

review

Extreme 915

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Because every boatie's notion of perfection is different, having options when buying a new boat is useful. Whakatane's Extreme Boats excels in such flexibility, as is demonstrated by two of its 915s.

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he 915 sits near the upper end of Extreme's trailer boat range, third-biggest behind the 985 and 1185. At 9.15m LOA (and weighing around 3.5 ton with engine and trailer) she's certainly an imposing vessel, but your eye tends to be drawn to the racy,

contoured hull with its sharp, aggressive lines.

She carries all the standard Extreme features – robust, marine-grade aluminium construction with built-in, underfloor buoyancy compartments, fastidious welding and a beautifully faired/painted hull. There's also the inherent stability that comes with the flooding keel and the geometrically-precise spray chines that deflect water down and away from the boat. I've heard owners use 'Extreme' as a synonym for 'dry ride'.

And the multitude of grab rails. Thoughtfully positioned, they're a not-so-subtle reminder that these boats are designed

to venture into far-off fishing grounds. If your constitution is up for it, they will cope with whatever the elements dish up once the coastline disappears behind you.

But for me a major appeal of an Extreme investment is the freedom/flexibility buyers are offered – using the same, fundamental platform as the starting point – to create a boat that meets their specific needs. These two 915s – built around the identical hull design – are a perfect example.

One is a Walk Around model with an open cabin; her sister's a Game King with a fully-enclosed cabin. The Walk Around's fitted with twin 200hp Yamahas, the Game King with a single Yamaha V8 – the mighty 425hp XT Offshore. Performance-wise there's not much between them, but the engines and deck/interior configuration choices clearly reflect their owners' respective boating/fishing preferences.

And it all revolves around fishability and accommodation – shaping a solution around its intended use.



*the*

**EXTREME**



## FISHABILITY

Both vessels are equipped with outriggers – so trolling’s a common hunting technique for the two owners. But if you’re hosting four mates who enjoy handling rods, they’re definitely going to have an easier time on the Walk Around. The additional space along the sides and foredeck helps to minimise crossed lines – it’s much easier to chase after a kingie doing frantic laps around the boat.

With the engine choices though, I think the pendulum swings the other way. The single 425hp takes up less space, reflected by the Game King’s slightly larger platforms behind the transom, either side of the engine well. Both boats are

equipped with sturdy rails around these platforms – anglers standing there will feel secure – but with the single engine they’ll have a bit more freedom for playing the catch.

Interestingly, there’s not much of a weight difference: the 425hp tips the scales at around 450kg, while each 200hp weighs 220kg. I’d argue, though, the twin set-up offers sharper manoeuvrability.

