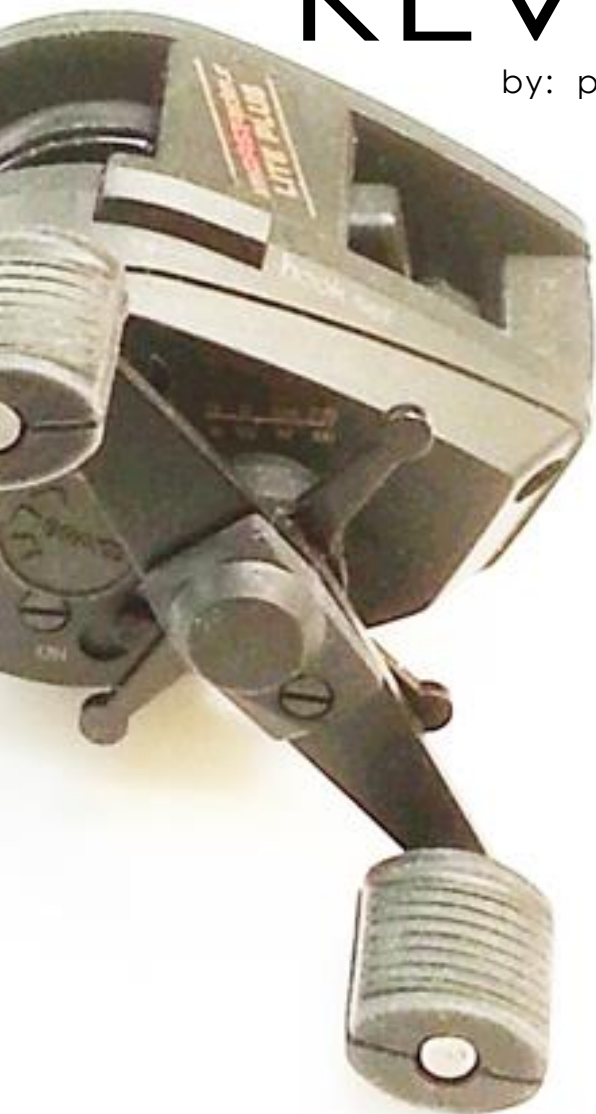


part 3  
POLARIS - 1021/22  
& 821/22/23



# graphite REVOLUTION

by: per erlandsen - persbox@online.no





## *Departure from the trodden path..*

*In 1952 ABU revolutionized reel design with their Ambassadeur 5000. Midway into the 1980s ABU was ready to repeat this feat and launched a massive research program. Target – to determine the design of the next generation reels. This program involved internationally renowned designers from Henry Dreyfuss Associates in New York and the German Porsche Design Studio. At the center of focus was functionality, ergonomics and new materials. The reels that came out of this huge effort looks like they came from outer space...*



radical  
shapes

# reel of the future project



ABUs project to develop the reel of the future coincided with changes in the ownership and management of ABU. New people were in charge and ABU went through massive changes as development and manufacture in part moved out of Sweden. The «quality first no matter the cost» attitude was thrown out, and the new ideology was to earn dollars faster, even if it meant taking a short cut or two with quality. The result was something of a contradiction. ABU developed spectacular reels with some of the heftiest specifications ever, and presented them with quality flaws which soon made them near to unsellable among the dedicated ABU fans. The story is both a tale of the bravery and sophistication of ABU as a reel producer, and the tale of the journey towards the lowest point in ABUs history when the reputation for quality was jeopardized and almost ruined by silly choices and cost cutting.





# P O L A R I S

PLOARIS reels are among the more difficult ABU reels to find, and they are the hardest to find of the graphite reels. There are two models, POLARIS 1 & 2, and they only come with «SAMPLE» stamped on the foot. The graphics are in gold and red. All reels around today stems from the initial salesman's samples batch supplied by ABU. When the POLARIS arrived in America ABU was made aware that another company had the rights to use the name, and a court ruling soon forced ABU to change the name of their reels and recall those manufactured as POLARIS. Some reels had already been handed out to customers in the USA and a few had also found their way into customer's hands in Sweden.

The POLARIS models were modified and became the Ambassadeur 1021 and 1022 Plus. ABU referred to them as the Ambassadeur 1000 family. Among the things which changed before the relaunch was the new level wind design (see the insert picture to view the difference)... and new reels were given new graphics in white color.

Being rare, genuine POLARIS reels should be valuable, but the prices I see people pay for the few that come up for sale seems to reflect the low interest collectors show for the Ambassadeur 1021 and 1022 models.

