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YACHT REPORT | THALIMA & NILAYA



Two of a Kind

THALIMA & NILAYA

by Justin Ratcliffe

Moored side by side on the Quai Chicane at the Monaco Yacht Show were two handsome sloops built by yards in different hemispheres at opposite ends of the globe. Despite being half a world away from each other, they both produce bluewater cruisers designed for high performance, flexibility, safety and comfort in whatever conditions the oceans can throw at them.

It is hard to think of two shipyards further apart geographically than Southern Wind Shipyard (SWS) and Baltic Yachts. *Thalima* is the new 33m RS (raised saloon) from Southern Wind in Cape Town, South Africa, whereas the 34m *Nilaya* is from Baltic Yachts on the west coast of Finland. With less than a metre between them, *Thalima* and *Nilaya* have much in common, not least because their general concepts are by Milan-based Nauta Design. Optimisation of the naval architecture, sail plan and appendages was entrusted to long-time partners Farr Yacht Design in the case of *Thalima* and to Reichel-Pugh for *Nilaya*. Both are owned by experienced yachtsmen, but there are some important technical features that distinguish the two yachts and reveal the subtly different client base they are designed to satisfy.

One fundamental difference is that SWS builds semi-custom yachts, whereas Baltic is increasingly pursuing the full custom option. This is in accordance with their individual marketing strategies:

“We pursue a policy of consistency in building ever better yachts,” claims the SWS website, “avoiding technological embellishments that contribute little to the final result but very much affect the final price. We want our owners to enjoy the build process and to contribute their ideas so as to produce the semi-custom yacht most suited to their needs.”

The approach of Baltic Yachts, on the other hand, “is to continuously improve the company to achieve leadership in our market segment... We are still true to our philosophy,

There is considerable crossover between the two and the final decision comes down to owner preference and price rather than seaworthiness and sailing pleasure.



Thalima has a High Modulus carbon fibre mast and Park Avenue boom with Future Fibres PBO standing rigging.



but have placed greater emphasis on flexibility and custom than ever before.”

These distinct avenues dictate their client base and how they build their yachts; they also account for some of the differences between *Thalima* and *Nilaya*. But as we shall see, there is still considerable crossover between the two and the final decision comes down to owner preference and price rather than seaworthiness and sailing pleasure.

Both SWS and Baltic use advanced composite materials to build medium-light displacement yachts for high performance combined with easy

handling – distinct advantages for the growing band of owners looking for world cruisers that can also perform well on the superyacht regatta circuit. Another positive spin-off is that composite materials provide a higher general build quality and better durability. However, it is an approach that puts pressure on the builder to reduce construction weight without sacrificing strength, safety or interior comfort and – as with any yacht project – compromises are required.

I first saw *Thalima*, the first in the new SWS 110 series, in its early build stages in South Africa in 2008. Constructed of advanced composites (carbon fibre, Kevlar, epoxy resin and Corecell/ Klegcell) in a female mould using the infusion method, the hull was built in three longitudinal sections instead of being split along the keel line, a decision in part dictated by the sheer vertical height of the hull. (See our special report on Southern Triplets in *The Yacht Report*, issue 95.)

“A centre-line split mould would have given me a huge height for the resin to climb all the way to the top if I was to lay the moulds on their sides at 90 degrees,” explained the head of the lamination team, Stefan Falcon, at the time. “I played around with the idea for a while and when I received the core layout drawing I realised that we had different thicknesses of core throughout the boat. The thickness transition was close to where I would have liked to split the infusions anyway, so I decided to try to split the mould in three parts. Like all things, there are advantages and disadvantages with a mould configuration in ‘three halves’. The advantages far outweigh the disadvantage of the extra space the moulds take up and the hassle of de-moulding.”

Nilaya's hull is made of carbon/ aramid pre-preg composites over a corecell foam core and built on a male plug with the same materials used in a female mould for the deck, which makes for a slightly lighter and stiffer boat than the infusion method.

To reduce weight still further, both yachts have sandwich/foam core interiors with a light teak veneer in the case of *Thalima* and mahogany for *Nilaya*. Masts and rigging are also designed for lightweight performance: *Thalima* has a High Modulus carbon fibre mast and Park Avenue boom with Future Fibres PBO standing rigging, whereas *Nilaya* has a Hall Spars carbon mast, again with PBO rigging, plus titanium turnbuckles and halyard locks to save weight and prevent excessive compression on the mast (a solution that, with the benefit of hindsight, *Thalima*'s captain would also have liked). In fact, at the end of the day, the displacement weights of the two yachts are almost the same, largely because the owner of *Nilaya* requested a very quiet boat and this required intervention by sound insulation specialists Van Cappellen in The Netherlands.

