

New beginnings for a Blackfin

STORY BY TED DIXON ■ PHOTOS BY MIKE HUNTER



Te Anuata is the ideal boat for her angling owner. He fishes her successfully in local tournaments and because of her small size, he can fish her on his own. He loves the way his boat handles in the often rough waters outside the reef in Tahiti.

Built in Florida, USA in the early 1990s, *Te Anuata* is less than 33 feet overall. Her 22-degree, deep-vee hull and heavy displacement of 9.15 tonnes give her the seakeeping abilities of much larger boats. She is a Blackfin 32.

Blackfin boaters are a dedicated group with their own website. These owners are fanatical when it comes to

their boats. The last Blackfin was produced in 1997 and the boats have become collector's items. This 'cultish' following can be attributed to the boat's comfortable ride in all sea conditions and superb handling in tight conditions; Blackfins perform well and they seem to catch fish.

Imagine his anguish when *Te*

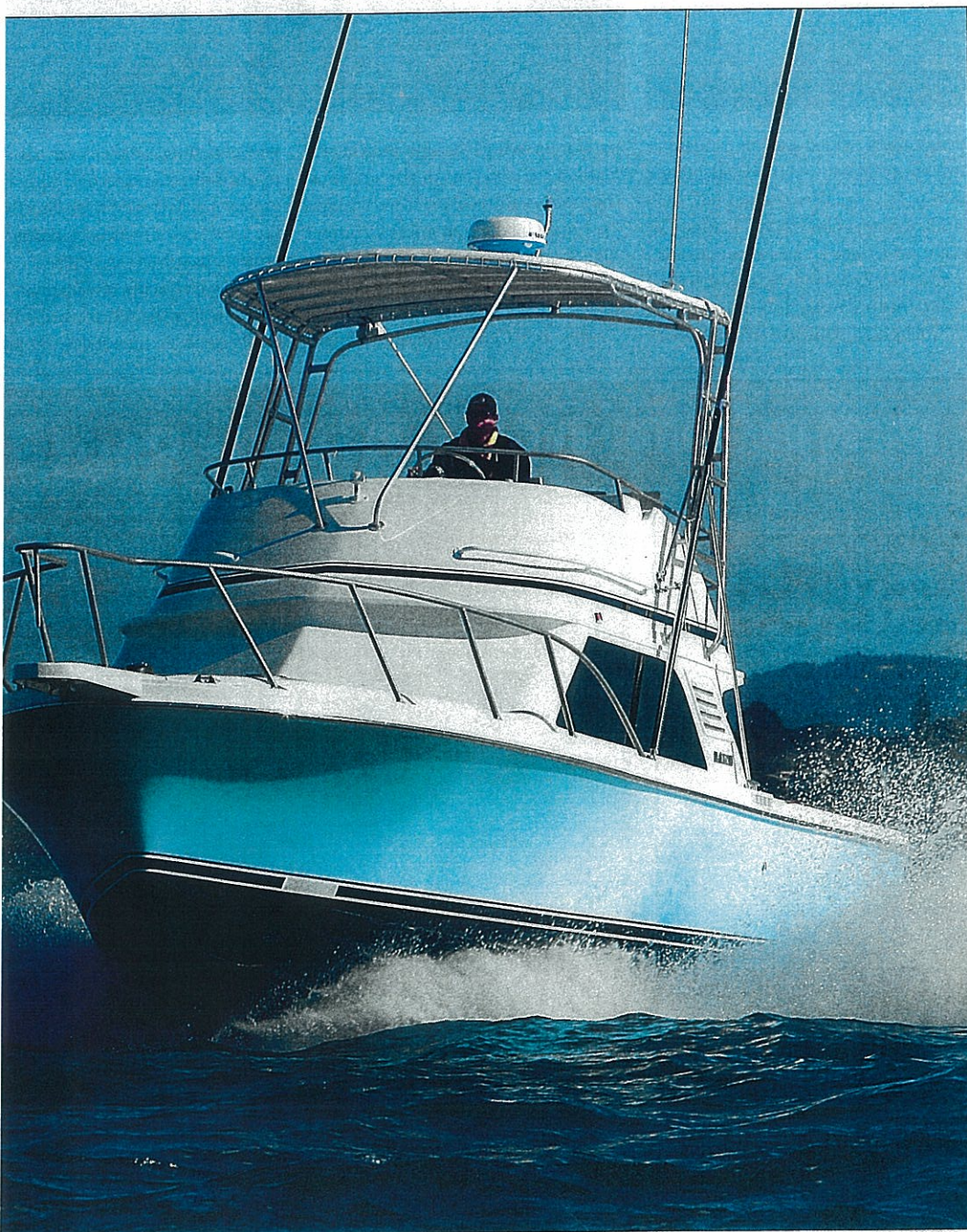
Anuata's owner one day discovered her resting on the muddy bottom in her marina berth, mucky, oily water flooding over her cockpit, submerging the engines and entering the cabin. Her interior and engines were ruined. The sinking proved to be due to a faulty siphon break in the toilet.

