Jackpot, the new, lifting keel Elliott Tourer 1650 designed by Greg Elliott, right. The yacht can sail or motor at more than 10 knots.

HIGH NUMBERS

"Once you've cruised like this, you would never go back." Auckland yacht designer Greg Elliott is espousing the benefits of single-level flow from cockpit to saloon: his signature style on performance cruising yachts.

STORY BY REBECCA HAYTER | PHOTOS BY MIKE HUNTER

Jackpot, the Elliott Tourer 1650 under gennaker in light airs on the Hauraki Gulf. Offshore, she will average 210 miles a day.

He is comparing this to the conventional style in which the saloon is several steps lower than the cockpit, effectively separating the two areas, socially and physically.

"Gone are the days when the woman disappeared below and occasionally poked her head out to talk to people," Elliott continues. "It's like stepping down into a cave."

The Australian owners of *Jackpot*, the new Elliott Tourer 1650, obviously agreed. They were all but signed up on a big Australian production yacht until a last minute decision to catch a flight to Auckland to sail a rum race on *Go*, an Elliott 16m. They smoked the opposition.

Impressed, the Australians visited the 1650 Tourer, then almost completed at Harbour Yachts in Auckland. The upshot was that they bought it.

Jackpot is part of Elliott's Tourer range which includes the 1250: eg *Austral Express*; 1350: eg *Vavoom*, a sixth boat is in build; 1450: *Ubique, Elysium*; 1550: one boat is in build; 1650: *Jackpot*, a seventh boat is in build.

There is a strong family resemblance: plumb bow, straight sheer, narrow entry flattening aft and flared topsides.

Jackpot makes good use of space but still feels racey. Her cockpit extends forever: from the open transom, twin helmstations and then about a mile of walkway between seats either side. Beneath the port seat is a locker than could take a Remuera tractor, and there's enough space under the sole for liferaft, dive gear and a deflated, inflatable dinghy.

The starboard side is devoted to the double quarter berth cabin.

The cockpit flows on one level forward into the saloon, where the pilothouse provides nearly all-round views through the 10mm safety glass. Discreet lighting adds elegance at night.

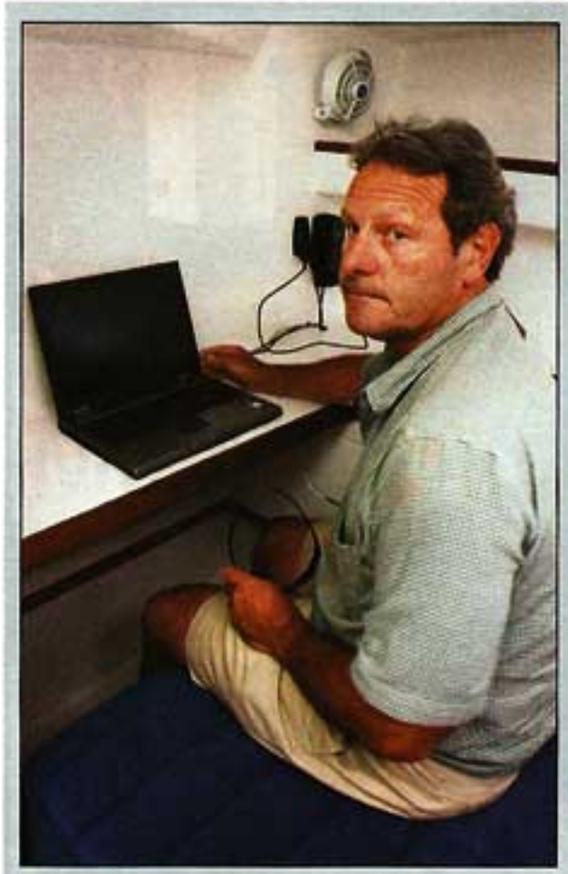
The galley, to port, is delicious with a top-opening freezer, a front-opening fridge, two pull-out bins for rubbish, a stretch of bench space as long as a start line, and a cutlery drawer with exquisite, custom made timber dividers.

Flush-fitting Lewmar hatches either side in the pilothouse-cockpit bulkhead give more inter-flow with the cockpit, on the same level.

Stowage abounds throughout the boat, including galley and saloon lockers. Unlike most designers, Elliott isn't concerned that filling these lockers with food and gear will impair the yacht's performance.

"We can easily carry two tonnes of liquid [fuel and water]," he says. "It won't affect it upwind; in fact it might even benefit from it. Downwind and reaching, it might affect it by, say, two per cent. Out of ten knots boatspeed, sailing or motoring, that's nothing to worry about, is it?"

The stand up nav station is forward, to port, with large chart table, electronics and BEP switchboard. To starboard, a large saloon table on a raised platform provides for good views outside when seated. The double, aft quarter cabin to starboard is down a couple of steps which separate it nicely from the saloon and bring privacy to the day head, accessed off these steps.