“A lot of effort went into making sure the yacht was very quiet both under sail and while motoring,” explained Baltic’s Managing Director, Kenneth Nyfelt. “To this end we used lightweight foam on the hull sides, under the flooring and on the deckhead to reduce the noise of normal talking. There is also a cork laminate layer in the floor to dampen the sound of footsteps on deck. This means we have 3,800kg of insulation, which is about 100kg over the design prediction.”

Martino Majno, Nauta’s marine engineer who followed the build, showed me the remarkably low decibel readings that resulted from this additional damping. Contractual sound levels while motor cruising (at 2,000rpm) were set at 65dB and while predictions reduced that figure to 53dB, the final level was a hushed 45dB. Even the aft crew mess close to the engine room is not much higher at 47dB.

This kind of focus on owner requirements is confirmation of Nyfelt’s claim that “We are increasingly moving into full custom yachts”. Another example is the

owner’s request for light, sensitive steering – hence the gearless mechanical system and bespoke solenoid feature to disengage the tiller arm from the autopilot rams for a more precise feel. In fact, all the main sailing functions can be controlled from the cockpit pedestals, including a boom vang dump just in case – in Captain Jamie Connolly’s words – “things aren’t happening fast enough on deck when we’re short-handed”.

At the last minute, the owner also requested that the aft master suite be moved into the forward section of the hull. This meant recalculating the weight distribution and as the forward bulkhead had already been laminated



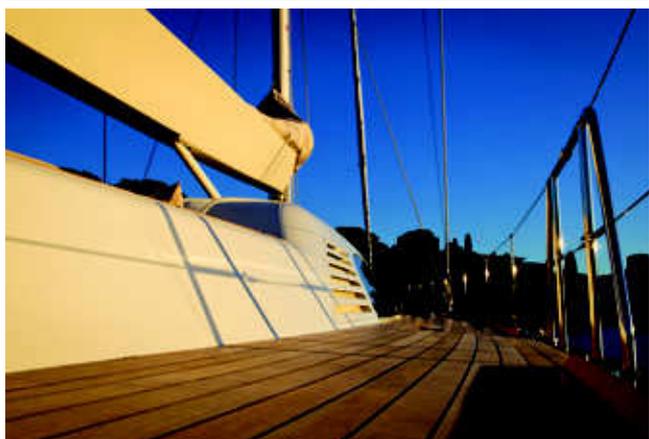
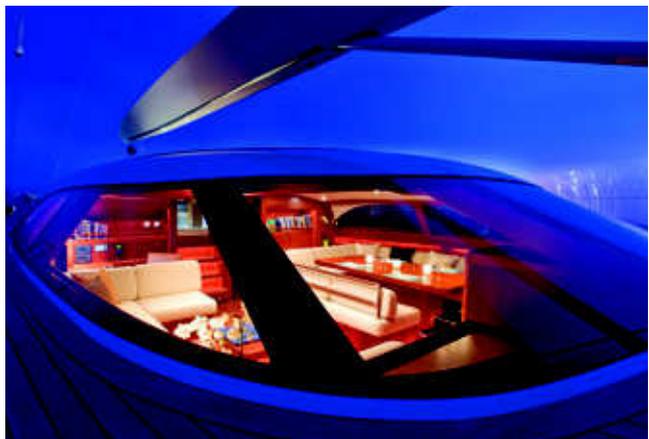
Nilaya has a Hall Spars carbon mast, again with PBO rigging, plus titanium turnbuckles and halyard locks to save weight and prevent excessive compression on the mast.



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The exteriors – *Thalima* (above) and *Nilaya* (below)



the gloriously spacious cabin is served by a luxurious but somewhat smaller bathroom. What is interesting (and rather telling) is that the reason for the owner's change of mind was because he had gone aboard an SWS 100 and liked the forward cabin arrangement.

As mentioned, Nauta Yachts was responsible for the general concepts for both *Nilaya* and *Thalima*. The word 'general' here is misleading as the studio develops everything from buoyancy and weight studies to exterior profile and interior layout in such detail that the final construction plans are often those supplied by Nauta.

