

# BOATS & GEAR

NEW TECHNOLOGY, REVIEWS *and*  
PRODUCTS *for the* CRUISING SAILOR

## Return ENGAGEMENT

After a hiatus, **ELAN YACHTS** re-enters the North American sailboat market with a roomy and comfortable cruiser.

BY MARK PILLSBURY

**L**arge framed photos of gorgeous new boats bounding along under sail were what first caught my eye when I walked into the Springline Yacht Sales office in Mystic, Connecticut, one morning last August. No surprise there. But the pair of shapely downhill skis standing right beside one of the photos seemed a bit out of place in a marina office — at least until I focused in on the stylish Elan logo stamped on their flared, rounded tips. I was there, after all, for a test sail on the Elan Impression 45, one of the Elan models that will be introduced — or should I say reintroduced? — here in North America at boat shows starting this fall.

For those who enjoy watersports of the frozen type, the Elan logo (with its distinctive small “e”) is a fairly common sight in lift lines that queue up anywhere from Sugarloaf Mountain in Maine to Whistler in British Columbia. But sailors would have to think back nearly a decade to recall the last new Elan sailboat model to be introduced here in the States. Since then, the company’s marine division has had a Eurocentric focus.

**Deck saloon-style windows in the cabin house and portlights brighten up the Elan’s interior.**

Elan, with headquarters in Slovenia, has been building boats for 65 years, starting with kayaks and other small craft. In the 1970s, it moved into the small-sailboat market and then into larger boats. Since 1995, all of its models have been designed by Rob Humphreys Yacht Design, perhaps better known for its long line of Oysters.

A new interest in the American market developed when private investors Merrill Lynch International and Wiltan Enterprises Limited took the nationalized company private about a year ago. Elan is in the process of organizing a new dealer network in the U.S., of which Springline Yacht Sales is the first.

At the dock in Mystic, I found the traditional-looking Impression 45 sitting alongside a racier hard-chined Elan E4, one of the models in the performance cruising line. Elan also builds an S series of boats, similar to the E series but lighter in weight, and with fewer cruising amenities and more racing features.

The Impression 45, though, is a through-and-through cruiser, from its fold-down swim platform at the transom to the deck saloon-style cabin top, lounging cushions forward of the mast, and beefy anchor roller and windlass at the pointy end. When I started to poke around,



COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER



**Well-placed instruments and electric winches at each wheel (above) give the helmsman fingertip control over the Impression 45. Down below, an owner will find plenty of headroom and creature comforts in the master cabin aft (left).**

pretty much everywhere I looked I discovered features that would make life afloat all the more comfortable: little things like teak cup holders at the end of the cockpit bench seats, and a sturdy stainless handrail that doubles as a fiddle around the top of the teak drop-leaf cockpit table. Below, as I stepped from the companionway into the saloon and walked forward, I instinctively grasped the handholds on the side of the galley counter, located to port at the foot of the companionway; on the side of the nav station, a step forward and to starboard; and on the side of the folded dining table amidships. Portlights in the hull and overhead let in lots of light, and opening ports (including one over the galley stove) promised good ventilation on a breezy day.

All Elan hulls are vacuum-infused. In the Impression line, the sides of the hull are foam-cored from the waterline up and solid glass below and where loads are carried. A layer of vinyl ester

resin is added to the layup to deter blistering. Decks are hand-laid, with a balsa core for thermal and sound insulation.

When it comes to get-up-and-go, the standard configuration calls for a full-batten main and overlapping genoa. The boat we sailed had optional Seldén in-mast furling, electric Harken primary winches and a shallow-draft



#### Attention to Details

A rubber strip ensures that removable floor panels won't squeak when put back in place. Metal plumbing fixtures replace the plastic fittings found on most production sailboats.

keel. It also had an upgraded 75-horsepower Volvo diesel and saildrive (a 55-horsepower Volvo is standard).

Speaking of options, Elan offers several packages that allow you to add an array of features to the basic production boat, starting with the layout below. You can choose to have a two-cabin, two-head couple's layout; an owner's cabin forward with twin aft cabins (as on the boat we sailed); or you can give up the separate shower and head stalls forward and go instead with a fourth cabin with bunks.

You can also dial in the finish and gear you want on board. The boat we sailed had several upgrades, including an anchor, windlass and 50 meters of chain; LED lighting, curtains and teakwood (light oak is standard) below; Frigomar reverse-cycle AC and heat; an 8-kilowatt Fischer Panda generator; and so on. The options do, of course, add up. A base boat sells for \$268,000; the one we sailed was priced north of \$300,000 and still needed electronics and instruments.

Unfortunately, on the day I visited, Long Island Sound lived up to its light-air reputation. Still, in breeze that ranged from 5 to maybe 10 knots, we tacked upwind at about 5 knots. As we cracked off to a reach, my GPS had us making 6.5 knots over the ground. Sightlines forward from both wheels were clean, and singlehanded tacking was straightforward, with plenty of room to maneuver behind the twin wheels.

The boat also responded well under power. The Impression 45's bow thruster was on the blink for our test sail, but we had no problem leaving the tight quarters of the slip (though a dolphin piling dead ahead didn't help things) or backing in when we returned.

A decade ago, the last Elan Impression we saw caught the fancy of *CW's* Boat of the Year judges. I wouldn't be surprised if the new 45 impresses them as well.

*Mark Pillsbury is CW's editor.*

## SPECIFICATIONS

ELAN IMPRESSION 45

**LENGTH OVERALL**  
45'5" (13.84 m)

**WATERLINE LENGTH**  
37'6" (11.43 m)

**BEAM**  
13'8" (4.17 m)

**DRAFT**  
6'2"/5'3" (1.88 m/1.6 m)

**SAIL AREA**  
993 sq. ft. (92.2 sq m)

**BALLAST**  
7,297 lb./7,606 lb.  
(3,310 kg/3,450 kg)

**DISPLACEMENT**  
24,030 lb. (10,900 kg)

**BALLAST/DISPLACEMENT**  
0.30/0.32

**DISPLACEMENT/LENGTH**  
218

**SAIL AREA/DISPLACEMENT**  
19.1

**WATER**  
136 gal. (515 l)

**FUEL**  
71 gal. (270 l)

**HOLDING**  
11 gal. (x2) (40 l) (x2)

**MAST HEIGHT**  
64' (19.5 m)

**ENGINE**  
75 hp Yanmar

**DESIGNER**  
Humphreys Yacht Design

**PRICE**  
\$269,000  
Elan Yachts  
860-415-4810  
elan-yachts.com

## SEA TRIAL

**WIND SPEED**  
5–10 knots

**SEA STATE**  
Calm

**SAILING**  
Closehauled 5 knots  
Reaching 6.5 knots

**MOTERING**  
Cruise (2,100 rpm) 7.2 knots  
Fast (2,500 rpm) 7.8 knots

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