This owner showed a dedication that



LEFT: *Te Anuata* up on the hard in Tahiti before being shipped to New Zealand and, below, underway on Auckland's Waitemata Harbour after her exhaustive refit.

The boat's interior, electronics and machinery were written off after she went down at her marina berth. Integrated Marine Services in New Zealand replaced virtually everything except the rudders, trim tabs and some external fittings.



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The boat's all-new interior is well suited to tropical day-tripping. Plastic clears separate it from the cockpit.

would impress the most diehard Blackfin fan. He looked at buying another boat but none matched, for him, his Blackfin, so he raised the boat, removed

the engines, loaded her on a freighter and shipped her to Integrated Marine Group (IMG) in New Zealand.

Mark Wightman of IMG first saw *Te Anuata* when she arrived at the container wharf in Auckland. He was surprised by how badly damaged she was.

"A black oily film covered the boat's



exterior up to the flybridge, showing the depth of the water in which she'd sunk. The interior, the cockpit – everything – was ruined by the contaminated water," Wightman explains.

Integrated Marine Group is a partnership of Electrics Afloat, Whiting Power Systems and General Marine Services.

Between them, they cover all major repair and refit expertise; MG acts as project managers and work directly with the crew and/or owners of vessels. Their projects date back to 1994 and include several superyachts – *Te Anuata* was much smaller than their usual refits and IMG agreed to undertake the project.



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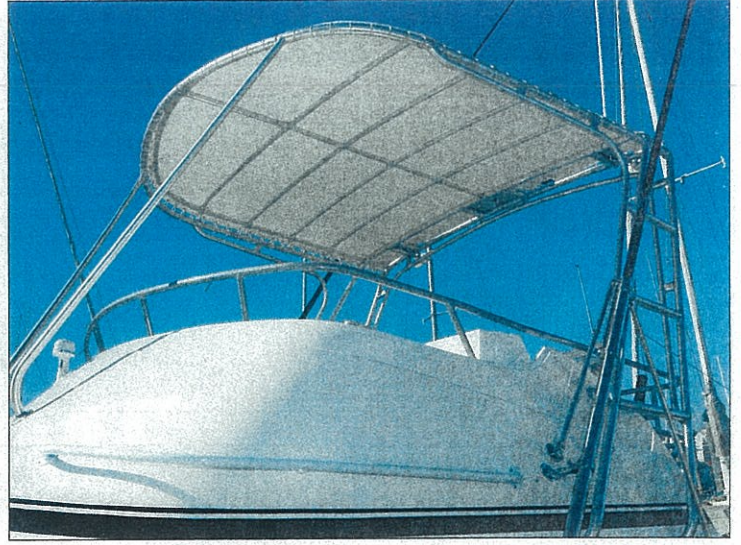
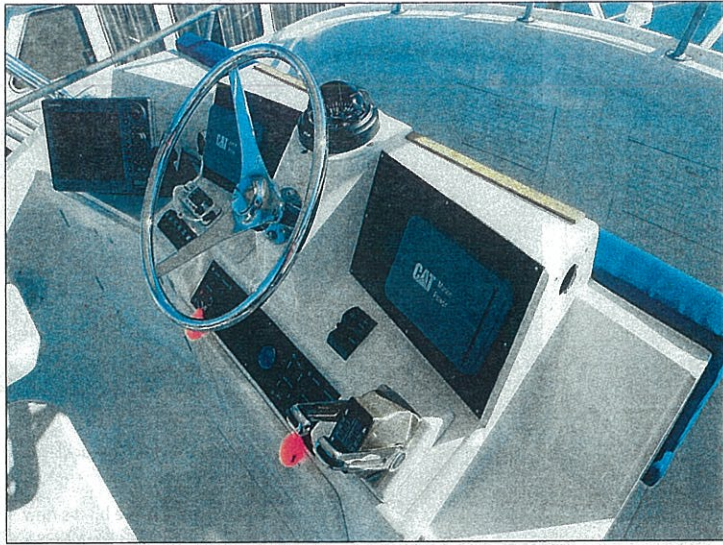
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sight unseen, which was unusual. They relied on photos and information from the owner about the level of damage.

