



Setting up for Sportfishing

STELLA

KEEPING IT SIMPLE AND PRACTICAL

This is the second Extreme 795 Mangawhai charter operator Tony Orton has set up. He told NZ Fishing News' Grant Dixon that this boat (an Extreme 795XST) is a "notable example of how the manufacturer continues to evolve its models."

“We haven’t deviated much from the standard production boat – this one is the little brother to the flagship 915XST. The major change for us is going from a twin outboard rig to a Mercury diesel,” says Tony.

His new charter vessel *Stella*, has been designed with two principles in mind – simplicity and ease of use.

“At sea, there needs to be room for the clients to move around and fish in comfort, and when we get back to the dock and it is clean-up time, we have set the boat up to make that as quick and efficient as possible.”

The fishing

Tony’s speciality are trips to the Mokohinau Islands, targeting big snapper and kingfish. An obvious choice was the full walk-around hull that enables Tony’s clients to all be engaged in the fishing process.

“We might be slow-trolling livebaits for kingfish with two

anglers in the stern, with another two at the bow casting topwater lures or soft-baits – everyone is involved with a good chance of hooking up.”

A change from the standard cockpit layout is space for a 90-litre split lid IceyTek bin which sits on the motor box, with six rod holders set into the surrounds. Tony carries 4-5 bags of ice and this is where clients keep their drinks cool. Any fish kept are placed in Kai Coolers and iced down, so there is no mixing of drinks and fish scales.

The centered engine box allows anglers to walk easily across the stern, enabling them to follow their fish, which is especially important when dealing with billfish at the boat. There is no game chair – instead the anglers fish stand-up using Black Magic Equalizer sets.

Livebaiting is a huge part of the fishing operation, each day starting with a bait-gathering session on the coast. *Stella* has

1) A key feature of the boat’s fishability is the full transom walkaround, enabling anglers to follow their fish. 2) Providing the economic power to *Stella* is a 3.0 litre V6 Mercruiser diesel. 3) Livebaits are an essential part of Tony’s fishing operation. This one incorporates two tuna tubes and is supplied by just the one 3500GPH pump.





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“I feel quite at home with a diesel motor and I believe their harmonics can help raise fish.”



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1) The forward casting platform is a great spot for casting topwater lures or soft-baits. 2) The simplicity of design and function can be clearly seen from above. 3) Underneath Stella looks the part. 4) The clean lines of Stella's transom. 5) Centre stage on the engine box is a 92 litre split lid IceyTek cooler, surrounded by 10 rod holders. 6) OceanBlue bases and Reel Rods riggers have been set up with double halyards to enable both lure and livebait trolling, as well as running teasers. 7) Pop-up cleats sit flush with the gunwale when not needed – one less thing to catch lines on.



1) The uncluttered cockpit with plenty of storage is a feature of the Extreme 795 XST, making it ideal as a charter boat. 2) The passenger seat can be configured four different ways, including an option of creating a child's berth. 3) The MinnKota is the 'second crew member', operated by a remote controller. The ground tackle is deployed via a SavWinch drum system.

quite a unique livebait tank/tuna tube set-up, described by Tony as "the best I have ever used." One 3700GPH Rule pump feeds the tank and the tubes.

"On the old boat I had to have three smaller pumps – one for the tank and one each for the tubes. This system makes two of those pumps redundant – two less things to maintain or possibly fail."

The two tubes are set inside the livebait tank, one on either side. The water initially flows through them and then tumbles into the main tank, effectively helping to aerate it along the way. As a backup, there is a standard aerator in the tank, which Tony says can hold up to 100 good-sized jack mackerel baits – more than enough for a hot Mokohinau kingfish session.

Having the tuna tubes on all the time gives the anglers somewhere to put their livebaits if a shift in location is required, preventing any tangles. It leaves the transom 'clean,' which is aided by the use of pop-up cleats

Stella has been well set up for gamefishing. The outriggers are Reel Rods 19ft carbon fibre blanks set in Ocean Blue bases. Tony has these set up using a double halyard system through which he can run lures conventionally as well as teasers or livebaits. All are within easy reach of the cockpit.

An electric Cannon downrigger and a dredge complete the fishing

set-up, along with a MinnKota Terrova 112lb electric trolling motor.

"I have grown to rely on this bit of kit – it is great for holding the anglers over a productive pin as well as slowly covering the ground when livebaiting or casting topwater lures. I think it would be hard to have a boat without it, given our style of fishing."

Shimano tackle is the weaponry of choice. For gamefishing there are Talica 50's, with Talica 12's matched with Abyss rods for livebaiting and jigging. Vanford reels on Dialuna rods are the go-to tackle for soft-baiting. A selection of Stella reels matched to Ocea rods do the topwater business.

The vessel

At the heart of *Stella* is the Mercruiser 3.0 litre 270HP V6 diesel, running through a SeaCore Bravo II duo-prop leg.

While less common in a trailerboat, Tony noted that diesels are the norm for the big boats he's run for much of his chartering life.

"I feel quite at home with a diesel motor and I believe their harmonics can help raise fish – I certainly hope so!" Tony says.

