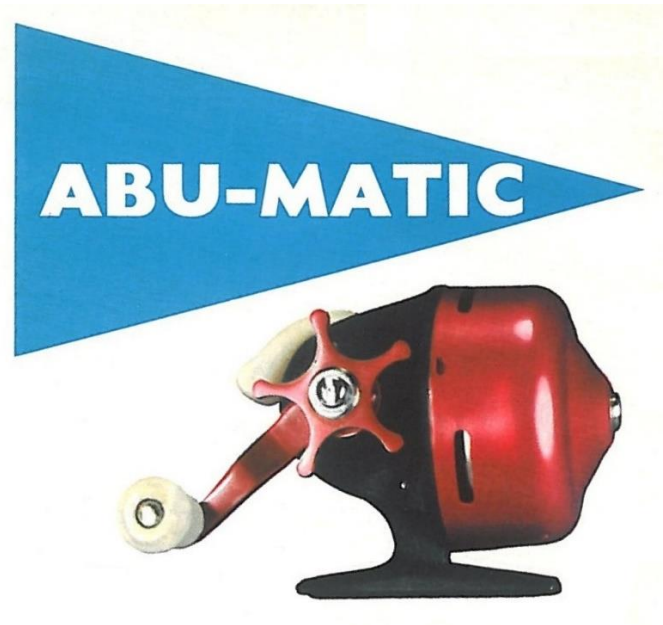


The elusive ABUMATIC 2-models



Introduction

This little study originated from e-mails exchanged by Wayne Real in Australia, Coenraad van den Heever in South-Africa and Hans van der Pauw in the Netherlands. As it can therefore be regarded as an effort undertaken from three continents, the weight of the matter - however unbelievably trivial the subject perhaps may be - is felt by us all. We'll do our best, even though neither of us actually possesses an Abumatic 2-model or has even ever handled one (some experts...).

But luckily, while struggling along, the admirable Swedish Abumatic collector Leif Markström came to our help and he very kindly and generously provided us with information and photographs that would otherwise have remained out of our reach. We are most grateful to him.

The origins of the Abumatic reels

The Abumatic reels are so-called spincast or closed-face reels. The Swedish call them 'inkapslade haspelrullar' which literally means encapsulated spinning reels. These reels were designed to be used on a baitcasting rod with a trigger grip, the type that already existed for use with multiplier reels (the Ambassadeur type of reels). The spincast reels then had the advantage that they were easier to use, especially for novices, as they eliminated the risk of backlash and that fine spring time wonder, the bird's nest. Advertisements in ladies' magazines from days happily gone by therefore claimed that 'even women' could use them with ease. In hope of expanding the market.

ABU certainly wasn't the first to invent or produce these reels. The first spincast reels were marketed in the USA in 1949 by the Denison-Johnson Reel Company and the Zero Hour Bomb Company (Zebco). Incidentally, in 1956 a friend of president Dwight D. Eisenhower requested the Zero Hour Bomb Company to send such a spincast reel to the president. A surprise indeed. Because when the package was

received at the White House, and security officials read the name of the sender, they quickly threw the package into a tub of water and called the bomb squad! Soon after that the Zero Hour Bomb Company changed its name to Zebco.

Back to our subject. ABU started to develop a spincast reel shortly after ABU director Göte Borgström and his son Lennart had visited the USA in the summer of 1954 for the promotion of their Ambassador 5000 reel. The reason was that Göte Borgström realised that the American spincast reels were a serious threat for their new Ambassador reel (which was introduced in Sweden in December 1952). The first ABU spincast reels were then developed by engineer Carl Nurmse and marketed in 1957. Two models were brought out simultaneously: the model 60 and the simpler and less expensive model 30. ABU was the first manufacturer outside the USA to produce spincast reels and beside their production for the Scandinavian market it was soon exporting large quantities of these reels to the USA.