However, there is a clearly a difference between the studio's long-standing semi-custom work for SWS and *Nilaya*, the first collaboration between Nauta and the Finnish yard to be launched (they also worked together on the 60m ketch *Panamax*). The result is a softer, 'Italian touch' when compared with Baltic's usually quite severe styling.

"The owner of *Nilaya* participated in every detail and was free to make his own choices," Nauta's co-founder and CEO Mario Pedol said. "Southern Wind is a semi-custom builder and from a designer's point of view there is less flexibility, because you have to take into account the market trends and benchmarking with competitors."

Another significant difference between the two yachts is that *Nilaya* has a lifting keel from APM in Italy that reduces the draught from 5m to 3.5m. Baltic usually engineers its own slightly lighter keel systems, but as the yard was fully stretched with the Panamax project the decision was taken to outsource. It is worth noting that SWS provides the option of a lifting keel on the 110, but *Thalima's* owner decided to keep it simple with a fixed keel.

"We initially specced a lifting keel, but the owner is very conservative and after initial discussions with the

shipyard we decided on a 4.2m fixed keel," explained Captain Clinton White. "He didn't like the idea of having 33 tonnes moving inside the yacht and felt safer having it bolted to the bottom," Captain Clinton White explained with only a trace of irony. "The money we saved he spent on a Wally tender."

Thalima is the third yacht that Clinton White has skippered for the owner, an engineer who personally went through every CAD file before signing off each phase of the build. Together, they had a clear idea of what was wanted and this meant a number of modifications to the standard spec. These included extra sound insulation in specific areas, while a more powerful Cummins engine (medium-continuous duty) for faster transfers was squeezed into the compartment under the main saloon – actually a welcome compromise for the captain as it meant "I now get to sit down instead of stooping!".

The owner also agreed to his captain's suggestion for a sturdy bimini, which saves the crew having to put up and take down an awning each time they stop for lunch. But the principal 'extra' aboard *Thalima* is the hydraulic captive winch, a first for SWS but also for Bamar who previously had supplied only the electric winches favoured by Perini Navi. The captain admits this required "a steep learning curve", and additional weight, but the advantages are a cleaner deck and full control of the main sheet from the cockpit pedestals.

On the inside, the quality of interior finish of both boats is excellent. The decor is simple and traditional, yet with an elegant, contemporary edge. Whereas the bathroom countertops aboard *Nilaya* are of Pedra Verde marble, *Thalima's* are of polished carbon fibre made in-house (as were the carbon folding dining chairs and ceiling handrails) and the owner's bathroom features a bathtub with a cascade waterspout. The fixed furniture pieces aboard both yachts are foam-cored and in the case of >>

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The interiors – *Thalima* (above) and *Nilaya* (below)



FROM CAPE TOWN TO GIBRALTAR

Every Southern Wind yacht destined for Europe makes the testing delivery voyage from Cape Town to the Med on its own bottom. Francesco Volpi is the Customer Care Representative responsible for the yacht systems and he accompanied *Thalima* on her shakedown voyage.

We left the V&A Waterfront Marina in Cape Town on 29 May 2010 and arrived in Gibraltar 1 July. With a couple of stops totalling just five days during the crossing, the delivery was completed in 28 days covering more than 6,500 miles. Not bad at all, especially considering the boat was sailed in a quite conservative way to reduce unnecessary risks and damage (the owner and guests were expected onboard just days after arrival). For the record, the previous quickest passage with SW100 hull n°6 was also completed in 28 days from Cape Town to Palma de Mallorca.

The first stop was St Helena on 6 June for refuelling. The breeze between Cape Town and St Helena was not so consistent (generally E-SE from 5-25 knots) and 2,000 litres of fuel were burnt during this first leg. The stop was more a precaution, as the remaining 4,000 litres of fuel would have been enough for the second leg (St Helena to Cape Verde).

Unfortunately, both St Helena and the Ascension Islands had run out of fuel and couldn't deliver any to us, so we had to carry on to Cape Verde. There is no airport on St Helena and you can only get there by sea: the Royal Mail Ship (RMS) St Helena visits the island every 20 days and, as you can imagine, supplies are not so easy to come by. At least we had the opportunity to have a quick look to this peculiar island and visit the home where Napoleon spent his exile (only from outside, however, as you have to book in advance – remember this if you ever find yourself nearby!).