*The most obvious difference between the Polaris and the 1000 family is the level wind design...*





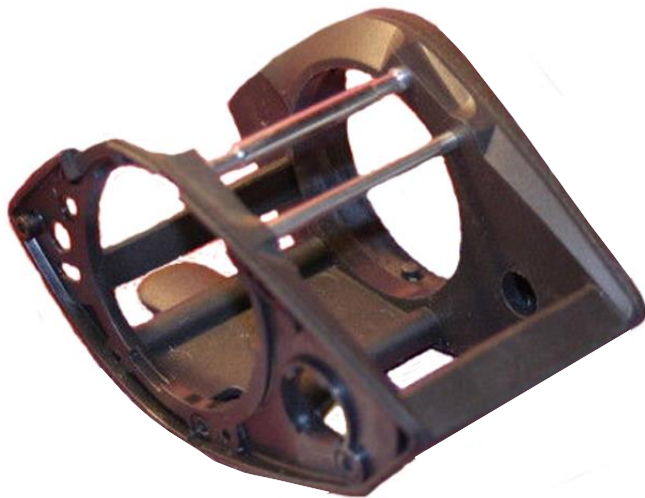
# ambassadeur 1021 & 1022

Ambassadeur Polaris 1 & 2 became the Ambassadeur 1021 and 1022. Design is by Göran Jonasson and Henry Dreyfuss Associates in New York. Spec'ed with features they were seen as the reels that would eventually replace the old Ambassadeur round reels, but as we know this never happened. The traditional customer is highly conservative. A new material, outrageous shapes and novel features..., it may just have been too much for many to swallow. Remember only 33 years had passed since the conservative British market found it hard to accept a red fishing reel. Quality was a problem too. Reels soon started to look miserable, scratches, faded labels, chipped feet and even a few mechanical problems started to show up and anglers began to mistrust them. Sales soon dropped well below expectations.

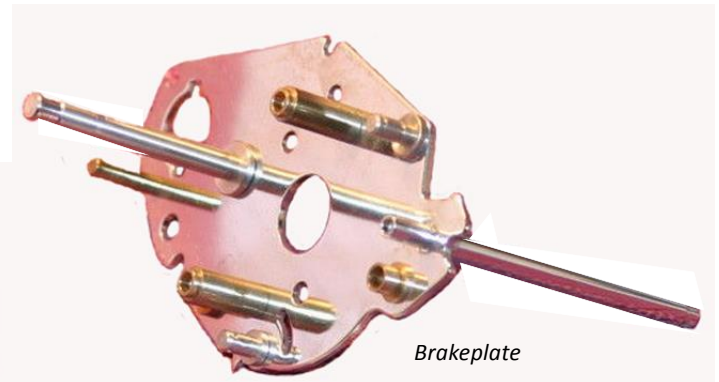
The 1021 & 1022 were great reels, though. Ergonomics and functionality were put at the center of attention. All functions at your fingertips, the idea being to leave the angler focused on the fish and not on operating the reel. It didn't always work as well as it was intended, but I can't help but applaud ABU for their courage and concern for details. 1021/22 came in two color variations, black with gold/red print and black with white print, the former are the modified Polaris reels which were shipped back to Sweden. Models are 1021/22 Plus and 1021/22 FL.



# Inside..



*Frame*



*Brakeplate*



*Controll plate*



*Side plate*

Inside you find bearings in the spool and a molded graphite frame with a metal break plate to which the mechanical parts are attached. This is a departure from traditional design and a risky solution as it calls for extreme precision. It works all right though and the look is almost as if reels are carved from one piece of graphite. The construction is stiff and light and the internal parts are well supported.

There are a lot of functions and the buttons for these are tucked closely together. This means things are a little tight and the 1021/22 can be complicated reels to take apart. Also some of the mechanical parts which operate the different functions can be a little fragile and sensitive to the way they are installed. I've had a few requests to service reels where things do not work and found that it's all down to faulty installation of parts. Don't take a reel apart unless it is really needed is my advice.