Tacktick

The basic electronics kit on *Jackpot* is: VHF Icom, SSB and Tuner Icom, Raymarine E Series chartplotters, Iridium phone and Toshiba laptop, and the B&G Hydra series autopilot with integrated ram.

The base instrument pack is a single band G NMEA FFD into BandG processor linked to Pilot processor and display. All additional displays are by Tacktick, using the new Dual Line Maxi displays mounted on the cockpit/pilothouse bulkhead and the remote, usually in the hand of the tactician: all supplied by Kiwi Yachting.

The Tacktick displays for outside use can display all available data – wind, depth, speed compass and GPS – in large numbers which can be changed easily using the remote and can be mounted anywhere without cables.

This version of Tacktick has graphic historic displays on the remote to help tacticians make a call on likely wind shifts without leaving the rail. Tacktick receives and displays data from Raymarine and B&G.

FROM ABOVE LEFT: The mainsail has a bridle and single line mainsheet. The long cockpit flows into the saloon.

QUIET RUNNING

Elliott has designed some high profile racing yachts, such as *Maximus, Hydroflow/Upshot* and co-designed *Mari Cha IV*, and he doesn't believe in hanging around when cruising either. As we saw during our sea trial, *Jackpot* cruises easily at 8.5 knots at 2200rpm under motor, using about 6 litres per hour, but will sprint at a much less economical 10 knots at 2600rpm.

The power comes from the 110hp Yanmar engine beneath the saloon sole. "The centre third of the boat houses all the heavy items," Elliott says: "engine, tankage and pumps."

The central positioning of the engine requires a longer than usual propeller shaft, so its installation includes an Aquadrive thrust bearing to control the vibration and manage the forces from the propeller. The Aquadrive allows the use of soft engine mounts for extra smooth, quiet motoring.

"This boat might be motoring for 24 hours so the Aquadrive bearing saves wear and tear on the soft mounts," Elliott says. "It's the way to go in these bigger installations."

Although he happily describes *Jackpot* as a cruising boat, he says she still suits owners from a racing background because she supplies that extra buzz of a performance yacht. "She would get to Fiji in less than five days," he says. "She'll easily do 210

miles a day. You can guarantee that, wind or no wind, because she can motor at 8.5 knots easily, with a top speed of 11 knots and can sail even faster."

The Gori three-bladed propeller includes a motorsail function. This allows the skipper to over-rotate the propeller, which reduces the revs by 400rpm, meaning the engine is still under load but it's using less fuel.

LIFTING KEEL

Jackpot's upwind performance comes largely from her 3.5m, bulb keel but this lifts to 2m draft to access her Brisbane marina. It's well disguised as part of the main bulkhead and so slick in operation that many guests will be unaware of its hydraulic magic.

When in shallow draft mode, a large, gleaming, stainless steel pin takes the weight of the keel. Once out in deeper water, the skipper pushes a red button to raise the keel enough so the hydraulic ram takes its weight, allowing removal of the pin.

Then, a push of a green button lowers the keel slowly down its slinky-smooth fibreglass casing. There is a constant tolerance of 1mm between keel and centrecase; it reaches the end of its travel with a gentle clunk.

The slightly wedge shape of the keel and its centrecase keep it snug: no knocking or banging as the boat moves through big seas or alters heel during a tack.

To achieve the perfect fit, the builders created the fin in fabricated steel and faired it by hand to a computer-cut profile. The keel fin then became the mould for the centrecase.

Elliott says lifting keels are stronger than fixed keels.

"A fixed keel is held on by pins," he explains, "but a centreboard keel is one big pin. It is way, way stronger."

A fibreglass casing behind the centre case forms a crash box in case an errant reef hits the *Jackpot*.

CONSTRUCTION

The hull is male moulded with epoxy resin throughout. The construction is medium-tech composite with E-glass laminates over structural foam core, with carbon fibre stiffening where required. It is vacuum bagged to shape.

FROM LEFT: The for'ard head; cutlery drawer; light spacious galley, nav station and saloon with all-round views.

"We make use of carbon where it's useful and to stiffen the boat," Elliott says. "It's all done with fabrics and engineered properly. It's not just a drum of resin and fibreglass sprayed into a mould."

ACCOMMODATION

Forward of the saloon, three steps lead down to the for'ard accommodation. The first cabin, to port, is open. Offshore, it would be a sea berth, but it's also the office. The aft section of the berth lifts out, creating a seat for someone to sit at a small shelf, laptop at the ready.

The Iridium-capable phone is also to hand. This phone has a lightweight docking station with antennae, power and a handset, smaller than most mobile phones. It will allow talk or data transmission and download of weather information, to or from just about anywhere in the world, albeit at about $1.50 a minute.