Wightman says the refit of *Te Anuata*, despite her modest size, was a fairly large project. Firstly, they needed to fully understand what the owner wanted in his 'new boat'. From there,

they coordinated all aspects of the refit, including major structural work in the hull and cabin areas prompted by damage not related to the sinking of the boat but discovered during the refit. They then planned the machinery and engineered and installed the systems to run the boat.

"One of the biggest issues was fitting bigger equipment into smaller spaces," says Wightman: "it became a big challenge putting an inline, six-cylinder engine into where a v-engine used to fit."

The boat's owner made numerous trips to New Zealand to liaise with IMG on the project, which IMG appreciated.

Most of the alloy pipework was retained, with replacement parts painted to match; flybridge electronics are all new.

While the boat is fibreglass, nearly all its timber was infested with termites, a common problem in the tropics. The

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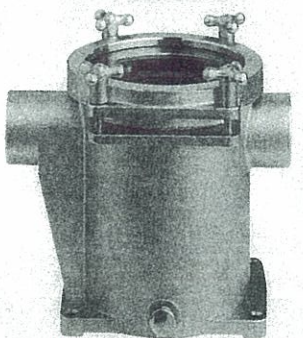
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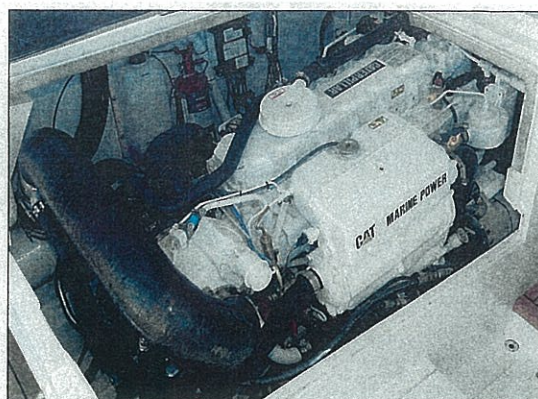
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TOP LEFT: Stripping the boat in Auckland.

ABOVE & LEFT: The boat's new machinery after the refit.

INTEGRATED MARINE GROUP

The Integrated Marine Group is a partnership of Electrics Afloat, Whiting Power and General Marine Service formed during the America's Cup defence in 2003 to support the large number of superyachts visiting New Zealand and requiring upgrades or refits.

Electrics Afloat provides marine electrical expertise. Whiting Power Systems provides experience and expertise in propulsion and mechanical engineering. General Marine Services provides expertise in fluid handling engineering.

From superyacht refits, routine vessel maintenance to projects like Teanuata, the team at IMG works closely with owners. IMG combines the specialised talents and experiences of each of the partners into a one-stop shop. What they can't do in-house, they bring in, managing other professionals to complete the work.

IMG ensures it keeps its customers informed through every stage of the project, from planning phases to completion, with continuing service and worldwide support.

cabinetry in the cabin, the bulkheads, the longitudinal stringers – even the engine bearers – had to be excised.

Over 14 months, IMG performed or coordinated the work. She was stripped down to her bare hull, the stringers rebuilt, her aft bulkheads removed and replaced with half-height bulkheads and plastic clears so that the interior flows into the cockpit to create an open plan,

sport cruiser feel. The new layout is well suited to the tropics allowing natural ventilation to cool the interior.

"Going from a closed cabin to an open cabin brought some structural considerations, and aesthetic considerations," Wightman says.

"The hull is very soft without structure such as engine bearers and longitudinals to keep it stiff. We took datum

