



**S**hhhh. Seriously, let's keep this between us. They are French and there are two of them. They are beyond beautiful. They are beyond smoking hot. They are exquisite. There are people who would be very interested in this information and The Man likes to keep a low profile. Which is strange, I know, because he makes his living playing guitar and singing songs about beaches and boats in front of tens of thousands of screaming fans. Everybody knows his name, his hopes, his dreams and his quirks.

But when it comes to his boats... well, he's a lot like every other busy businessman, family man and contented sailor. He simply wants to knock off after a day at work, step aboard and take a spin around the buoys on a Wednesday night. He wants to climb aboard on a holiday—maybe with the kids, definitely with a cooler—cut the engine, get the main up, unroll the jib, and feel that magic moment of warm breeze filling well-trimmed sails.

Just like us. Except not. The Man is Jimmy Buffett, a figure who, outside of the thin air of Valencia, is the most famous living sailor in

the world. And the French pair... whew... the French pair.

The French pair are his new boats, the latest in a long line of beautiful, purposeful boats made for sailing and saltwater fun. In this way, he's just like us. He gets his money together, finds the right boat, and goes sailing. But, once the details are fleshed out, once we find out that there are two of them. And once we learn a bit about the hows and whys of them, well, not so much like us. His plan would be our plan if we were The Man.



A group of friends take Jimmy Buffet's latest French eye candy, a Tofinou 9.5, out for a summer spin on the Chesapeake Bay.

But we're not. We, on the other hand, strap shark fins to our cars, buy coconut shell bras, and chant "Salt, salt, salt," smiling all the while as The Man tells us, through his famous laugh, "I'm spending your money foolishly."

**I**n November 1971, Jimmy Buffett, a 25-year-old aspiring singer-songwriter rolled into Key West aboard an old Packard driven by fellow musician Jerry Jeff Walker. He was broke and had just separated from his first wife. At that point, Buffett's

career as an entertainer had started and stopped half-a-dozen times.

The Key West Buffett stepped into was a very offbeat and relatively lawless place—it's said that marijuana bales were unloaded onto the public wharf in daylight; trade in shrimp, Cuban refugees and narcotics was thriving; and any number of alternative lifestyles were both explored and celebrated. Buffett soaked up the atmosphere like a deep-water sponge, and the characters, sounds and tales of Key West found their way into his songs and attitude.

Buffett found his voice in 1973 with the release of his second album, "White Sport Coat and a Pink Crustacean." He used the profits from this album to buy a Cheoy Lee 33 ketch with the theory that if his career went pear-shaped, he would at least have the boat to live and travel aboard. He named the boat *Euphoria* and later told an interviewer, "If it all fell apart tomorrow, I could live on that boat and be happy."

A year later, with his signature song "Margaritaville" in the Top 10 and plenty of



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career traction, he stepped up to a Cheoy Lee 48 clipper ketch he named *Euphoria II*. This boat plays a large part in the Buffett hagiography as he spent a lot of time sailing and working aboard her. "I had bought a new boat and was headed south," he said. "I didn't know if I would be coming back. Anyway, I had rigged the boat as if I weren't."

He wrote a number of songs aboard *Euphoria II*, including "Cheeseburger in Paradise." *Euphoria II* is still actively sailed in the charter trade under the marketing slogan "Jimmy Buffett's Former Yacht."

In 1979, after the birth of his first child, he sold *Euphoria II* and downsized to an Alerion 26 daysailer that he named after his new daughter, *Savannah Jane*. The 26 was based on a 1912 Nathanael Herreshoff design and was built in Maine by Rumery's Boatyard. This is the boat Buffett sailed in the first edition of Yachting Key West Race Week, back in 1988, and this is the boat featured in the children's book *The Jolly Mon*.

There were plenty of fishing boats and large powerboats along the way but we'll focus on the sailboats. In 2005, Buffett purchased *Chill*, hull No. 2 of the Hinckley DS42 series.

And in early 2007, a pair of Tofinou's entered his life. This is the French pair... whew... the French pair.

**T**he boats are Tofinou 9.5s, designed by Michel Joubert, built in France and delivered early in 2007. One of them, named *Alerion*, is an East Coast boat with a trailer. It spends part of the year migrating along I-95 between Buffett's preferred summer climate on the north shore of Long Island and his winter base in Palm Beach, Florida.

The second, named *Groovy*, in memory of Buffett's longtime pal and boat captain, was delivered straight to St. Bart's where she will be ready for The Man when he flies in for winter R&R.

