

# A REVIEW OF THE ABU AMBASSADEUR MORRUM ZX 3600

*By Coenraad van den Heever PhD*

Today I will be reviewing Abu Garcia's flagship classic round reel that was released during 2013. I only obtained my sample, for collection purposes, earlier this year. Why wait so long to obtain one of these premier reels? Well, maybe the cost had something to do with this. It retails for around 500 USD which is considered a rather large investment for a reel that is going to be displayed. In many instances, you can actually buy it for around \$300-400 depending on the retailer and the running of specials. One website described the reel as "*wicked expense*" and I feel this is the best description available! Is this reel worth your hard earned money? Let's find out.

They say a picture speaks a thousand words...





The carbon fibre handle gives it a space age look and the Swedish Crest sits proudly on the right side plate with the inscription *Made in Sweden*.



Cosmetically, this reel is a work of art. The dominant black colour is accentuated by the silver and gold linings. However, looks is subjective and you must decide for yourself if you like the colour scheme on this round baitcaster.

What comes with it?



A warranty card, how to adjust the mechanical brake leaflet, instruction booklet, a reel schematic and a bottle of oil (not included in the image). Pretty standard for a flagship model.

Now with looks aside, let's get into the technical aspects of the Morrüm ZX 3600:

Firstly, the reel is exceptionally light for a round baitcaster. It only weighs 206,9 g compared to an 4600 Abu Ambassadeur C4 that weighs in at 263,6 g, the smallest in the range. The carbon fibre handle, alongside the machined aluminium frame and side plates all contribute to keeping the weight to a minimum without compromising strength. Plastic inserts are used to "fill" the side plates:



The reel foot is riveted to the frame and is therefore not an integrated part of the one piece frame:



In contrast, the Abu Ambassadeur TSR's reel foot is actually part and parcel of the frame:



The frame and side plates of the Morrüm are also deeply anodised to resist corrosion better. Full marks in this category. However, this reel is intended for freshwater use only.

Moving on. The bent carbon fibre handle is ergonomic, light and strong.



Unfortunately, the EVA handle knobs ruin the quality of the handle! EVA is a great material to use on fishing rod grips because it gives a solid grip, comfortable and dries quickly. On fishing reels however, it looks cheap, becomes compacted and “shiny” losing its deep black colour after a while. EVA handle grips are seen on a lot of cheap baitcasters and spinning reels available on the market today. Therefore, quality Portuguese cork would have been a much better choice to round off the carbon fibre handle making it more exclusive. Two (2) ball bearings are found in each handle knob ensuring smooth rotation.

An indexed aluminium star drag can also be seen in the picture below:





The thumb release bar:



It is a chromium plated plastic bar that is integrated into the reels frame. Even on the diagramme provided, the thumb bar does not have a part number allocated to it. If this release bar gets broken or damaged, you will have to order the entire machined frame as replacement making it an expensive affair!

Furthermore, when the release bar is pressed down for a cast, the bar stays down and does not return towards its original position. The bar now moves freely up and down, is totally inactive, and makes a “clunky” sound in the frame. A spring loaded mechanism should have been incorporated to return the release bar to an upwards position in order to remain static until the handle is turned and the gears engaged. I expect this sort of refinement in an expensive reel of this calibre.

The cast control button is indexed, making adjustment positive and comfortable:



The one piece aluminium spool is light, but strong, and turns freely when spinning. The spool axles rest on two ball bearings delivering liquid smooth casts, but let's pause at the bearings used in this reel. The reel has an 11 bearing drive of which 10 are called High Performance Corrosion Resistant (HPCR) ball bearings. Unlike Shimano that treat their stainless steel bearings with an anti-rust coating (Anti Rust Bearings (ARB)), these HPCR actually contain high levels of chromium that prevents rust much better than a surface treatment. Therefore, Abu Garcia used some of the best bearings available in their flagship model. The anti- reverse bearing consists of 11 stainless steel cylinders and quality plastic v springs:



The entire unit is *Made in Germany* as can be seen in the image below:



Full marks on the bearings used in this reel, with no shortcuts in this department.

The level wind has a wormshaft that is made of aluminium that runs on two tiny ball bearings. When this reel was reviewed in 2014 by a popular tackle website, the author of the article incorrectly noted that the reel only had one bearing on the level wind mechanism.



Aluminium is the metal of choice due to its low weight compared to heavier stainless steel used in other Ambassadeurs (C3 & C4) . How long this aluminium wormshaft will last remains to be seen... An advanced alloy that is nitrated would probably have been a better choice (e.g. like the wormshaft found in the Abu Revo STX first generation baitcasters). A stainless steel pawl is used to ensure longevity.

The line carriage is made of plastic with a metal insert that is titanium nitrated. This ensures that braided line can be used without cutting into the line guide.