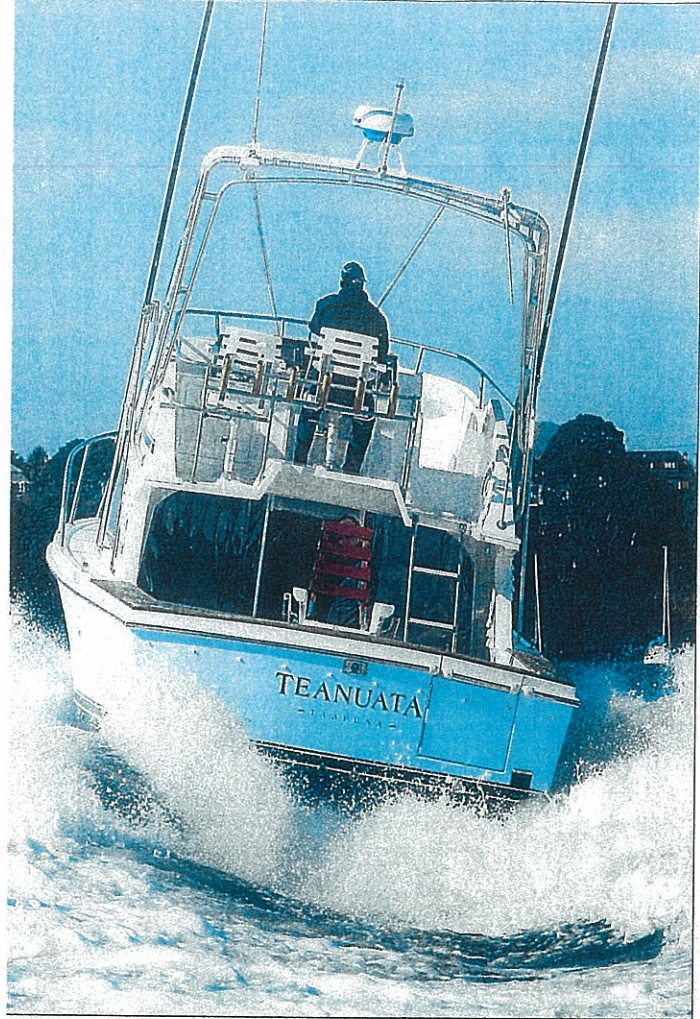
points all over the hull, then made sure it was dead level on a concrete floor. We supported the keel and all along the chines and kept checking it against the datum points and were very careful to make sure the hull didn't move. When it was fitted out originally, it would have still been in the mould."

The boat's interior is uncluttered and comfortable. Plain laminated surfaces are set off by wooden trim. A circular settee and a small timber table are to port. The galley with an under counter microwave, front load fridge, hob and sink lie to starboard. There's a compact head to starboard forward of the galley. Furthest forward in the bow area is a double v-berth. The facilities are designed for day use or an occasional overnight stay. The boat looks and feels like sportfishing boat.

On deck, the ample cockpit sole is covered in teak. Characteristic engine boxes, which hide the big Caterpillars, are upholstered and double as comfortable seats. The impressive Lees fighting chair is a reminder of the vintage and purpose of the boat. It gleams in the cockpit.

Most of the boat is new, except the hull, rudders, and stainless fixtures – cleats, chair, and rod holders. The team re-used the existing aluminium bimini structure over the flybridge. What new tubing was needed was painted to match the original.

IMG has close affiliation with Mann engines, through Whiting Power Systems., but, based on the serviceability in the islands, the owner chose Caterpillar C7 engines at 455hp each.



SPECIFICATIONS

model	Blackfin 32 Flybridge aka Blackfin 33
builder	Blackfin Boats Florida, USA
years built	1988-1997
loa	32ft 11in, 10.04 m
lwl	29ft, 8.83m
beam	12ft, 6.66m
draft	29in, 88.9cm
disp original	9.15t
since rebuild	8.9t
engines	(two) C7 Caterpillar 455hp @ 2800rpm
fuel consumption	95.2L/hr per engine full speed
top speed	35kts
transmission	Twin Disc MF 5016 A
ratio	1.5:1
shafts	1.75in 2 @ 2205 stainless
seals	Manebar
shaft bearings	2@ Durmax
propellers	2@ Henley Black Tip 5-blade Nibral
steering	Hynautic
fuel capacity	1420L

A better than new *Te Anuata* carves up Auckland's Waitemata Harbour at more than 30 knots.

The Twin-disc transmissions sling Henley Black Tip five-blade Nibral propellers. Top speed with the new power plants is 35 knots.

IMG added 250 litres fuel capacity to a total of 1420 litres, to provide a greater range for fishing trips.

The Caterpillars are electronically controlled with fly by wire technology. The lower station is controlled by a single joystick.

After 14 months work, *Te Anuata's* owner first her in her new Sea Foam colour at the Auckland International Boatshow.

"When he saw it, he just stopped in his tracks," Wightman says happily. "He said, 'You've understood what I wanted completely. You've cracked it.'"

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