



RENAISSANCE OF A MYTHICAL SAILBOAT

BY LAURENT IMBERT

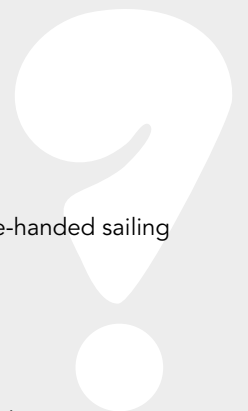
BACKGROUND

The 1960s and 1970s were a crucial period for sailing, particularly for recreational sailing. Reinforced plastic (GRP) made it possible to create innovative and affordable production sailboats, leading to the emergence of sailboats that are now considered collector's items. These sailboats possessed characteristics that are still challenging to find in new boats today.

Arpège, Ecume de mer, Nicholson 32, Mallard 9, Centurion 32, First 30—these are boats that can still be regularly seen sailing on the water and delighting their owners. The construction using Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) allowed for more freedom in hull design, integration of elements in the construction process, cost reduction, and popularization of sailing by offering boats with multiple advantages:

- A racing and cruising spirit
- Performance both in crewed and single-handed sailing
- A less spartan onboard life
- Simplicity in maneuvers
- A leap forward in design and naval architecture

It was during this period that Michel Joubert designed a boat model that would become iconic for an entire generation of sailing enthusiasts and professionals — **the SURPRISE!**





Michel Joubert (on the right) with Bernard Nivel. Photo @Yves Ronzier

MICHEL JOUBERT, THE NAVAL ARCHITECT

Associated with Bernard Nivel on numerous projects, Michel Joubert played a significant role in transforming the world of boating with his pencil and maritime passions. The use of composite materials allowed Michel and his accomplice to unleash their fertile imagination in naval design. As a result, supposedly more than 20,000 boats were born that still sail today!

The list of boat names seems endless, showcasing their highly eclectic creations! Bernard Nivel once said that with Michel, they had drawn just about everything, except perhaps submarines, or unintentionally so!

THE BIRTH OF SURPRISE

Designed in 1976 by renowned architect Michel Joubert, the Surprise came to life. Meanwhile, Jean Archambault, with 10 years of experience in lamination, sensed a promising project. It was at this time that the combination of plans and construction gave birth to the Surprise. This sailboat, described by its architect as a "fun, fast, practical, easy, and economical dayboat", quickly made its mark in the boating industry.

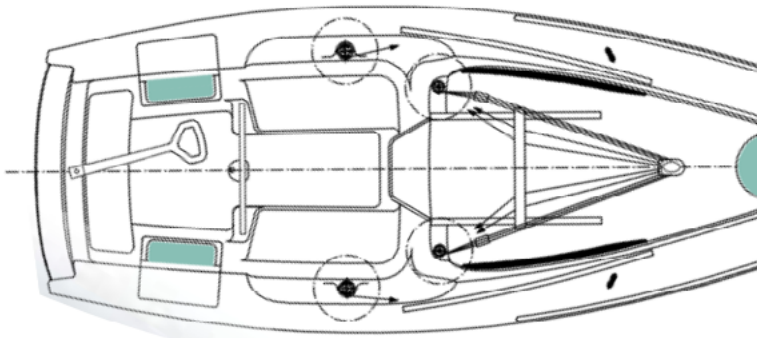
The Surprise secured a spot at the 1977 Paris Boat Show. The boat made a strong impression and became the undisputed star of the 1977 edition in the eyes of Parisians. By 2015, the year of the unfortunate bankruptcy of the Archambault shipyard, more than 1700 sailboats had been manufactured.

This fun and economical dayboat has become a reference in the world of monohull racing. Its seaworthiness and performance have quickly propelled this boat to the top of the rankings. Racers on all types of waterways have appreciated the versatility of the sailboat. Thanks to certain individuals (such as François Séchaud for Switzerland), various European-racing fleets have adopted the Surprise. Over 800 units have been sold in Switzerland, with no fewer than 600 boats still based on Lake Geneva.



THE RE-BIRTH OF A PROJECT

After several attempts to revive the iconic series, the Surprise makes a comeback under the banner of Bateaux Phœnix. Didier Bouygues, a skipper and amateur racer, has always cherished these sailboats and decided to devote himself wholeheartedly to restarting the production of the fourth generation of Surprise. With the enthusiasm of the Surprise owners' associations (ASPRO France and Switzerland), Mr. Bouygues teamed up with Art Pro Composite to manufacture the new boats. The first Surprise from Bateaux Phœnix was born in December 2022!



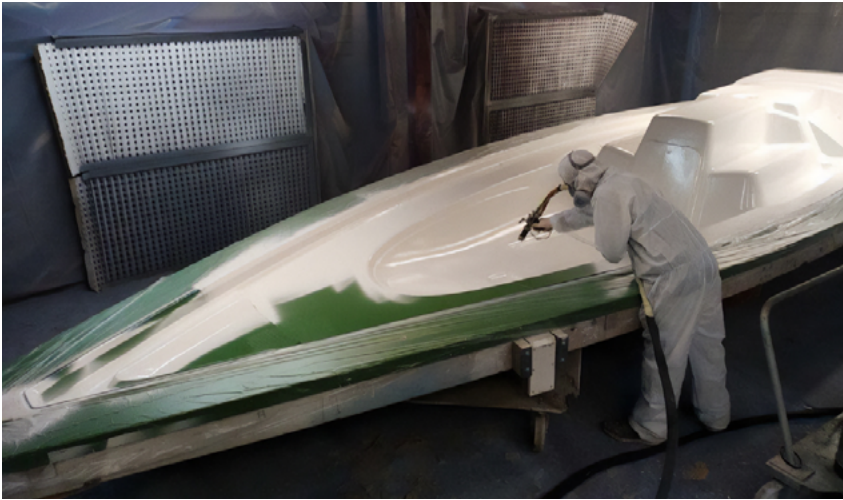
Didier Bouygues discovered sailing in 1974 and amateur dinghy construction in 1978. With this experience, in 1981, upon completing a Sailing Sport Study program, he joined a company specializing in Reinforced Plastics. At that time, Composite Materials were not yet widely discussed. Throughout his career, he balanced his time between plastic construction and competitive and leisure sailing. In 2015, he decided to resume the construction of the Surprise boat but only recently obtained the molds. He then left his position as a composite manager at a large catamaran construction yard to try to revive this legendary monohull, the Surprise.

Website: surprise-bateauxphoenix.com/



To see Bateaux Phoenix and the new Surprise boat, visit:





Produced at Art Pro Composites, Didier Bouygues trust EUOMERE products for his Re-Birth Project Bateaux Phoenix:

- **Eurogel HQ-212**, an isoNPG DNV Approved gel coat grade for Marine construction is used on decks and hulls.
- **Structural Bonding Paste FSP-HV 1545** has been chosen for its performance in terms of adhesion and mechanical abilities.

At Euomere, we are extremely proud of this rebirth and wish Didier Bouygues and Bateaux Phoenix the ability to continue inspiring numerous owners with the Surprise, both for racers and for fast leisure sailing.