Before actually bringing out these spincast reels, ABU had already advertised them, earlier in 1957, as the ABU Viking reels. But it soon turned out that a Viking brand of reels, including spincast models, already existed (in Canada), so the name Viking had to be changed in a hurry before marketing the reels. Lennart Borgström then came up with the name 'Abu-matic', later written as one word 'Abumatic', a brain wave he got from the automatic transmission in American automobiles. (For collectors only: as two ABU Viking models were already photographed for the advertisements, a few of these reels might have existed by that name... or may even still exist.)

Except for the cheaper models, most Abumatic reels had the ingenious 'Synchro' drag system in the handle, which together with the superior engineering and high overall quality of the reels (e.g. stainless steel and solid brass gearing, tungsten carbide line pick-up and hard-chromed stainless steel winding-cup) soon made the ABU spincast reels the most popular and wanted brand.



MALMÖ FISKEREDSKAPSAFFÄR

ingen av

Nr 30

Nr 60

Abu Viking

Den inkapslade haspelrullen passar för alla spön såväl haspel- som vanliga spinnsjön och ger långa backslagfria kast även med de lättaste beten. Abu Viking tillverkas i två modeller, nr 30 och nr 60.

Tekniska finesser:
Riktigt utformat tumgrepp för bekväm frikoppling.
Mjuk bromskona som effektivt skyddar linan.
Linförarstift av hårdmetall.
Linförarkåpa av hårdförkromat, rostfritt stål.
Lättrad fot för säker fasthållning.
Stillastående spole — därför ingen tvinning av linan.
Spolkapacitet 180 m 0,20, 120 m 0,25, 90 m 0,30 eller 70 m 0,35 mm av massiv nylonlina. Utförd av rostfritt stål och korrosionsbeständigt material.

Dessutom är Abu Viking nr 60 försedd med:
Tystgående automatisk backspärr.
Snabbreglerad slirbroms, synkroniserad med veven. Härigenom kan man med oanad snabbhet effektivt kontrollera fiskens rusningar.

ABU Viking reels as advertised in the *Malmö Fiskeredskapsaffär* catalogue of 1957. The reels were never marketed under that name however.

ABU-MATIC 60

Another world
from
ABU-MATIC



ABU-MATIC 60
— a fisherman's dream of streamlined beauty — combining the fool-proof fixed spool principle with the multiplier's ruggedness and handiness — this is a reel to gladden the heart of the beginner as well as the expert.

ABU-MATIC 60 is the greatest reel sensation since the Ambassadeur reel was presented 5 years ago. There was never a reel so easy to operate. A child can handle it blindfold. ABU-MATIC 60 is the only reel in the world with SYNCHRO-DRAG — another result of ABU's advanced engineering. The SYNCHRO-DRAG features an adjustable star-drag synchronized with an instantly adjustable drag built into the handle. Thus the star-drag remains set, while the variable handle drag is used to take care of emergencies as they occur while actually playing the fish.

ABU-MATIC 60 further has the same type of automatic anti-reverse as the Ambassadeur reel.

Catalogue number 18000.

Suitable rod: ABU Brilliant 5 1/2 ft
ABU Scandia 5 1/2 ft
or ABU Adjusto

Spool capacity for ABU-MATIC 60 and ABU-MATIC 30

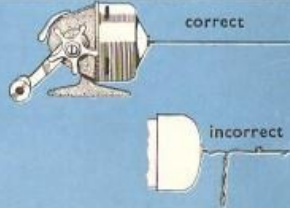
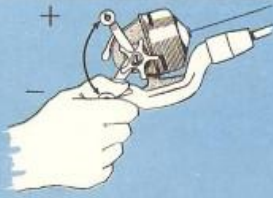
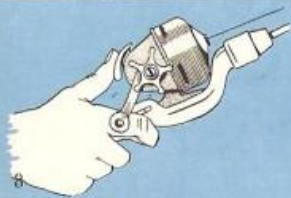
155 yds. 6 lbs. test (0,25 mm), 110 yds. 9 lbs. test (0,30 mm), 90 yds. 11 lbs. test (0,35 mm).



On baitcasting rod

Synchro-drag

Fixed spool —
no line-twist



sensation
ABU

FISHING REELS

ABU-MATIC 30
is a slightly simpler model of the ABU-MATIC 60 fishing reel.

