is where X-Yachts is renowned for, although the increased size, load and power level, can lead to a certain loss of feel. In a nutshell then, I’d sail the X4, but live on the X6.

Above: The bespoke tender garage aboard the test boat

Above left: Helm controls include a stern-thruster

Above: The bespoke tender garage aboard the test boat

ON TEST: X4 & X6

The optional carbon arch keeps mainsheet lines out of the cockpit

The X4 is a prime example of how, if you’re prepared to pay for the extras, the step up to this size level brings the sort of customisation and systems design most typically associated with the superyacht world.

Design: X-Yachts design team

Sail area disp 23.2
Fuel 200lt 44gal
Sail area trimaran 80.0m² 863ft²
Berths 4–7
Engine 45hp Yanmar saildrive
Water 340lt 77gal
Fuel 150lt 33gal
Sail area disp 19.5
Shop x3 170
Price (ex VAT): €279,000
Test boat (inc VAT): £520,000

Design: X-Yachts design team

Specifications: X4

Length overall 13.09m 42ft 11in
Beam (max) 5.70m 18ft 9in
Draft 3.15m 10ft 4in
Sail area (100% foretriangle) 112.0m² 1,207ft²
LWL 17.85m 58ft 7in
Draught 3.60m 11ft 10in

Specifications: X6

Length overall 20.23m 66ft 11in
Beam (max) 5.40m 17ft 9in
Draft 3.00m 9ft 10in
Sail area (100% foretriangle) 222.3m² 2,399ft²
LWL 17.85m 58ft 7in
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