*Ergonomics and functionality were given much attention. The control panel on the right side plate places all buttons inside the reach of your fingers tip.*

good  
&bad

To some extent the 1021/22 is a contradiction. Features are advanced, and the reels are well designed. When fully functional these reels are a delight to use and offer both lightness and finesse. They have a superb balance on the rod, and casting distances are above average, even with very light lures. But you are let down by quality which is not as high as you expect from ABU. Don't drop these reels as the foot will easily break if the reel land on it. Pick up can be slow to engage when you start to turn the handle, and the release is sometimes unpredictable. If you buy one used you should make sure all functions are working. Reels which have been opened aren't always correctly assembled and I have seen flipping and reverse mechanisms which no longer works do to this. When not plagued with any of these faults these reels work well, they do need service though, and you should pay attention to the advice by ABU to rinse off salt water after every fishing trip and give vital functions a small amount of oil. Don't leave them exposed to sunlight for a prolonged time is also a good advice. The problem of keeping them good looking is a losing battle for most owners and they tend to look miserable even after only moderate use. (These notes are just as valid for the 800 family reels).



*Like a space ship... it's hard to be left unimpressed with the spectacular shapes of the 1021 & 1022 reels!*

# 821 822 823 FAMILY



Sometimes it's really hard to understand ABU's model policy. Alongside the launch of the Ambassador 1021 & 1022 came the launch of a family of almost identical reels, the Ambassador 800s. Why not concentrate on one range rather than confuse customers with a set of competing models has been my question?

There is no doubt ABU intended the 800s to be just as advanced and full of features as the 1021/22, but what finally came out as production reels were slightly simpler. Construction is more in line with traditional ABU thinking, frames consists of two plates separated by metal spacers, a less risky approach than the molded frame sides of the 1021/22. The two larger models, 822/23 lack the thumb bar release and flipping. The smaller 821 have both of these features, but no line alarm. I have seen prototypes of both the bigger reels with the same specs as the 821, thumb bar and flipping, but they were not offered for sale. In 1986 the 823 were priced at SEK 1 575,- and the 1022 at SEK 1 695,-. The 823 hold 170 m 0,40 mm line, the 1022 hold 120 m.

The 1021 & 1022 were designed in the USA by Lennart Jonasson and Henry Dreyfuss associates whereas the 800 reels were designed by German Porsche design studio under supervision from Svängsta. Was this a fight between the new arrangement of outsourcing and the in-house designers at Svängsta? Yes, if I am to listen to one of the employees who used to work in Svängsta at the time, and apparently not, if I am to listen to the sources closer to the US design office. No matter what is correct, it would have been very easy for ABU to put their money in just one model, a plus version with all the features and a basic version without the thumb bar and the flipping switch. If you ask me which to chose, I would have chosen the 800 as the design is a little more in line with ABU's know how and they are slightly bigger reels.



The 800 series did not sell well and are impossible to find in some markets. And as always with these graphite reels, it's hard to find really good ones. They did not stay in production for long and must have been a huge disappointment for ABU who had invested big money in them. Today they are examples of the courage and boldness of ABU through a time when the company faced many problems.