ABU-MATIC 30 is equipped with drag control on the crank-shaft. The drag tension can therefore be changed very easily while playing the fish.

ABU-MATIC 30 can be used as a multiplying reel by placing on a casting- or spinning rod (for right hand winding) or as a spinning reel by securing under a spinning rod (for left hand winding).

Catalogue number 18050.

Suitable rod: ABU Scandia 5 1/2 ft
ABU Sport 5 1/2 ft
or ABU Succia.

ABU-MATIC 30



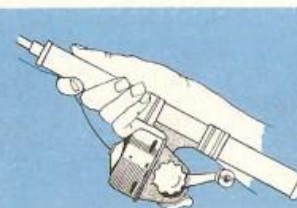
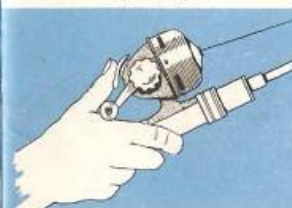
Common features of ABU-MATIC 60 and ABU-MATIC 30

- * No line-twist as the spool never turns.
- * Line protected spool-edges preventing the line from getting behind the spool.
- * Smooth rubber cushioned line brake eliminating unnecessary line-wear.
- * Winding-cup of hard-chromed Swedish stainless steel.
- * Line pick-up of tungsten carbide for life-time durability.
- * Comfortable shaped thumb trigger fits any hand.
- * Guaranteed backlashfree
- * Corrosion proof.
- * 100 yds. 9 lbs. monofilament line pre-wound on spool.
- * Patents pending

On spinning rod

As spinningreel
under the rod

Conveniently placed
drag



The first Abumatic reels, models 60 and 30, as shown in the 1957 Tight Lines catalogue.

Man kan inte få backslag med ABU-MATIC

*ABU-MATIC 62
är vänsterhandsvevad för
placering under
haspelspöet. I övrigt lika
som ABU-MATIC 60.*

*Utförlig instruktionsbok
medföljer varje rulle.*

*Anne-Charlotte Rundqvist,
Ronneby, har tagit den här
torsken på 12,2 kg med
ABU-MATIC 60.*



The Abumatics, just like the later 500-series, were exceptionally strong and sturdy reels. Here Mrs Rundqvist from Ronneby, Sweden gets all excited while holding a huge smelly cod by the eye-sockets. Caught with an Abumatic 60. It shows that women were well aware how to use these spincast reels.

The Abumatic 2-models

ABU recognised the potential market for spincast reel models that could be hung under a conventional spinning rod. These 'under-the-rod' reels were not yet what we now know as 'underspin reels', as these underspin models (also called triggerspin reels) have a longer stem, like conventional spinning reels, which enables you to hold them easily and securely with two fingers before and two behind the stem. In 1957 ABU, as mentioned above, brought out its first two Abumatic spincast reels: the models 30 and 60. Two years later, in 1959, two more models were introduced: the 70 and the 80. The same year however four 'under-the-rod' counterparts of these reels were introduced - not in the Swedish *Napp och Nytt* catalogue, but in the English *Tight Lines* catalogue only. These were the 32, 62, 72 and 82, the so-called '2-models'. Of these reels - both the regular models and the 2-models - six had the famous synchro-drag, together with an automatic anti-reverse: the 60 and 62, the 70 and 72 and the 80 and 82. The models 30 and 32 lacked these features and we'll discuss them first.

Abumatic 30 and 32

The Abumatics 30 and especially its later 'under-the-rod' counterpart the model 32 have puzzled us most of all. These cheapest models in the Abumatic line (until the introduction of the even simpler model 20 in 1961) had no anti-reverse, but instead of that a clicker that worked both ways. And instead of the synchro-drag they had a cheaper direct drive mechanism with a drag working in both directions. When the model 30 was introduced in 1957 it was already

mentioned and illustrated in the catalogue that you could use this reel both on top of the rod and under the rod (see the blue lower part in the picture of the 1957 catalogue, 2 pages back). In both cases winding in could be done in the normal 'forward' direction, even though this meant that the direction of rotation of the winding-cup when the reel was hanging under the rod would then be opposite to that when the reel was used on top of the rod. This was possible only because the Abumatic 30 lacked both the anti-reverse and the synchro-drag that the 60 model had. Both these mechanisms would have made reeling in possible in only one direction: forward when the reel was placed on top of the rod. (This meant that if a model 60, equipped with synchro-drag and anti-reverse would be hung under a rod, winding in would have to be done 'backwards', which would feel very unnatural and awkward.)