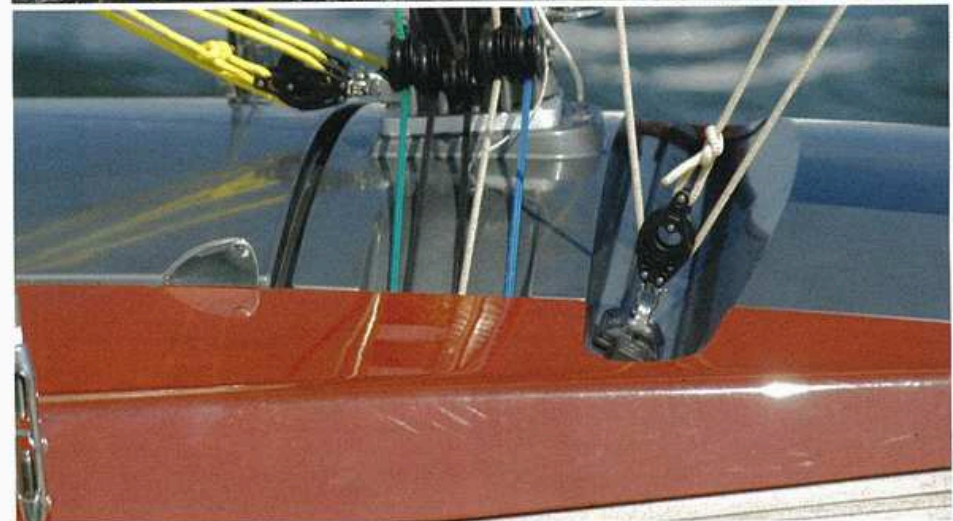
Tying the pair together is Jody LoCascio, a laid-back and talented boat captain whom Buffett met in a surfing lineup and runs the Tofinou's for Buffett. I caught up with LoCascio twice in recent months once. Once in Annapolis, where we went sailing aboard *Alerion* in light air and sunshine with the U.S.

Sailboat Show as a colorful backdrop. We met on the docks again three months later in Key West where he sailed aboard the Farr 40 *Barking Mad* during a lengthy practice session prior to Acura Key West Race Week.

LoCascio is a sailor, and while he loves sailing with The Man and the interesting and colorful friends of The Man, he is hardly a rabid Parrotthead and is refreshingly nonchalant and

aces, and carried a bright yellow Buffett guitar pick as a good luck charm aboard the Farr 40 during Race Week.

**T**he Tofinou 9.5 has been called a "Pocket Wally" in reference to the sleek, stylish and expensive boats produced at the Wally Yachts facility in Monte Carlo. In many way, the comparison is apt. But while the Wallys are ultra-modern creations for



A gentleman's daysailer, *Alerion* finds her sweet spot sailing close to the wind, top. Lines are run under the deck for a clean look, above, while the bright yellow asymmetric spinmaker sports Buffett's shark fin logo, opposite.

humble about his relationship with Buffett. Professional sailor Terry Hutchinson, on the other hand, who served as tactician aboard Emirates Team New Zealand in the 2007 America's Cup Finals and who invited LoCascio aboard *Barking Mad*, is a rabid Parrotthead. Hutchinson owns the hats, listens to "Songs You Know By Heart" in the morning before big

the über-wealthy, the Tofinou has its roots in the European yachting traditions of the 1920s. The original 7-meter Tofinou was designed in 1928 and built of wood. The boats were stable, handsome daysailers and were concentrated on the west coast of France. The design was adapted in the late 1980s by Joubert and his boatbuilding brother Phillippe, who have now



built more than 180 7.0s, including a pair that were used in the movie "What Lies Beneath" and are purportedly now owned by that movie's star, Harrison Ford.

The 9.5 is an extension and an evolution of the 7.0 project. The boat is solidly built and versatile; perfect for short-handed daysailing but ready for a race. At first look, there is almost too much to process. She is a beautiful study in contrasts and almost too much to digest. Carbon mast and teak decks. Dyneema backstay and lazy jacks. Gleaming mahogany and latest generation Harken hardware. An achingly beautiful shearline capped with a carbon fiber bowsprit. But it all works. Like that perfect song emerging from a swirl of inputs, it all comes together. She is a balanced combination of traditional and modern.

The boat is just over 31 feet on deck and, with her T-shaped keel lowered, she draws more than seven feet. Raising the 1,764-pound keel, for trailering or shallow-water sailing, reduces draft to 4 feet, 7 inches. The boat has a surprisingly racy underwater profile as the keel itself is a resin-infused vinyl ester fin with an America's Cup-style lead bulb at the bottom. Raising and lowering is done with an electric system, natu-



**Classically inspired but thoroughly modern, the 31-foot Tofinou is a joy to sail, top. The author takes enough time away from the tiller to smile for the camera with his daughter, above.**

rally, but a manual back-up system is provided.

The sailplan is simple and geared for short-handed sailing. As is typical of the "Gentleman's Daysailer" genre, she flies a large mainsail and a smaller, self-tacking jib. *Aileron* carried Doyle Sails and her oversized bright yellow asymmetric spinnaker, which we struggled to keep full in the light air and powerboat chop of an Annapolis Saturday afternoon, carried Buffett's "fin" logo. Her mainsail was adorned with an ad for Landshark lager, a "new beer

from Margaritaville" according to the advertising, which is a partnership between Buffett and Anheuser-Busch.

With 511 square feet of sail (under main and jib) and a displacement of 4,850 pounds, she is running closer to a J/100 than an Alerion Express 28. *Aileron* has no lifelines and very little freeboard. She loaded up fast upwind, and in quick order the suddenly very close water was rushing by the leeward side. As is the case with many of the boats I have sailed in this genre, the sweet spot is upwind with a bit of breeze. The boat heels over, locks in and tracks beautifully, looking and feeling beautiful while thrilling all aboard and all who get to see her in this mode. Downwind, this type of boat is often sticky, especially in the lighter stuff. This time around, I was keen to be proven wrong by the 9.5's massive asymmetric spinnaker. But the weekend powerboat chop and fading later afternoon breeze failed to provide an adequate testing environment.

The decks are 8-millimeter teak and the craftsmanship and finish impeccable. The cabinhouse, toerails and coamings are varnished mahogany. Halyards, sail control lines, and even jib sheets are run under the deck, which adds to