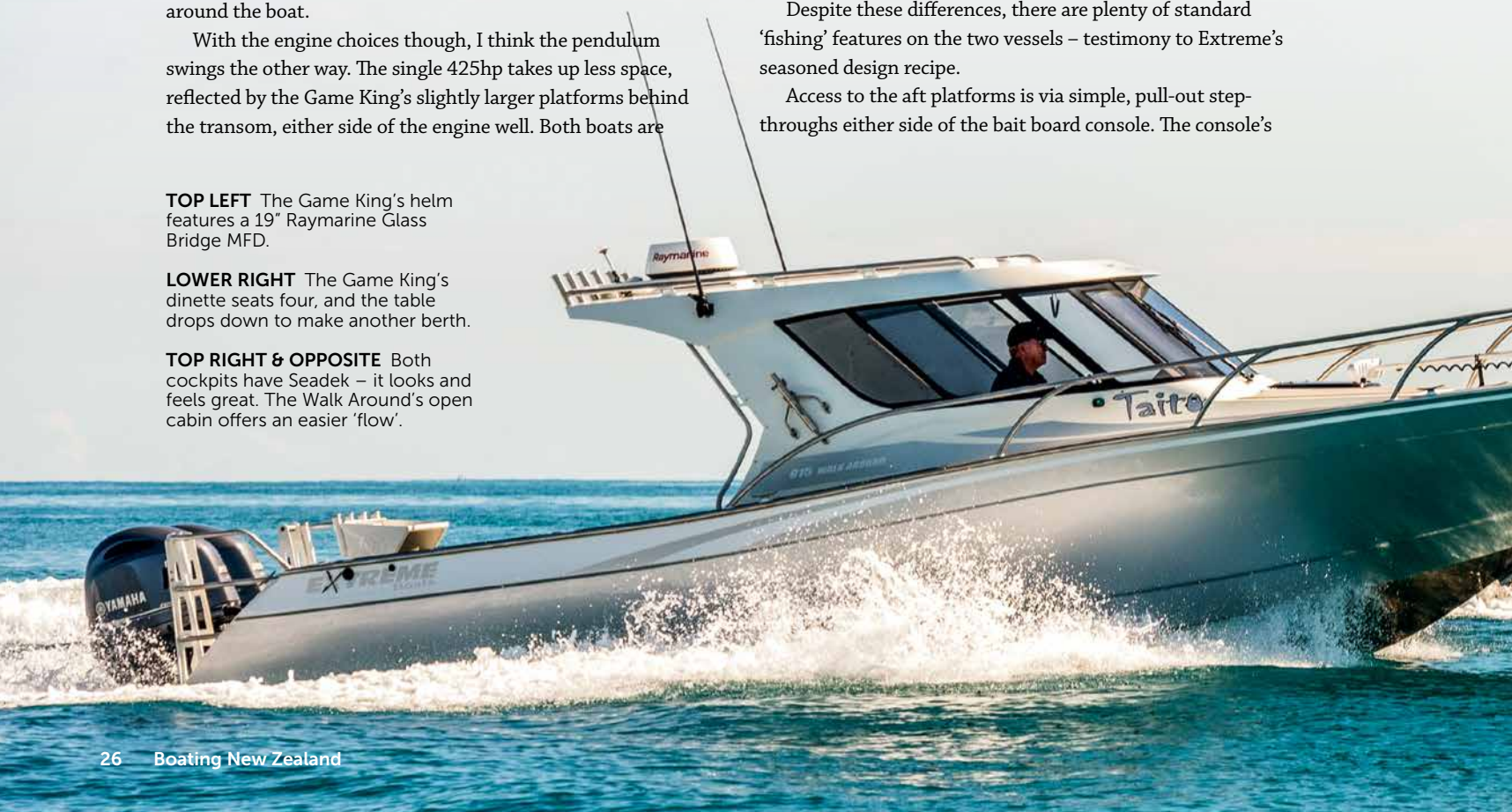
Despite these differences, there are plenty of standard ‘fishing’ features on the two vessels – testimony to Extreme’s seasoned design recipe.

Access to the aft platforms is via simple, pull-out step-throughs either side of the bait board console. The console’s

**TOP LEFT** The Game King’s helm features a 19” Raymarine Glass Bridge MFD.

**LOWER RIGHT** The Game King’s dinette seats four, and the table drops down to make another berth.

**TOP RIGHT & OPPOSITE** Both cockpits have Seadek – it looks and feels great. The Walk Around’s open cabin offers an easier ‘flow’.





identical on both boats – though the Game King has a slightly flashier bait board – it's equipped with a spacious drawer below for accessories. On the Walk Around this is an open cavity. Under the port step-through is a live bait tank with a window – conveniently located when you need to re-bait in a hurry.

Both boats are riddled with rod holders – three per side (gunnels), four on the aft edge of the bait board, two more on the aft platform rails and another eight in the

cabin-top rocket-launcher. Can you ever have enough rod holders? The Game King's six gunnel rod holders are Evolution 360° rotating models – perfect for coping with a panicking marlin.