Currently, *Stella* will burn, on average, 40 litres a trip less than the twin 200HP outboards and given the cost of petrol over diesel, that is quite a saving. Offshore Adventures have invested in their own mini-tanker, which holds 2000 litres at a time. By





1) Tackle can be left on board with the knowledge it will be safe in a lock-up cabin. 2) The two large drawers under the helm station are ideal for tackle storage. 3) The helm station is dominated by a 22" Garmin screen. 4) More SeaDek provides waist height padding for anglers tackling a decent fish. A transom door makes bringing the bigger fish on board an easier task.

the numbers, Stella burns just on 1.5 litres per nautical mile when cruising at 22-25 knots, depending on conditions. At trolling speed (7-8 knots), the usage is 5-6 litres an hour.

Another feature that makes the end-of-day clean up quicker is the freshwater flush. A freshwater hose is plugged into a fitting on the side of the motor and it is run while the boat is being cleaned.

There is no shortage of rod holders on board – 28 to be exact. Tony has added the Evolution 360 rod holders to the gunwales which gives him many choices as to angles for gamefishing especially.

"These are rated for up to 130lb tackle so I can even run the dredge pole from them if necessary."

For those fishing forward there are a couple of rod holders in the bow. A further 10 are set around the IceyTek on the engine box, plus a single row rocket launcher holds a further eight. However, one of the best is a removable four-rod holder that is slipped over the lower cockpit shelf, offering the reels far more protection than they would get in the gunwale itself when underway.

Another excellent feature of the boat is the SeaDek flooring. This has been applied throughout

the boat and as well as providing great grip underfoot, it also has a cushioning effect.

"Comparing it with the likes of chequer plate alloy or tube matting, it offers so many benefits, making a huge difference to relieving the stresses on legs and feet caused by a long day at sea. I certainly notice it and the anglers

regularly comment positively on its cushioning effect."

A 22" Garmin screen dominates the helm station, and features a 24-inch radar, the sounder paired with a powerful 2kW transducer that Tony says is "next level – doesn't matter how fast you are going, you get a clear image of the terrain and fish below." The



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1) Towing is done courtesy of a Ford Ranger Wildtrak X, which handles the big rig comfortably and safely. 2) A high-powered electric winch and a Boat Catch make retrieving the boat onto the GFab trailer a simple task. 3) Trim is provided via a set of HydaTabs. With the stern leg deployed, there is very little to catch a line on. 4) On the road, a triple-axle customised GFab trailer, braked on all six wheels, takes care of the business.

Garmin is linked to the Fusion sound system and there is also a satellite compass to back up the conventional one on board.

HydroTabs are fitted to the transom and these are recessed, adding to the clean, clear working space at the blunt end – nothing to catch a line around.

There is excellent vision from the helm and a fresh water pump on the windscreen washer is a practical add-on.

The king/queen seating on the port side can be configured in four different ways, including the creation of a child's bunk or a great place to comfortably watch the lures being washed astern. Clever use of space has been made for storage – either pull-out drawers under the helm and navigator seats or shelving in the hardtop, cockpit and cuddy.

Another often overlooked feature when people are building boats are hand-holds. With a couple of bar crossings to be undertaken each trip, having plenty of places for anglers to hang on in relative comfort and safety is important. There is no shortage of holds on *Stella*.

The vessel is set up as a day boat but does have some creature comforts for what will mainly be family overnighting excursions. There is a flush toilet, an infill that creates a double bed, and a bunk/hammock suitable for children.

The ground tackle deployment comes courtesy of a SavWinch

1500 SS drum winch system.

“While I don't do a lot of anchoring, this is the fifth boat I have had this system in and I have never had any trouble. It is manufactured from marine grade stainless steel and is fully sealed.”

On the road

Stella is trailered on an alloy GFab triple-axle trailer which is braked on all six wheels using the Credo system. The GFab team insisted Tony run 14-inch rims with commercial tyres for a better towing experience and he was concerned the larger diameter tyres would mean it wouldn't fit in his shed – it made it by 70mm!

When retrieving, it's common

for Tony to drive the boat onto the trailer, a BoatCatch securing the hull once it is fully loaded.

“A BoatCatch is to a trailer what a MinnKota is to a boat.”

A Trail Max electric winch does the hard grunt where such retrieving is not possible.

On the road, *Stella* is towed by a Ford Ranger Wildtrak X that features the latest 2.0-litre diesel power plant coupled with a 10-speed automatic gearbox.

“The Ranger is a great tow wagon and I prefer the 2.0-litre engine over the previous 3.2-litre option – it has longer legs on the hills and better fuel economy. When not towing it is just as comfortable as driving a car.”

As mentioned, Tony's goal was to keep *Stella* as simple as possible, from loading up in the morning through to the clean-up at night.

“Storing the boat in a shed is a big bonus – there is no need to clear windows in the morning and the clients step aboard a clean, dry boat to start their day.”

As to its performance, Extreme has redesigned the hull slightly, which Tony says has provided a much better blue water performance thanks to a finer entry without losing any stability.

“The way the boat handles in a quartering sea is especially noticeable.”