Making Maverick

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Maverick, the second in Cantiere delle Marche's Flexplorer series, is fast approaching completion at the shipyard in Ancona. Owned by Tom Schröder, Top Gun aficionado and now principal shareholder in the shipyard, the 44-metre explorer yacht has been designed and built expressly for a round-the-world tour.

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Opening spread: *Maverick* was launched last November.

Right: The yacht in build at the CdM yard in Ancona.

Facing page, from top: Owner Tom Schroder at the launch; the owner's deck aft; testing the CAT main engines.

When Tom Schröder was first introduced to Cantiere delle Marche in 2019 at the Cannes Yachting Festival, he was particularly struck by the onboard technical spaces. "I could see how well everything had been put together and that impressed me," says the German-born entrepreneur. "I thought that sooner or later I wanted to own a CdM." A year later he attended the launch of Aurelia, the first Flexplorer, and a few months after that he signed the contract for *Maverick* in the midst of the pandemic. Little did he know at the time that he would end up investing in the company.

"Maverick had been in construction for a year and I had built up a very good relationship with the management – always the most important factor in an investment decision," he says. "When the main shareholder decided to sell his stake in the company, Vasco [Buonpensiere, then sales & marketing director, latterly CEO and co-owner] told me about the management buy-out and investment opportunity. Naturally I checked out the numbers and everything, but I'd already decided I wanted to step in because I trusted the management."

Like her predecessor *Aurelia*, *Maverick* embodies all the key elements of a true explorer vessel – robustness, long range, ample storage, seaworthiness in all weathers, and so on – but the flexibility and functionality that defines the Flexplorer concept has been ratcheted up a notch.











CANTIERE DELLE MARCHE

HEAVY LIFTING

The trademark A-frame crane, for example, has undergone important upgrades. Custom-built in carbon fibre by Advanced Mechanical Solutions (AMS), the lifting capacity has been bumped up to 4,000kg and its dimensions increased to improve the functionality of the aft deck. Aurelia's crane is not full beam and the recesses that house the structure and close flush with the deck when not use (the teak planks are cut at 45 degrees to further disguise the join) reduce head height in the lazarette that houses a gym. Maverick's crane is wider and its recesses are further outboard, so they intrude less on the beach club, laundry and technical spaces below. Moreover, the crane has a mobile snatch block that can be positioned directly above the tenders and toys instead of moving them around the deck on cradles during lifting operations. A portable, carbon-fibre davit crane by Atlas is used to handle smaller loads with sockets located around the deck perimeter.

The mooring system in the stern has also been revised. *Aurelia* has her winches mounted on the main deck with hawseholes in the stern quarters, which limited the length of the collapsible bulwarks. By moving the mooring winches and fairleads to the swim platform, the side platforms now extend all the way aft on main deck to create an open garage-come-beach area of 135 square-metres. The heated 3,300-litre capacity pool in the centre of the aft deck is another new addition, although in explorer mode it is more likely to be used for storage than swimming.

The aft deck will carry several tenders, including a 9.55-metre custom chase boat designed by Valerio Rivellini. With an aluminium hull, carbon fibre topsides and powered by a 370-hp inboard Yanmar engine, it will be able to carry a jet RIB tender on its aft deck for rapid transfers (called Iceman and Goose respectively after other *Top Gun* characters, towing one support craft is also easier than towing two). The custom tender is being assembled offsite, although the shipyard built the aluminium hull and plan is to offer the design to CdM clients as a standalone product. **»**

CANTIERE DELLE MARCHE



JUSTIN RATCLIFFE



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"Maverick represents the maximum evolution of the Flexplorer concept within the 500GT threshold."

CRANK UP THE VOLUME

Maximising the loading capacity of the main deck aft meant concentrating the living areas forward and adding a fourth deck to house the wheelhouse and captain's cabin. The upper deck is now dedicated to the owner's use, with a VIP suite on the main deck forward and four guest cabins on the lower deck. Additionally, there is a 'crow's nest' or observation deck under the radar mast (the winglets are a styling feature that recall the tail fins of the F-14 fighter jets in Top Gun). The extra deck brings with it added volume and the yacht is rated at 499GT - appreciably more than average for her length overall. Despite the higher superstructure, however, her profile looks balanced on the water.