And for rods equipped with electric reels – there are 12-volt outlets under the gunnels at the aft end of the cockpit – neatly tucked away from corrosive seawater. Nearby, either side, you'll also find knee-wash buttons – one seawater, one freshwater – for hands-free rinsing. Keeping the





**ABOVE** Both boats carry Minn Kota electric motors.

**RIGHT** The difference in the two deck layouts reflects the owners' fishing aspirations.



I've heard owners use 'Extreme' as a synonym for 'dry ride'.

boats stationary over hot spots – or at least drifting in a controlled manner – is courtesy of Minn Kota electric trolling motors – mounted on the port sides of the foredecks.

To make the most of the expansive space, both cockpits sport hard-wearing, easy-to-clean Seadek. Its symmetry is super-neat and looks very smart – the grey complements the vessels' silver/white colour schemes – and it feels even better underfoot. In fact, the product is used everywhere on the boats – on the gunnels, on the foredeck, inside the cabins – even on the Game King's roof. If you've been ordered up there with binocs to scour the horizon for birds/work-ups, your butt may as well be comfy.

And speaking of finding fish...

The 915's helm has serious dash space for MFDs – offering





**RIGHT & BELOW** The Game King's galley; the boat's riddled with lockers and drawers.

**OPPOSITE** The single engine uses less space. Nifty lockers in the cockpit sole will take dive tanks.



owners plenty of choice. The Walkaround has twin Raymarine 12" HybridTouch units – the Game King's owner has opted for a single Raymarine 19" Axiom Glass Bridge.

The latter's clarity/versatility is spectacular – you could spend all day playing with it, too absorbed to even think about the fishing. To fully utilise its features, this MFD interfaces with *three* transducers – you can witness every snapper's chirps and burps in high-definition.

More importantly, though, the MFDs on both boats are sufficiently large to provide visual cues to anyone fishing at the transom. That's easy to understand on the Walk Around – it's an open cabin. On the enclosed Game King? Well, there's a very clever arrangement: the cabin's aft bulkhead has a bi-fold door in the centre, flanked by two large windows. Both windows drop down, leaving clear sightlines to the helm/MFD. Easy for the skipper to communicate with the chap wrestling the marlin.

With its panoramic 360° views, the 915's helm station is a confidence-booster – thanks to the large, curved side windows and narrow mullions. It's particularly helpful when close-quarter manoeuvring and driving the vessel on to its trailer.



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## ACCOMMODATION

The other major difference between the two 915s is the accommodation – again reflecting the two owners' specific preferences. While both have massive V-berths in the fully-lined forepeak, the Game King's bigger interior volume allows for two, fold-out pipe-cots above the squabs.

The Game King's owner spends a lot of time overnighing with his family, so this four-berth arrangement is ideal. There is a chemical toilet under the squabs (a fully-plumbed option is available) and a curtain at the forepeak's entrance is for those who prefer discreet ablutions. Of course, the same four-berth set-up works equally well for really close fishing buddies who're non-judgmental about bodily noises/odours in the night.

With no rear bulkhead, the superior 'flow' between cabin and cockpit on the Walk Around is obvious. There's plenty of seating – helm and passenger seat, with an arrangement of bench seats cascading aft. Full marks to Extreme's design team for creativity with storage lockers. They're everywhere.

Given the owner's enthusiasm for family cruising, the Game King's layout has been designed for extended trips – the cabin's equipped with a



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**TOWING A 915**

At 9.15m these Extreme's need serious trailers. The Game King's model is a particularly flash affair: an aluminium GFAB triple-axle beauty. Two axles are braked (Credo electric braking system) and the large winch up front is remotely controlled. The trailer comes with a 12-year warranty.



**RIGHT** With more interior volume, the Game King's forepeak has two fold-out pipe cots.



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galley and a dinette. A sink, single-burner cooker and an 85-litre Isotherm fridge/freezer are the galley's key features, but note the practical 'home' considerations, such as the USB ports above the bench-top.