Now if you could already crank both ways with a model 30 and thus use the reel either placed on top of the rod or hanging under it, then why ever was an 'under-the-rod' model 32 introduced? Moreover these two models must have been technically identical. And indeed they were. The reason for introducing the model 32 was the fact that all these Abumatic reels were sold with pre-spooled line. E.g. the model 30 contained 100 meters of 0.30 mm Platil nylon. Now a customer who would want to buy the cheapest Abumatic to use under a rod, would be reluctant to buy a 30, because it had the line spooled up in the wrong direction for his purpose and he would have to reel in backwards to retrieve it. So if ABU would want to sell a pre-spooled 30 model for use under the rod, it would have to market it as a 32, just like the other 2-models, to clearly indicate that it had the line spooled up in the correct direction for use under the rod. In short: the only difference between the 30 and 32 models (apart from

the engraving in the green bell cover) is the direction in which the line was pre-spooled on them when they were sold. This may seem a trivial difference, but marketing-wise it's important enough.



A rare Abumatic 32, from the collection of Leif Markström.

All the same the model 32 was never much of a success. Probably only very few of these reels were ever sold as today they are extremely rare. They never appeared in the Swedish *Napp och Nytt* catalogues, but only in the English *Tight Lines* catalogues of 1959 and 1960, so they were short-lived as well.

The other Abumatic 2-models: 62, 72 and 82

As mentioned before, in 1959 four Abumatic 2-models were introduced, all of them in the English *Tight Lines* catalogue, none of them in the Swedish *Napp och Nytt*. These were the Abumatic 32, 62, 72 and 82. They were the 'hanging-under-the-rod' versions of the 30, 60, 70 and 80 respectively, winding in line in the opposite direction of their counterparts. Model 62 appeared in *Napp och Nytt* 1960 and 1961, models 72 and 82 in *Napp och Nytt* 1961 only. This shows that the Abumatic 2-models were developed first and for all for the English-speaking market, in this case the USA, where spincast reels were already used for a decade and enjoyed much popularity. The Scandinavian market came second and we believe that in other parts of Europe the reels were hardly sold or used at all. Their relative popularity in other parts of the world, such as Australia and South-Africa, is still unknown and to be examined.

The use of spincast reels is culturally determined - that is, in a fishing culture kind of way. And as they were easier to use and more affordable than multiplier reels, we can clearly see the usefulness of Abumatics for people who owned and were used to baitcasting rods with a trigger handle. But why would anybody choose an Abumatic to use hanging under a rod when conventional ('open-face') spinning

reels were so much more comfortable and secure to hold (two fingers on each side of the stem) and easier to handle? After all, when the first Abumatic 2-models were introduced, in 1957, fine conventional spinning reels were readily available, the most popular ones being made by Mitchell (France), Luxor (France), Penn (USA), DAM (West Germany), Zangi (Italy) and of course ABU itself. In fact ABU had introduced its popular and well-made 'people's spinning reel' the ABU 444 in 1955, two years before the first Abumatic 2-models, and in 1957 that reel cost only 68,- Swedish kronor: hardly more than the Abumatic 32 (65,- SKR) and much cheaper than the Abumatic 62 (98,- SKR).

There are several answers we can imagine for choosing an Abumatic 'under-the-rod' model instead of a conventional spinning reel. First of all the Abumatics looked very modern and attractive: they had a nice streamlined design - compact and no frills - and fresh bright colours, in particular the tasteful red and black model. And in the 1950s people were much taken in by such modern designs, for they heralded progress and better times coming. The Abumatic 2-models, like their regular 'on-top-of-the-rod' counterparts, also had the advantage of having no bail, a feature that was sensitive to damage and malfunction. Apart from that, anglers in the USA were already accustomed to the regular spincast reels and to the ease of handling of these reels. That could have attracted them to buy a similar model for the straight handle spinning rods they might already have or for rod types that were not available with a trigger grip.