Cape Verde Sao Vicente Island was reached in 10 days on 17 June. This second leg offered a better wind scenario, despite the doldrums: SE until the equator and NE above with an average wind speed of 20-25 knots.

Just over the equator we were caught in a big thunderstorm, although we had tried to escape from it by pointing closer to the Liberian coasts. This ended with a lightning strike that damaged some of the electronic equipment and the four-day stopover in Cape Verde was necessary to repair the wind/navigation system.

From Cape Verde to Gibraltar we had good upwind sailing, tough at times, but interesting to see the behaviour of the boat in these conditions.

Following the wind conditions and forecasts we headed NE to just below the Azores and then we tacked towards Gibraltar.

The boat was very comfortable sailing in all wind conditions; she is very well balanced and stable. In fact, I would say she's more stable than the SW100s that I've sailed on previous deliveries.

The righting moment of this boat is consistent and the



keel weight, originally designed for rod rigging, has not been modified even through PBO rigging and a High Modulus mast were fitted. Our average speed during the delivery voyage was around 10 knots and during the very first days with quite strong SE winds we reached a top speed of 18 knots.

The SW110 has several innovations compared with the SW100, principally the captive winch and the hydraulic traveller for the mainsail sheet, and a removable staysail, both of which performed well. The controls for these units are located on both pedestals, so one person can trim sail and traveller at the same time, even while steering. The removable staysail is a must especially when tacking: there is no need to furl the genoa as on the SW100 due to the fixed stay. This will be much appreciated in regattas.

Another improvement on the SW110 is the primary ventilation system inside the boat. This is a forced-air circulation system that allows good ventilation and air exchange all over the boat.

SMALL AIRS AND BIG PERFORMANCE

In the glitz and glamour of a superyacht show like Monaco, it is easy to lose touch with the real reason we are all there – yachting. Tork Buckley was invited the day following the Show to experience just that aboard *Nilaya*, Baltic's high-performance cruiser racer.



We left the dock with a smooth, unfussy competence that belied Captain Jamie Connolly's comment about "things not happening fast enough on deck when we're short-handed". We didn't get far though; the endless spider webs of underwater ground lines got entangled with the raised keel. We carefully re-docked beside a Wally while port staff sorted out the lines.

Nilaya yacht is a long-legged and powerful performer. Nauta's Mario Pedol quietly bragged of the performance that exceeded what he had wisely under promised. The brief to build a light airs cruiser racer has been well met, with 8.5 knots close-hauled in 6 knots of true wind. The yacht is extremely quiet — a challenge as performance and sound reduction are in "total conflict", commented Pedol. The lightweight construction is exemplified by a square, 250mm teak-lined cover in the mid-cockpit table; some 75mm thick it was so light that when removing it I applied way too much force and nearly lost it over the side. Clearly the speed and sound conflict has been resolved. *Nilaya* is the experienced owner's seventh yacht and its predecessor was a Swan of less generous dimensions. Like any racer, *Nilaya* has a container that follows her and for regattas she will be seriously stripped down (Jamie pointed out that they have pulled more than 2.5 tons out of the old yacht in past efforts). The yacht's other function, of course, is world cruising and this has led to a very smart obsession with storage space that rivals the owner's obsession with storage space. The requirement was to have sufficient stowage space for favourite foodstuffs, wines, cigars and precious tableware for a month off the beaten track. The resulting solutions are hugely effective

and there is even a windsurfer stored beneath the master cabin.

The galley is particularly worthy of note. Designed by Nauta and laid out by Baltic, the chef was brought in to refine the plan. The result is a galley customised and fitted like a stainless and honeycomb glove around the equipment used, to the extent that pans with removable handles are used to lower their storage profile. The main countertop is designed to be used from both the (outboard) chef and (inboard) stewardess sides. The sensibly deep sink is also conceived for a two-sided operation. The resulting workflow is better than on many a 50m plus motoryachts I have seen.

The racing campaigns are still one year away and the yacht, systems and crew will be broken in over a 12-month period starting with a trip to the Caribbean this winter. The captain is quietly very pleased with the yacht and found nothing to complain about. He did comment that the crew has not yet had to try flying canvas in heavy weather or to push the yacht really hard, but the plan is to do just that in the transatlantic passage when the owner will also be aboard. Apart from wanting to put himself through the transat, he is obviously very hands on, to the extent that there are two nav stations: one for the captain aft and another owner's set in the raised deckhouse.