Next to them are the diesel heater's controls. With the door/windows closed, it keeps the cabin toasty on chilly mornings/evenings. Opposite, on a raised platform, is the dinette – perfect for four. And when Dad's snoring begins rattling the windows, he'll be banished to the pedestal table. It lowers to seat height and, with a drop-in squab, converts into a full-length berth.

I like the LED lighting – particularly the fact that it's both dimmable and can be switched to red

**RIGHT** Identical hulls with different engine choices and configurations.

... I've no doubt it will be an immensely rewarding investment ...



### EXPANDING A LEGACY

Extreme Boats is in expansion mode.

The company recently completed a new facility specifically geared to its new division – Legacy Marine. It's a dedicated building for producing large sportsfishers and commercial vessels – all in the company's trademark aluminium.

Hull #1 is a 70-foot sportsfisher powered by twin 1900hp MAN V12 diesels. This new Legacy range includes a 40- and a 50-footer – both still on the drawing board.

Recently launched is a 12m 'fuel barge', the company's first commercial vessel – built for Hauraki Express. She's designed to carry 10,000 litres of diesel – providing a friendly fuel-delivery service for boaties caught short in the more distant parts of Hauraki Gulf. She's powered by twin 485hp Cummins engines.

Extreme's 85 staff members currently produce around 350 boats a year.



for night vision. Both boats have 150Ah house batteries, and on the Game King the charging's supplemented by a 200-watt solar panel on the roof. Note that the Walk Around can also be configured with a fully-enclosed cabin.

### PERFORMANCE

I've driven many Extreme boats over the years and it's never a disappointing experience – the 915 didn't blot the copybook. Admittedly, our visit coincided with sublime, settled weather, but it *did* provide the opportunity to explore the boat's agility – and for a relatively heavy 9.15m vessel it's extraordinary.



**LEFT** The new facility is specifically geared to the building of large sportsfishers and commercial vessels.

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In terms of power and physical size, Yamaha's 425hp V8 might be an intimidating outboard, but it seems tailor-made for the Game King. And to be fair, the 915's agility is partly a function of the V8's electric steering. It's superb, one-finger stuff – super-light – and without it throwing the boat around as we were would be impossible.

I think I'll rephrase that: I drove like a gentleman. Extreme Boats sales manager Shane Laurent rolled his eyes and took over. Let's just say I was really happy to have the handholds – and the padding along the side of the passenger seat to absorb the G-Forces. High-speed pirouettes might look great for the cameraman – but they do generate regrets about the mince pie consumed an hour earlier.

Both rig options suit the 915 perfectly – and in terms of performance and fuel efficiency there's

not much difference. Together the Walk Around's twin 200hp Yamahas consume 50 litres/hour at a 26-28 knot cruise speed (3,800 – 3,900rpm). At her 25-knot cruise speed the Game King's using 45 litres/hour (3,700rpm). At WOT both boats reach around 42 knots. Of course, it's not only about performance and efficiency – the V8's note is demure at gentlemanly speeds, but at full power its song stirs the testosterone. Quite a treat for an old geezer.

A 915, of course, will be a challenging proposition for any boatie – not the least because of the capital outlay, towing requirements and handling – but I've no doubt it will be an immensely rewarding investment – especially because you can tweak it to suit your boating/fishing dreams.

Just go easy on the throttle. **BNZ**



## Extreme 915

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### HIGHLIGHTS

Seadek – it looks  
and feels great

Performance  
– pretty impressive  
for large boats

Game King's interior  
accommodation  
– very versatile

### SPECIFICATIONS

**loa** 9.15m

**beam** 2.82m

**construction** marine-grade  
aluminium

**hull thickness** 6mm (standard)  
with 8mm upgrade option

**side & deck thickness** 4mm

**deadrise** 20°

**recommended hp** 300-450

**towing weight** 3,450kg  
(approx) inc engine & trailer

**passengers** rated for 8 people

**fuel** 450 litres (bigger on request)

**cruising speed** 25-26 knots

**max speed** 42 knots