Now to the heart of the Morrüm ZX. Gears are important components to any reel:



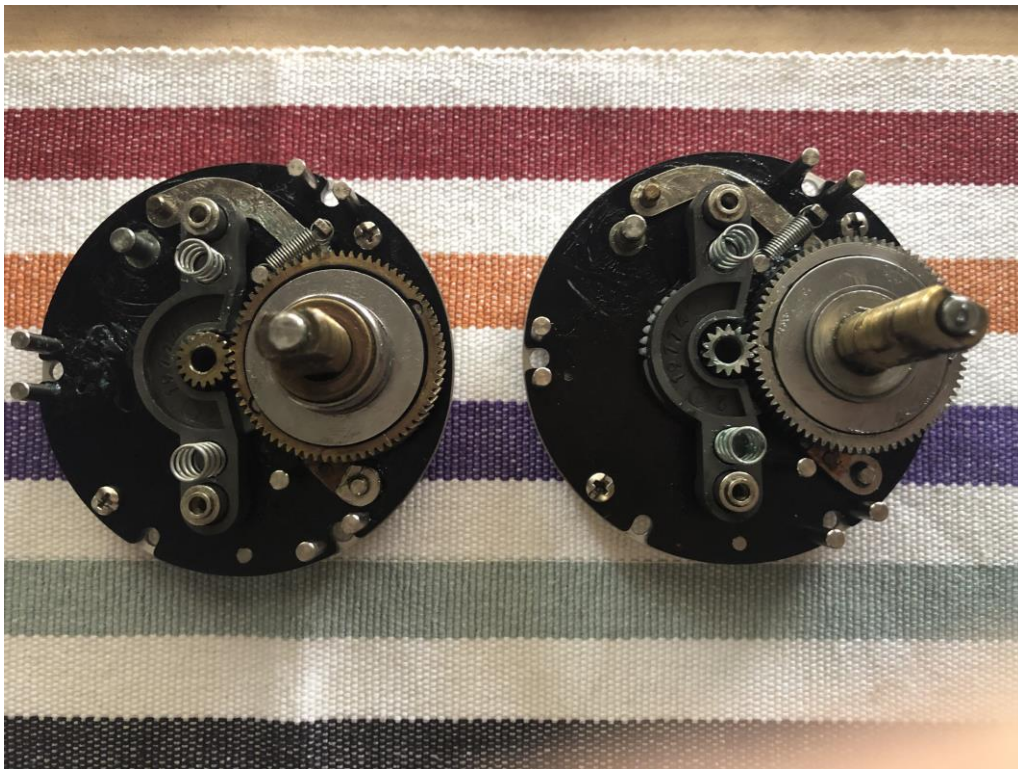
The main drive gear in the Morrüm ZX is manufactured from aircraft grade aluminium that is hardened, but the material used for the pinion gear is unclear.

It is coated with a black surface treatment to ensure longevity and for protection against corrosion. I suspect it is made of duraluminium to minimise weight on the reel, but I am not sure. From a mechanical perspective, it is important to have a more durable pinion gear than a main drive gear, because the former gear works much harder than the latter one. The pinion drives the spool and therefore more strain is put on this small gear. This coating will probably enhance its durability.



In classic Ambassadeurs and contemporary Ambassadeur C3 and C4 models, both gears are made of solid brass, but are much heavier than the ones used in the ZX.

Let's deviate from the current review for a moment. When the original Ambassadeur Morrüm's were released in 1998, two larger models were available, the M7700 CL and M7700CT. The CL has a level wind while the CT has an open cage for achieving greater casting distance:



Was this the only difference between these two larger models? Absolutely not! The CL model has a 4:1:1 gear ratio, while the CT has a faster ratio of 5:2:1. What is actually more important is the different materials used in manufacturing their gearing. The CL has ordinary brass gears, while the CT has stainless steel gears! Is this one of the reasons why the CT is much more in demand than the CL models? Or because much less CT models were made compared to the CL? I guess I will never know...

Getting back to the review. The drag system uses Abu Garcia's proven carbon matrix drag washers combined with stainless steel washers in between.



These carbon fibre washers have proven themselves over the years, not only in spinning reels and small baitcasters, but also in large multipliers used in game fishing. It feeds the line smoothly against the drag and quickly dissipate heat. Top quality materials used indeed.

The one piece spool is feather light (14g), anodised not only for corrosion resistance, but also ensures a great cosmetic effect and is fitted with the Infinitely Variable Centrifugal Brakes IV (IVCB IV) anti backlash system:





When you cast the reel, you can actually hear these plastic arms with its rubber gaskets breaking the spool against the aluminium braking plate in the next image:



It works like a charm and I cannot fault the system used.

The wide adjustment settings make it possible to quickly adjust the amount of force needed to brake your spool especially when the wind starts picking up. I firmly believe that this modern anti backlash system, emanates from ABU's original centrifugal braking system used that was developed for their original Record Ambassadeur in the 1950's. The contemporary IVCB IV is just a more refined version thereof.

Let us summaries what you have read. The Morrüm ZX is an expensive reel that is truly for the connoisseur and die hard Abu Garcia fans alike. The machined frame and side plates are light and certainly built to last a lifetime. Quality bearings are used and the gears are precision cut to ensure perfect meshing. Unfortunately, the EVA handle knobs make the carbon handle look cheap, while cork knobs would have been a much better choice in this department. As a refinement, the thumb release bar should be spring loaded and not be an integrated part of the frame. Being part of the frame makes replacing this plastic part costly. Seeing that the reel is intended for freshwater fishing only, I suggest that this cheap plastic bar rather be manufactured from lightweight magnesium. The wormshaft used in the levelwind appears to be made of standard aluminium and I suggest that an advanced alloy be used that is nitrated to enhance its durability. Nevertheless, the Morrüm ZX is a work of art that should be part of every serious Abu collection.