*822 brake plate and  
mechanical parts  
+ side plate*

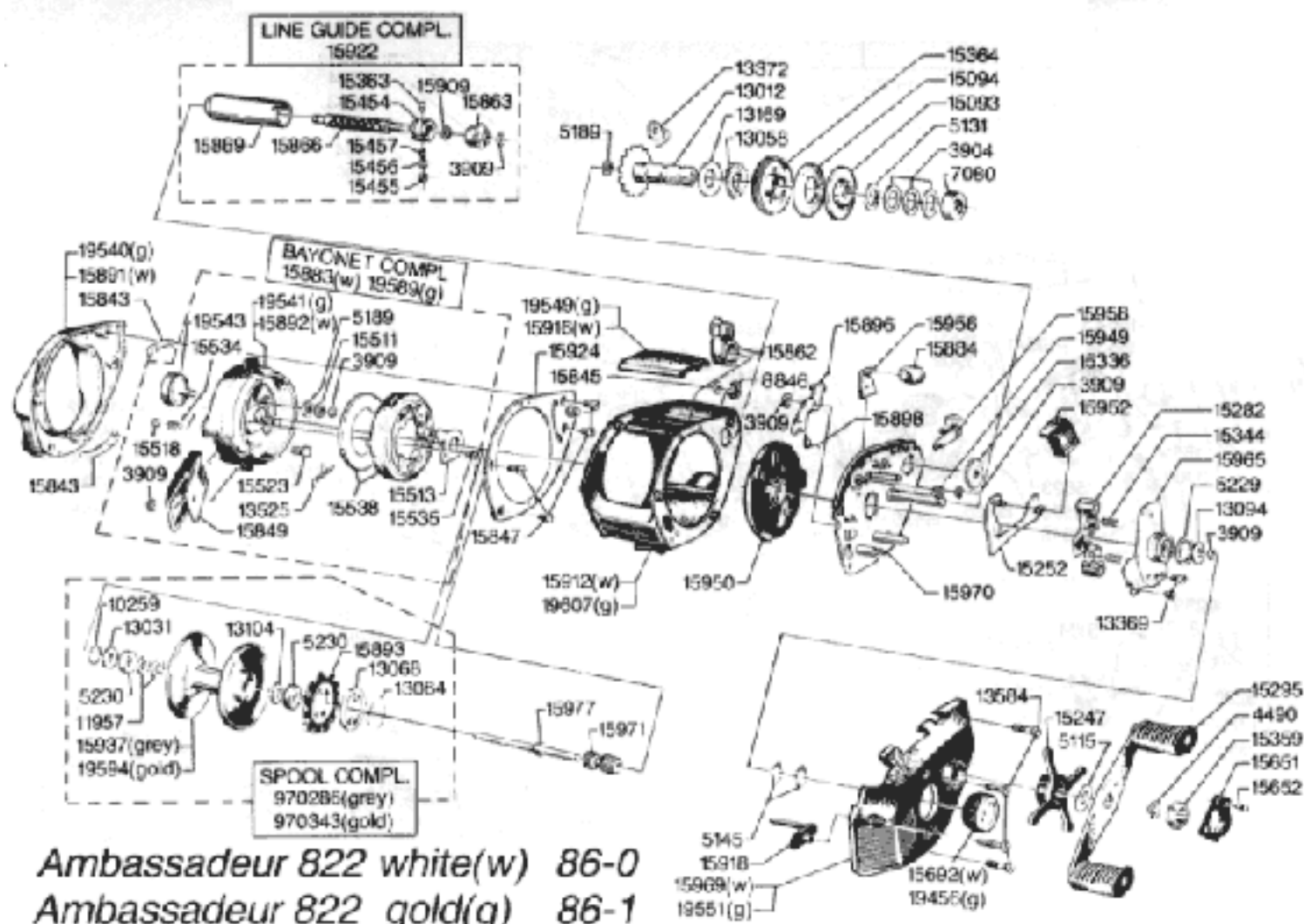
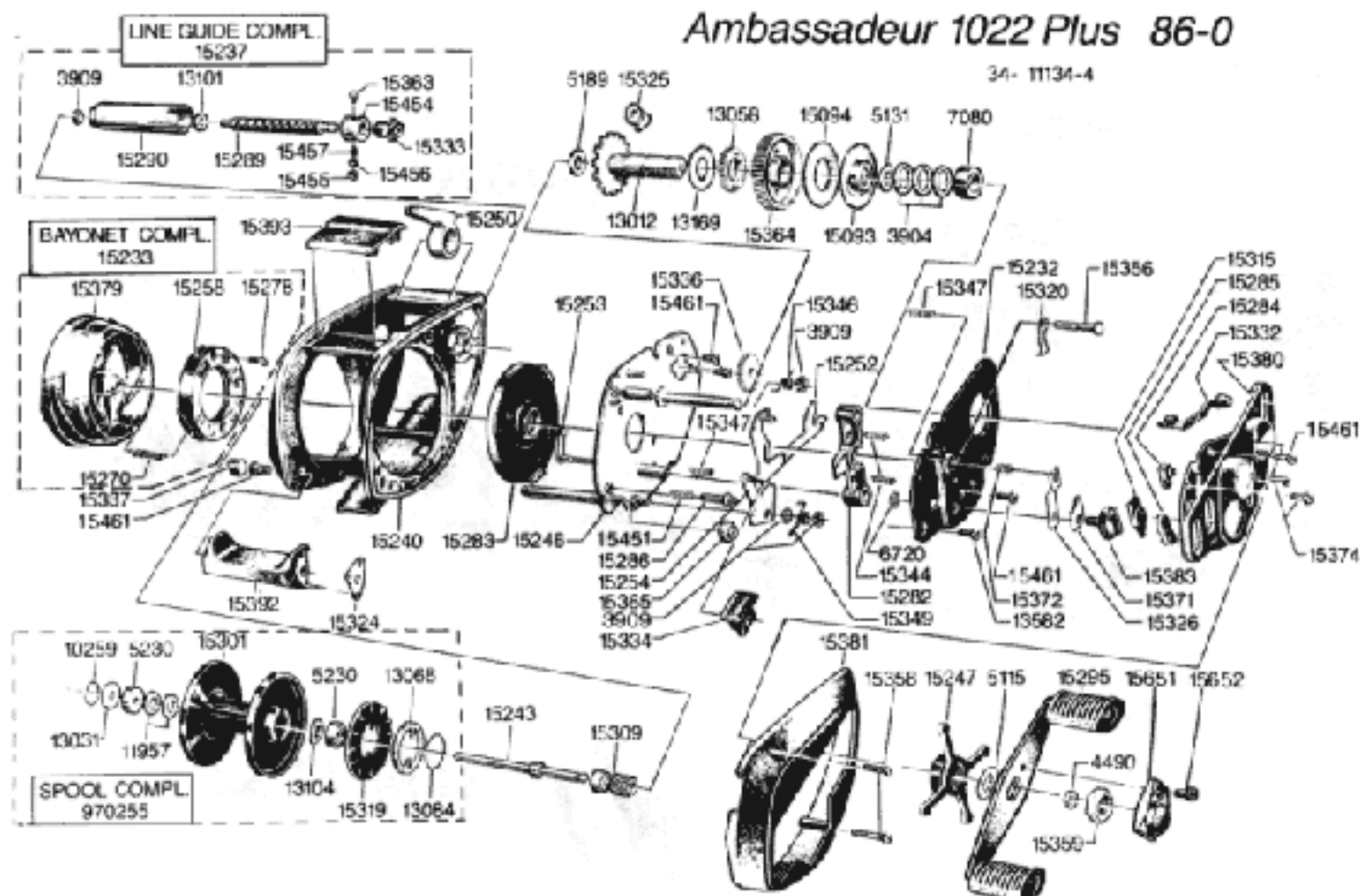