Left: Blueprint of Maverick's custom A-frame crane built by Advanced Mechanical Solutions in carbon fibre.

"Maverick represents the maximum evolution of the Flexplorer concept within the 500GT threshold," says Sergio Cutolo of Hydro Tec, responsible for the naval architecture and exterior design. "Because of the increase in volume at the top of the vessel and extra weight towards the bow, we had to keep the construction and outfitting materials as light as possible and reevaluate the hull form, which has a different distribution of immersed volumes to compensate for the longitudinal weight distribution."

The owner's previous vacht was a 74-foot Sunreef sailing catamaran (also called Maverick), which he sold in 2018. The idea of building an explorer yacht and a world tour came during the Covid lockdown while holed up at home. Due to start after this year's Monaco Yacht Show, the seven-year, globetrotting expedition will take in high latitudes as well as the Northwest Passage. To this end, Maverick is partially winterised with preheating for lubricants and the hull has an 'Ice Belt' around the waterline. Ice strengthening usually involves doubling the number of frames where reinforcement is needed to make the whole hull structure several times stiffer, along with thicker plating for extra strength to prevent buckling caused by floating ice, but CdM already builds to higher specs than normal.

"The transversal hull structures we design for CdM offer a simple and reliable solution that combine strength and efficiency while minimising impact on the living spaces inside the hull," explains Cutolo. "Whereas in a similar vessel you may have a shell thickness of 5-6 mm around the waterline, *Maverick* has a longitudinal strip of 12mm plating, at least double what you would usually expect to find. This transversal structure offers optimal support for the thicker shell plating around the waterline without the addition of longitudinal stringers." >>>>

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BUSINESS BOOM

Sales of explorer yachts have boomed in recent years, thanks in part to younger, adventurous owners who are less interested in cruising the usual hotspots. The explorer category often favours styling over substance, with the result that most so-called 'explorer' yachts



are no more designed for long distance passage-making than your average SUV is for serious off-roading. CdM is different and since launching its hardy Darwin Class of steel-hulled explorers in 2010, the brand has carved out a niche for itself in the market for ocean-going, pocket explorers under 500GT. As Vasco Buonpensiere points out: "We believe it should be you that sets the limits of what you want to do with the boat. Not the boat." With 16 projects under contract and seven deliveries, including

Maverick, scheduled for this year alone, CdM has seen production turnover increase from 37 to 80 million and its staff double in the last three years. Due to lack of space, its steel hulls are currently built up the coast in Trieste and Porto Marghera near Venice, but a new onsite construction shed will bring all the steelworks inhouse by the end of the year.

According to Buonpensiere, the entry of Tom Schröder as majority shareholder will not affect day-to-day operations: "Tom wants to stay small, stay family, stay high quality, because that's what attracted him to the brand in the first place," he says. "The most important thing is that his is not a speculative investment."

Although technically a series builder, CdM has always offered a high level of customisation. However, the brand is also developing new models of around 100 feet/200GT, a size range in which clients are accustomed to more standardised products.

"Clients upsizing from 70 or 80 feet are often nervous about customisation and prefer less choice, not more," says Vasco Buonpensiere. "I'm a big believer in the smaller boats because they are the foundation of this company. We have quite a few Australian owners, for example, where most of the market is for boats under 35 metres. Especially in boom times you see yards start to build bigger, but nearly all our clients start at 100 feet."

