

The story of ABU and me...

By

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(Part 1)

I am a psychologist residing in South Africa and a firm believer of having a hobby. Therefore, it is not surprising that I have come to collect mainly ABU reels, but also rods and other related items from this exceptional company. However, I also collect vintage Mitchell reels from France, Penn (USA) and **DAM (Deutche Angelgeräte Manufaktur)** Quick of West Germany, although on a small scale. If you read between the lines, you will realise that I love a quality made product, especially from the past. For this reason I am “infatuated” by these reels and their built-in quality. No, I am not saying that contemporary reels cannot be a quality product! However you have to part with a significant amount of money to get something that will last anything like the reels from the ‘Golden Era’ (1960-1970’s).

So how did I fell in love with ABU reels from Sweden? This is my story...

It all started during the late 80’s at the age of 13 when I saw my first ABU reel, an ABU Matic 290 mounted on an ABU bait casting rod. It was a friend of mines father who was using it to catch Bass at the time. I remember asking him if I can hold and “get a feel” of it. It was balanced and easy to use... When enquiring where he obtained it, the old man told me that he had bought it somewhere during the 1970’s and has used it ever since. He also informed me that ABU is renowned for the best quality tackle in the world, but expensive and hard to find. “Hard to find”? Well, you must understand that South Africa was in isolation and sanctions instituted against my country due to their racial segregation policy (apartheid) at the time. Some ABU products did in fact enter the country, but not in large quantities and very expensive. So my dreams of owning one was crushed... I even asked to buy it, but my offer was declined: “Where must I get another one, this is my fishing companion”. I had to wait another 3 years to get my first Abu Matic 290 C... Read on!

In 1991, me and a friend visited pawn shops to look for second hand fishing tackle. We did not have any money, but it was nice to see what was on offer. Usually just beat up Daiwa and Silstar reels, really cheap stuff. One day my paths crossed with an Abu Matic 290 C that was fully functional (yes, yes I now know it is a Japanese model and not the real thing, but I did not know any better back then!) As you can deduct, I was still at school (age 16) at the time and money was a scarce commodity. After haggling with the store owner, we each traded 2 of our fishing rods and a rather new Silstar reel for the Abu Matic. I really felt that the universe and the gods were favouring me... but this unfortunately changed the following

year. I accidentally dropped the reel and one of the plastic parts on the inside shattered. I was dismayed and melancholic, but said to myself “One day I will have another ABU ...”



Fast forward to the mid 90's and an announcement was made: 'Abu was now officially back in South Africa' with a new distributor. I saw the ads, but I knew I could not afford them as a student paying my own tuition fees.

Abu Garcia

THE BEST FISHING NEWS THIS YEAR!

Ambassadeur
Abumatic and Cardinal
Reels are back!

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deur ETIENNE KRIEL

Laat die
wiele
rol



Brandstofverbruik is Telstar se sterkpunt

'n Vliegtuigbespreking wat iewers 'n kortsluiting ontwikkel het, het my onlangs agter die stuur van 'n gehuurde Ford Telstar Gle laat beland — inderhaas op pad na Nelspruit. Die eerste keer dat ek 'n kans kry om een van die nuwe geslag windtonnel-ontwikkelde Fords te voel soos hulle sê.

Die Telstar was met lugreëlaar en outomatiese ratkas toegerus waarvan laasgenoemde item 'n teleurstelling was. In die Oos-Transvaalse bergwêreld het 'n mens 'n ratkierie nodig as jy regtig lekker deur die draaie wil seil.

Maar 'n Ford het nog altyd lekker bestuur en as mens eers die oë op die horison gerig en die petrolpedaal vloer toe getrap het, is die Kaap weer Hollands.

Die gerief van die Telstar het beïndruk. Die motor is ruim binne, sit baie lekker en al die regte hefboome, skakelaars en instrumente is binne direkte sig en raakvat van die bestuurder sonder om jou oë onnodig van die pad te laat soek. Die asbakkie en sigaretaansteker is egter baie moeilik geplaas en mens is geneig om die ratheboom uit posisie te druk as jy skielik daarna vat of as wil uitskud. Maar nouja, die ou rookgewoonte kan ook nie juis goedgepraat word nie.

Siende dat daar nie baie tyd was om in Nelspruit te kom nie, het ek die lepel maar ingetrap en teen 'n konstante 180 kmu die oog fyn ingestel op moontlike spoedlokvalle. Een uur en dertig minute later was Machadodorp op regterkant. So 'n halfuur gouer as gewoonlik, maar toe begin besige enkelbaanverkeer op lang gedeeltes die spoed erg inperk.

Nogtans kon ek twee-en-'n-halfuur later in Nelspruit instroom betyds vir die afspraak.

Daarvandaan het ek die Ford sommer vir die lekkerte daarvan gelooi oor die bergpasse tot in Sabie. Hier moes ek brandstof ingooi.

Die voorafgaande stukkie het ek net geskryf om te probeer beduie dat ek geensins met die oog op brandstofbespa-ring bestuur het nie. En daar moet onthou word dat 'n outomatiese ratkas gewoonlik swaarder op die duur voggies is as die handratmodelle.