Still these Abumatic 2-models did not really catch on (as did the underspin models in the USA later on). And their existence was limited to five years only: from 1957 to 1961 inclusive.



An Abumatic 62 with the (Abumatic 60) sticker still on. It reads:
"ABUMATIC 60 - World's only Reel with sensational
SYNCHRO-DRAG - See instruction booklet".

All Abumatic 2-models were discontinued in 1962, at least they were no longer shown in the catalogues. And no wonder. That year (1962) the famous ABU 505 was introduced, which had all the advantages of a hanging Abumatic 2-model over a conventional spinning reel (no bail, no possible line-twist, the synchro drag) plus the great advantage over the Abumatic 2-models that the 500-model was much easier and secure to hold and more comfortable to handle when placed under a rod.

Finally, the Abumatic 152

A special case is the Abumatic 152. This reel was made in 1976 only. It was meant to be an 'under-the-rod' model - hence the 2-number - and as such it was a modification of the Abumatic 150, a simplified version of the Abumatic 170, without the stardrag, but with a screw instead, which allowed the drag to be adjusted by using a coin (just like the ABU 503). But while the 150 had a copper-coloured bell cover (again just like the ABU 503), the 152 had a yellow-gold cover.



An Abumatic 152 from the collection of Leif Markström.

However, after making prototypes ABU changed plans and decided to make the 152 into a regular on-top-of-the-rod spincast reel after all. It was marketed in the USA by Garcia as the Abumatic 152, but as only very few of these reels were ever produced it is quite rare.



Two seemingly identical Abumatic 152 reels. But the one with the Garcia sticker is a regular 'on-top' reel, sold in the USA only, while the other is a prototype 'under-the-rod' reel that preceded it, but was never marketed. (Collection Leif Markström)

Au revoir

We conclude our research by emphasising that we are well aware of the limits of our knowledge on the Abumatic 2-models. So any additional information on this subject would be more than welcome. If and when we receive more ins and outs on these reels, or corrections, we would like to use them for producing an improved version of this little story.

We'll wind up this PDF with some nice pictures of Abumatic 2-models on the following pages. They were kindly supplied to us by Leif Markström and were taken from reels in his collection.

Tight Lines from the three of us!