To starboard is a private cabin with two, stacked 1.5 berths. Forward of this, to starboard, is a large head with vacuum-operated Sealand toilet and hand basin and, opposite, a shower. The doors to these three cabins all open outwards which gets a bit involved; it may work better to swing one or two of the doors inwards.

Forward is the owner's cabin with a spacious vee berth, drawers and hanging storage. A hatch above the berth has pull-out insect screen and blackout screen for an afternoon snooze. Forward of the fo'c'sle is a massive crash bulkhead. All mattresses are inner sprung, made by The Bed Factory.

SAILING

We sailed on *Jackpot* in early autumn, in a light easterly. On board were Greg Elliott, Josh Tucker and Magnus Doole from North Sails, and Robin McGregor who owns the Elliott 1550, *Kiwi Koyote*. She was keen to see *Jackpot*'s Swing Bow thruster as a possible retrofit. By the time we returned to the marina, she was sold.

Like all Elliott-designed yachts, *Jackpot* is a dream to helm; her 3.5m lifting bulb keel provides good upwind performance.

Conventional bow thrusters reside in a tunnel in the hull. This means they create drag when not in use and require a certain depth to the forefoot so they have enough water to work in.

The swing thruster resides beneath the for'ard berth, in a piece of hull section which pivots down to immerse the propeller. When not in use, it is raised flush with the hull, thus creating no drag. This also means it can fit into shallow forefoots, such as *Jackpot*'s.

The Swing Thruster can be lowered only at less than six knots boatspeed; lowering or raising it takes about one second, courtesy of an electric switch. It also has a relay switch that automatically disables it after a set period of time, lest the skipper forgets about it, and the thruster fouls on some weed or a bow line.

On *Jackpot* this time period is set at three minutes which is about how long we spent discussing it before exiting the berth. I'd asked Elliott to execute a dramatic, bow-thruster spin for the camera boat – as he did, the three minutes was up and the Swing Thruster obediently switched off.

Oops – luckily, the Gori propeller proved its quick response in tight situations and we wriggled free.

ABOVE LEFT: The installation of the Swing Thruster and, ABOVE, the Aquadrive thrust bearing at the propeller shaft.

Off North Head, we hoisted the carbon Spectra North Sails mainsail from its Leisurefurl, boom, unfurled the genoa and were in business. According to the Norths boys, the carbon spectra combo is a good blend of performance and durability: the Spectra protects against chafe and UV; the carbon prevents creep in the Spectra. It is lighter than Dacron and rolls up in a more compact way, which means a smaller Leisurefurl boom and less windage on the furled headsail.

The mainsail has no traveller; instead it is held by a bridle on the coachroof and the hydraulic boom vang. The single-line mainsheet runs under the sidedeck and exits at the jammers just in front of the helmstation, along with topping lift, main halyard and mainsail furling line.

There is plenty of winch power: the electric Lewmar 65 at the jammers hoists the mainsail and has a non-electric mate to port. The primaries either side are Lewmar 54s; either can take the gennaker and genoa sheets. This may be a 16.5m yacht but sailing her shorthanded would be a lot easier than many smaller boats.

The backstay is hydraulic, adjusted from in front of the port helmstation. Both helmstations have electronic chartplotters and basic electronics. The gennaker halyard is on the mast.

Another treat in the cockpit is the latest Tacktick electronics from Kiwi Yachting – see sidebar, page 34.

Jackpot has a lovely motion through the water, although there is a distinctive jolt as she meets unexpected chop, such as the wake from a harbour ferry. It is possibly a feature of her stiff, medium-tech construction and deep bulb keel. McGregor notes the same feature on *Kiwi Koyote*, which she has sailed extensively offshore, including storm conditions. She has only praise for her boat's offshore performance.

Even though our top wind speed was only around 12 knots, *Jackpot* was a pleasure to sail. As with any Elliott yacht I've ever helmed, the Whitlock quadrant steering with JP3 bearings is pretty much perfect: smooth but with good feel for the boat. She tacks easily, spinning on her bulbed, fin keel and sailed upwind at up to 25 degrees apparent. In 8 knots of breeze, we were clocking just under 8 knots boat speed.

She heels to a nice angle, despite having a relatively narrow waterline for a cruising boat. This is where the flare in the hull comes into effect, generating reserve buoyancy as she heels. "She leans over quite quickly and then lives at this angle in any sort of breeze," Elliott says. Sail area is generous so he recommends furling in some headsail at around 16 knots.

Jackpot can sail safely with the bulb raised but her performance upwind would definitely be impaired.

We hoisted the gennaker easily but all too soon the breeze faded so our 9-knot ride home was courtesy of the smooth-running Yanmar.

Either way, this *Jackpot* is a winner.

SPECIFICATIONS	
loa	1650m
beam	4.8m
draft, up	2m
draft, down	3.5m
disp, light	13t
ballast ratio	40%
price from	$1.2m
delivery	6-9 months