There was much to enjoy in a jolly cruise in the choppy waters off Monaco, which were hardly a challenge for such a tough, bluewater yacht. But the sail did prove the light airs performance and cruiser comfort that *Nilaya*'s designers envisaged.

>> *Nilaya's* marble a carbon fibre film has been added for extra stiffness, while *Thalima's* floorboards are also made of carbon fibre with a teak veneer. The fire-resistant Sayerlack satin finish used on the veneer throughout the SWS yacht provides an attractive open-pored look, but it is probably not as durable as her captain would like, especially with young (and potentially destructive) children onboard.

In terms of layout, the two yachts are broadly similar, with four guest cabins including the master suite, both of which have walk-in wardrobes. The owner of *Thalima* opted for an elegant Pullman system in the twin single cabins whereby an extra mattress is revealed under the bed closest to the bulkhead; by removing the wall panels the top bed is attached and secured by ceiling brackets without unsightly rails or hinges. *Nilaya's* deckhouse means larger windows in the main saloon (and more headroom in the engine compartment), but this is compensated by the space taken up by the keel case, which means one of the guest cabins has bunk beds and lacks a separate shower stall.

In both cases, the aft crew areas are comfortable and spacious with a large cabin for the captain and modern, functional galleys. Both yachts have a primary ventilation (forced air) system, which can reduce the need for AC and provides added comfort for crew during crossings in bad weather with hatches closed. Talking of hatches, *Thalima* has pneumatic skylights in certain cabins where you would otherwise have to step on the bed to reach them – a useful feature for both guests and crew, although they still need to be locked manually. Both yachts have abundant storage and refrigeration space; *Nilaya* in particular even has fridges under the dining sofa.

In terms of lighting, *Thalima* has LEDs throughout, but *Nilaya's* owner opted for incandescent bulbs – an odd choice as LED technology can now compete in terms of colour

temperature, while the power and heat savings it provides make perfect sense. It is worth pointing out that *Thalima* is MCA LY2 compliant (*Nilaya* is not), and this dictated certain technical solutions, such as the chlorinated fresh-water system and remotely operated sea chest valves outside the engine room under the steps leading down to the TV lounge.

The difference between a semi-custom and full custom superyacht is often a fine one and *Thalima* and *Nilaya* are a case in point – their owners could easily have ended up with either yacht. Baltic is widely considered the premier builder of high-performance sailing cruisers in composite, but SWS goes to considerable lengths to incorporate its clients' requests into a series platform. It all comes down to owner preference.

On paper, *Nilaya* is the higher-spec boat with its lifting keel and pre-preg construction. Considering her owner is a competitive yachtsman with a Swan racing background, the added performance these features provide justifies the added cost. The owner of *Thalima*, on the other hand, was looking for safe, exhilarating sailing rather than grand prix performance, and his choices reflect those priorities. What is certain is that value for money in this post-crisis climate is of paramount concern and is likely to dominate the decision-making process for years to come.

Opening image: Justin Ratcliffe;
Nilaya images: Guido Cantini,
Sea&See; Thalima images: Pegaso

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Two of a Kind

SPECIFICATION | THALIMA

LOA	33.60m
Beam (max)	7.30m
Draught (fixed keel)	4.2m
Construction	Sailing yacht
Displacement (lightship)	86 tons
Naval architect	Farr Yacht Design
Exterior stylist	Nauta Design
Interior designer	Nauta Design
Main engines	Cummins QSL9-405 MCD
Speed (max)	10.5 knots
Fuel capacity	5,600ltr
Water capacity	3,000ltr
Number of owner/guest cabins	Sleeps eight in one master cabin and three guest cabins

The difference between a semi-custom and full custom superyacht is often a fine one and *Thalima* and *Nilaya* are a case in point – their owners could easily have ended up with either yacht.

SPECIFICATION | NILAYA

LOA	31.10m
Beam (max)	7.52m
Draught (max)	5.50m
Construction	Sailing yacht
Displacement	87 ton
Gross tonnage	89 ton
Naval architect	Reichel Pugh Yacht Design
Exterior stylist	Nauta Yachts
Interior designer	Nauta Yachts
Main engines	Cummins QSB59
Fuel capacity	6,000ltr
Water capacity	2,800ltr
Number of owner/guest cabins	One owner cabin and four guest cabins