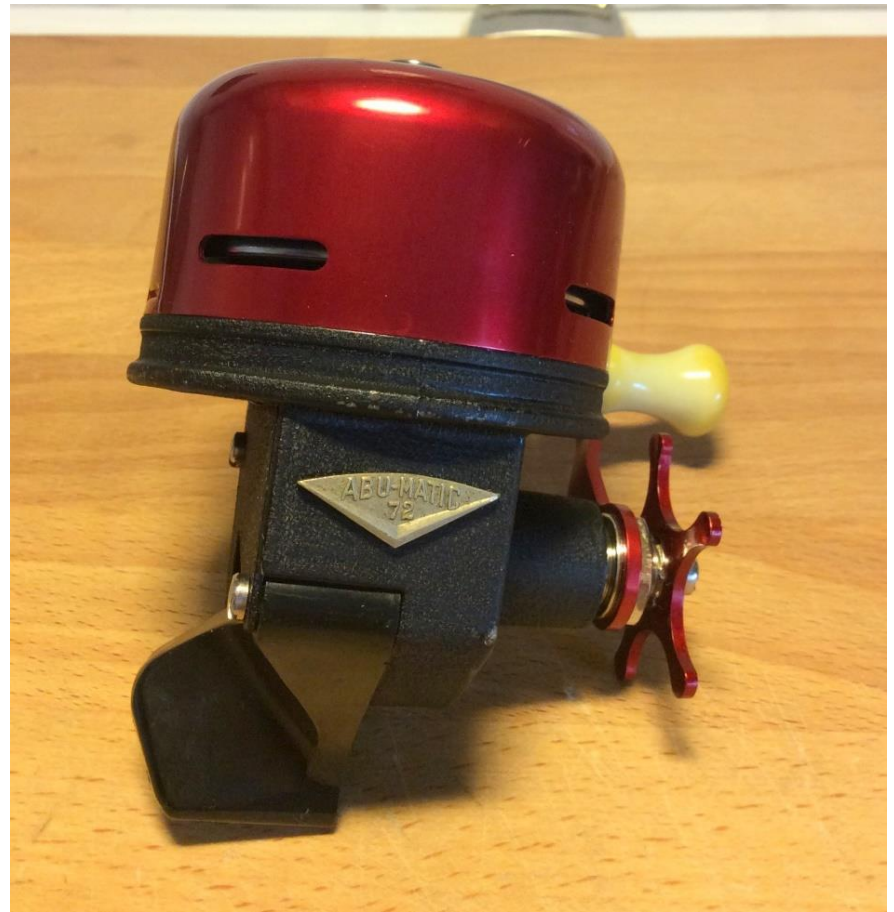
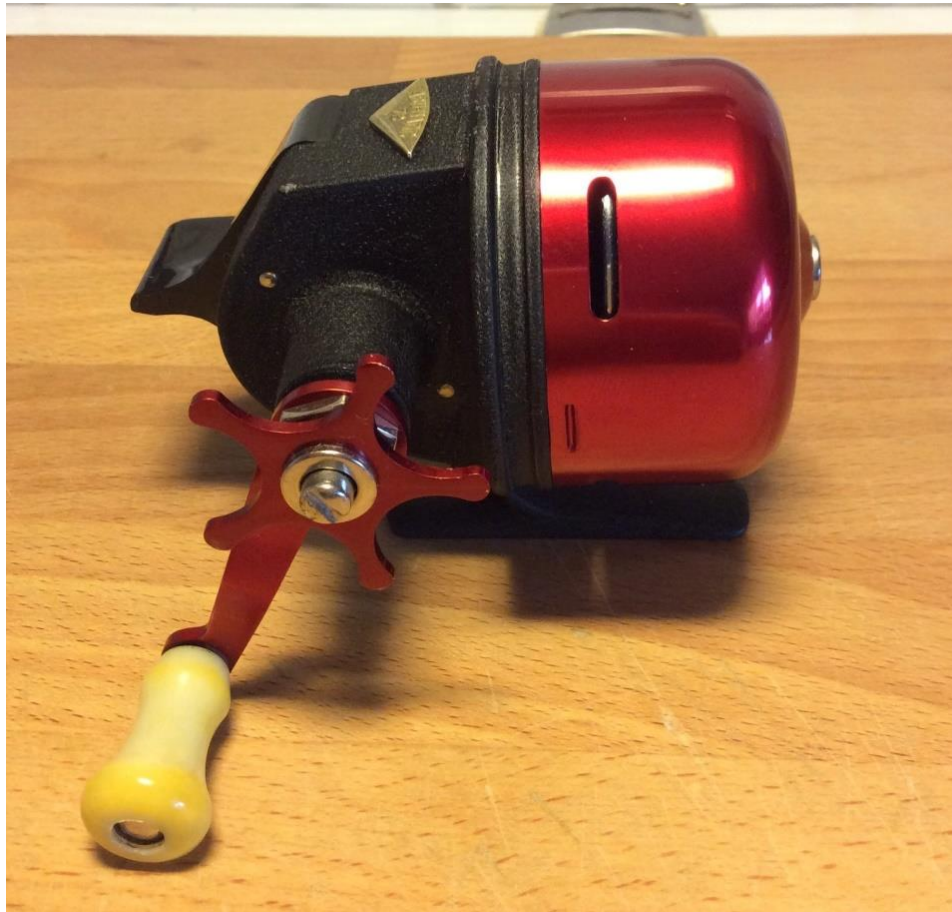
Wayne, Coenraad and Hans.



A small part of Leif Markström's vast collection of Abumatics:
only the lower model numbers...



Abumatic 62 (2x)



Abumatic 72 (2x)



Abumatic 82 (2x)