

part 2
XLT / 520 / 320

graphite REVOLUTION

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XLT

The 521/22/23 series/ XLT and XLT Syncro reels are ABU's second thoughts on the Ultra Mags and basically just a further development of these reels. Like the Ultra Mag the XLT belong somewhere in between the old and the new in terms of design and materials. They are very much just improved classic Ambassadeur designs with new features and some use of new materials.

The new adjustable Automag break was a sensible development of the brake used on the Ultra Mags. It is self-adjusting and works well. The Syncro system is a development ABU was very proud of, but it never received the attention it deserved. Perhaps ABU never managed to quite explain the benefits? Two speed options offered on the XLT 2 SPEED was another capable development and the simple way you select the setting makes it a good system to use. Personally I have always had a weakness for the option of more than one ratio, and the 6,1 : 1 and 3,8 : 1 suites my style of fishing. ABU called the XLTs the reels that had everything, and in a way they were right. They were truly capable reels and came with some pretty useful features, and with the new styling I think they also look better and more modern than the Ultra Mags. Looking at them in retrospect, I can't help feel that these were the reels that outperformed most of what followed from ABU for a very long time.

I used an XLT I Syncro and an XLT III 2 speed extensively for many years and I found them easy to service, reliable and powerful. The down side was the Polymer side caps which were difficult to maintain in good condition. Casting control was excellent, the power to wear out a big fish was there in ample quantity and I never experienced mechanical problems. The reels just kept on spinning as they should no matter how much punishment I threw at them. To this day I see the XLT as one of the best reels from ABU.



XLT 2 Frame



XLT 1 SYNCRO
Frame

High tech frame design, graphite & metal spacers. There is no brake plate like the one you find in the 1021/22 and the 821/22/23.



XLT 3

XLT name confusion



XLT 1 Syncro



XLT 1 - 2 SPEED



XLT PLUS



XLT SUPREME

The models of this family are a confusing lot of different names. The introduction of the Ambassadeur 500 and 300 model names was an unnecessary move by ABU which only put customers in doubt. The label, Ambassadeur 500, puts them below the 4000, 5000, 6000 classic Ambassadeurs in the hierarchy of ABU reels, but the XLT reels are actually ABUs top models. In retrospect more than one ABU representative I have talked to argue that the naming policy and the absence of a consistent profiling contributed to make them short lived models in ABUs program. One good suggestion was that they should have been called AutoMags and that the simpler (300's) should have carried on as UltraMags or just Mags. Well, it didn't happen.

Sadly the big Ultra Mag reels, the IV, V and VI models were not converted into XLT models. Sales below expectations were given as one reason, but what we see is a lack of consistent marketing effort which would become even more notable later on when new models being removed quickly from the catalogues if they had a slow start became the norm. This change from patient attitude where a model's image and popularity is built over years, to the policy of quick market tests where models were dropped in a hurry if they didn't sell in high numbers right from the start, is a fundamental change. I never understood why, but ABU politics during this time was frequently hard to comprehend. The absence of a policy where ABU profiled their reels strongly like they used to do so successfully with the Ambassadeur 5000/6000 may have harmed ABUs market position more than we realize.

The 300 series is the upgraded versions of the MAG reels. Cheaper than the 500 series and simpler with the Magtrax brake instead of the AUTOMAG for instance.

The 521 XLT Supreme is a special Japan edition and sold almost exclusively to this market. It differs in color and décor and is a good example of the potential for styling modifications.



321 PLUS

Casting legends...



good & bad

Ultra Mags and XLT's are very equal in both performance and quality. The modifications are related to design and to the magbrake which is the self-adjusting Automag for the XLT's & 521/22/23's. I personally like the Magtrax more, but this is up to personal opinion and I suppose, how experienced you are with multipliers.

The Ambassadeur Ultra Mag and the XLT are known as very good casting reels and still favored by many tournament casters. Several after-market kits to upgrade performance even further have been developed. This superbly converted ABU XLT 2 reel has had a full tournament conversion featuring the following modifications...

- o aluminum and stainless steel knobby mag conversion which backs off anti clockwise and takes just 5 1/2 turns from full on to fully off.
- o solid one piece brass bush conversion, to allow for smooth running of the spool at high speeds.
- o inner lip machined away from the flange so as to reduce the possibility of the spool rubbing and causing drag and ultimately slowing down the spool.
- o CNC machined Ct bar giving ultimate structural rigidity to the reel, giving zero flex to the cage again to remove the chance of distortion and spool rub.

The line guide system is fully removed and the reel is of course a fast spool change version allowing the user to change line diam. at the twist of the cam, without the need to remove the handle endplate.

Reels like this one uses Earth Magnets and spin at unbelievable speeds and for so long it seems like magic.

There is generally nothing to complain about regarding quality, other, than the side plates which scratch up so easily. Nothing inside these reels breaks or stops working, but they do need a bit of cleaning every now and then and some oil to function well. They are easy to service and you won't run into many problems doing it, if you know how to service an Ambassadeur 5000 reel you can do the XLT's as well. Although I have never experienced it myself, I have heard of occasional line guide system failures and worn out brakes.

XLT's are extremely effective casting reels, backlash is unlikely and casting distances are very good. The XLT's are nice to handle, well balanced and relatively light weight reels. I think of them as some of the best reels ABU has made, and it took them a good number of years to come up with something that could really compare to the XLT models.

Models

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|-----------------|-----------|-----|-------------|------|
| XLT 1 PLUS/FL | 4,7:1 | 275 | 120m - 0,30 | 1985 |
| XLT 1 SYNCRO | 4,7:1 | 275 | 120m - 0,30 | 1988 |
| XLT 1 - 2 speed | 6,3/3,8:1 | 277 | 120m - 0,30 | 1989 |
| XLT 2 SYNCRO | 4,7:1 | 285 | 170m - 0,30 | 1988 |
| XLT 2 - 2 speed | 6,1/3,8:1 | 318 | 170m - 0,30 | 1989 |
| XLT 3 SYNCRO | 4,7:1 | 310 | 170m - 0,40 | 1988 |
| XLT 3- 2 speed | 6,1/3,8:1 | 346 | 170m - 0,40 | 1989 |

321
322
323

521
521 SPRINT
522
523