		2024 deliveries		
ame	Hull number	Model/Series	Launch	Delivery year
:k	146.30	FLEXPLORER 146	2023	2024
a	115.32	RJ115	2023	2024
	86.33	DARWIN 86	2023	2024
	86.31	DARWIN 86	2024	2024
т	45.34	one-off	2024	2024
	146.35	FLEXPLORER 146	2024	2024
	43.38	one-off	2024	2024

ON THE INSIDE

The layout of Maverick's main and lower decks is similar to *Aurelia*'s. The asymmetrical arrangement of the main saloon, which is widebody to starboard, remains, but the galley is designed to be more family-friendly and communicates directly with the saloon with no intervening pantry. In line with the yacht's explorer vocation, there is a large walk-in cold room inside the galley with more cold/dry storage space on the tank deck, and in the full-height tunnel that runs between the engine room and the crew quarters one of the features that the owner first liked about the brand.

Maverick is powered by conventional Caterpillar C32 ACERT diesel engines for a range well above 5,000 nm at 10 knots. The fact that CdM has no current plans to build a yacht with hybrid propulsion - although it is researching PTO/PTI solutions and salt batteries - may seem retrogressive at a time when sustainability is a hot topic, but the strategy is a logical consequence of its practical approach to yacht building as well as the type and size of vessel it specialises in.

"We had the hybrid conversation with Tom, as we do with all our clients, but the more vou look into it the less it makes sense for us and our owners," says Buonpensiere. "Firstly, an explorer has to be reliable, so simplicity is the top priority. Secondly, *Maverick* burns around 70 litres of fuel an hour at 10 knots. so any additional savings a hybrid system may provide will never outweigh the extra cost. Thirdly, alternative fuels require more storage and technical space on board, which is a problem on the size of yachts we build." Instead, CdM has opted for something far simpler and more sustainable: wind power. *Maverick* will carry a wing kite (see sidebar) supplied by Wingit in Germany, which during long transfers can tow the yacht at low speed assisted by the engines (having the props turning at idle speed reduces drag). It is a solution that appeals to the owner's sailing background and Wingit is working with CdM to develop a kite system specifically tailored to the requirements of its explorer fleet.



Left: The owner's private foredeck Below: Maverick prepares for sea trials.





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JUSTIN RATCLIFFE

Dresden-based Wingit was set up in 2010 by kite surfing enthusiast Stephan Schröder (no relation to Maverick's owner). The company began with wing kites for smaller sports boats and nearly 40 have been installed to date, but later started receiving requests for automated systems on larger yachts. It is currently developing a special system for CdM able to handle much higher loads based on a feasibility study for kites of 20, 25 and 30 square metres on a steel-hulled vessel like the Flexplorer displacing 440 tonnes. The results show that they will be able to tow the yacht at over 8 knots on wind power alone, or more when engine assisted. The size of the kite does not dramatically affect performance, but the smaller the surface area the greater the angle it can sail to the wind.

No mast is required to fly the kite, just a deck-mounted coupling above the height of the railing in the bow for attaching the three control lines one to take all the forces and the other two for steering. After inflating, the kite is released and launched it into the air by pulling the lines. When the kite reaches the optimal height, it begins to trace a figure of 8 in the sky on an automatically controlled flight path. To bring the kite down the auto pilot moves it to a position directly above the boat where it exerts the least force. It can then be winched down and collapsed for stowage.

"The advantage of a kite over a conventional sail system is that it does not need a tall mast, flies higher in the sky where there's more wind, and generates up to 10 times more power than a traditional sail per square metre," says Schröder. The main thing is not the size of the kite but the speed at which it performs the figure of 8 in the sky – ideally you want constant flight speed to maintain constant power."



MAVERICK SHORT SPECS

Length Overall	44.33m
Beam	8.60m
Draught	2.70m
Hull/Superstructure	Steel/Aluminium
Fuel capacity	64,000 lit.
Engines	2 x CATERPILLAR C32 ACERT 2x970 kW @1800 rpm
Stabilisers	CMC Marine, 2 pairs, electric Zero Speed
Speed max	14 knots
Range	5,000+nm
Naval Architecture	Hydro Tec
Exterior design	Hydro Tec
Interior design	Francesco Paszkowski Design
Builder	Cantiere delle Marche