## 1021/22 & 821/822/823: Significant differences in design...

Although the 1021/22 and the 821/22/23 are very similar reels there are some significant differences in design. Both have graphite frame with metal spacers, in the case of the 1021/22 the two frame sides are molded pieces and in the case of the 821/22/23 the frame sides are plates cut to dimensions. On the handle side both have a metal plate onto which the mechanical components are attached. On the other side of the frame the 821/22/23 have another metal plate for fixing the level wind and other components, this plate is missing from the 1021/22 models. Take a look at the schematics for the two reel families on the next page and you will see where the design is different. The schematics show the 1022 and the 822 model, please note that the 822 comes without a thumb bar release mechanism. The smaller 821 have this feature and the design is a copy of the one on the 1021/22.

*Ambassadeur 1022 Plus 86-0*

30. 11134-4



*Ambassadeur 822 white(w) 86-0*

Ambassadeur 822 gold(g) 86-1

34-11143-8





# Features..

	1021	821	822
	1022		823
Magnetic brake	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quick Change			
spool	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flipping	Yes	Yes	No
Fast Cast			
thumb bar	Yes	Yes	No
Anti reverse	Yes	Yes	Yes
Line out			
alarm	Yes	No	Yes
Hook set	Yes	Yes	Yes
Line guide			
disengages	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gear ratio		4,7 : 1	

ABU did a great job of focusing on things which improved performance. Quick change spools were not an entirely new feature, but a practical one which allow spools to be changed without tools. The two systems are quite different, but both of them work well. Moving bearings to the inside of the spool reduces friction and solves a stress problem. In a graphite reel it is probably the only safe solution. On the 1021/22 most functions are operated from a small control panel. The idea is to have everything at your fingertips. The 81/22/23 takes a more minimalist approach and has fewer functions with fewer buttons to operate and I have to admit I like this thinking better.



# Impact..

Even though the 1021/22, and for that matter the 821/22/23, sold in relatively low numbers and were short-lived in ABU's program, there is no doubt they had a considerable impact on reel design. When a leading manufacturer like ABU launches reels with shapes like nothing you have seen before, it's bound to be noticed. And it was. One major contribution these reels made were that they utilized the use of professional designers in reel design. In the past this had been mostly left to engineers and in house people with a creative hand, but now professionalism took their place and this changed the way reels were made, and the shapes they were given. I bet, without these two ABU reel families we would have had to wait a bit longer for this revolution to happen. The 1021/22 and the 821/22/23 weren't of the usual ABU quality, but their presence in the market influenced many of the reels that followed them, both from ABU's own production lines and from other manufacturers. Look around you in today's market and you will see more than a few reels which owe the ABU graphite reels a bit in terms of design, philosophy, build and features. Personally I have a love/hate relationship to these reels. I love them for their fantastic shapes and outstanding ergonomics, and I hate them for not giving me the usual ABU quality which I appreciate so much. Despite the quality flaws, bottom line is these reels are basically very good, lovely to use, and extremely capable.