Die verbruik was 'n verstommende 9,9 kilometer per liter. En dit beskou ek as die Ford se sterkste punt in sy guns. Dit lyk of daar iets steek in die windtonnel ontwerp. Boonop is die Ford teen hoë snelhede feitlik geruisloos op die pad.

Deur die skerp draaie van die Long Tom bergpas en die volgende dag deur Magoebaskloof se kort draaitjies was die Ford se padgedrag onberispelik. Die outomatiese ratkas met sy gedurige verwisseling in bergpasse was al ongerieflik. Selfs al word die ratheboom in tweede gehou, het dit steeds gepla.

En donkernag op die pad wil mens meer lig hê as wat die Telstar se hoofligte bied.

Maar andersins, is die motor 'n baie bevredigende bestuurservaring.

Die verkoopprijs was hier in die omgewing van R95 000 toe ek laas gekyk het.



In 1998, I saw the advert of the ABU Morrur line up and drooled over this magnificent piece of machinery. The 1999 review of this reel also add insult to injury (both advert and review posted elsewhere on this website). My break came in 2005 (you see how patience is

a virtue?) when I bought my first ABU Ambassadeur 6000 brand new, *Made in Sweden*. After using it a couple of times I start toying with the idea to collect these wonderful reels. Why have one or two of them when you can collect many! I first started buying new Ambassadeur reels in current production and still one of my favourites of that time is the ABU Ambassadeur Record RCN 60 with its laser etching on the reel. Simply breathe taking!



Also during this time a friend of mine gave me my first ABU Tight Lines (circa 1990) that his girlfriend of the time (1991) brought along as a gift after visiting Sweden. Now I was introduced to other ABU reels and the article on Cardinal reels simply swept me away:

"Cardinal celebrates twenty-five years of spinning reel excellence- the world over".

Abu
Garcia



Cardinal celebrates twenty-five years of spinning



Those of us who were fishing back in 1965 may find it hard to believe, but it has been exactly one quarter of a century since the first Cardinal made its debut on the bank. Yet we will likely remember that with the introduction of this remarkable reel came a brand new level of spinning performance – one that has not been surpassed even as we enter the 1990's. Credit for the superior performance of the Cardinal spinning reel is due in large part to the extensive research and development effort that preceded its introduction. In fact, it was only after several years of testing, tooling and hundreds of hours of actual fishing that the first Cardinal models 66 and 77 entered the market. Yet they did so to an enthusiastic reception as word of their superior performance came well in advance of product availability to the public.

Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of these reels, and the one that is still spoken of with the greatest reverence, is the silky smoothness of their drive. Such smooth operation is achieved by a combination of a superbly engineered ball-bearing mounted worm gear, a stainless steel spool shaft, and a powerful, yet precise, fulcrum rear-drag mechanism. All these components are perfectly balanced to work in unison, thus enabling the Cardinal to achieve the distinction of a finely tuned fishing instrument, in addition to having proven itself as a real workhorse when pitted against long running and hard fighting gamefish.

Here's a chronological look, model by model, at the development of the Cardinal as one of the world's most respected names in spinning reels.

Cardinal 66 – The original Cardinal and an ideal reel for pike and big trout as well as cod and mackerel in salt water. This model was later identified simply as the Cardinal 6.

Cardinal 77 – A bigger, beefier version of the 66 that immediately proved its worth as a fresh-run salmon reel and an outstanding bluefish reel that can stand the rigors of salt water fishing. Later known as the Cardinal 7.

In 1979, the **Cardinal 44** (now the Cardinal 4) brought exceptional spinning performance to a broad segment of the fishing community. It's the all-purpose medium duty reel for fresh and salt water.

By 1975, the market was ripe for a new breed of reel, so timing for the introduction of the **Cardinal 33** (now the Cardinal 3) Ultra-Light was perfect. This remarkable reel was lighter than its predecessors and became a best seller almost overnight.

Then, in 1977 and 1978, "speed" became the buzzword as the **Cardinal 66X** and **77X** brought spin-fishermen high speed retrieve thanks to a 5.2:1 gear ratio.

Many believe that it was during 1978 that Cardinal earned a permanent position among the great spinning

...inning reel excellence - the world over!



reels of all time. It was then that innovations like Cardinal's skirted spool, internal bail-trip mechanism and precision spool oscillation became important features among serious spinfishermen.

It was also in 1978 that the Cardinal 33, 44, 66 and 77 were recommissioned as the **3, 4, 6** and **7**, and the **Cardinal 54, 55** and **57** series was introduced to round out one of the most complete selections of high performance spinning reels ever offered.

During the eighties, the Cardinal family grew rapidly. Numerous new models were introduced, giving fishermen an unprecedented choice of fixed-spool reels for just about every conceivable application.

The **Cardinal 700**, with its rugged aluminium body, first appeared in 1983. And it wasn't long before it became the world's largest-selling fixed-spool reel, a fact which was readily apparent to other manufacturers, as the 700 also became the world's most "copied" reel. Yet even before the competition could match the 700's features, Abu Garcia introduced its successor, the **Cardinal 700 GTi**, the first member of the Cardinal family featuring graphite and titanium reinforcement.

This was followed by the **Cardinal 800 GTX** a reel incorporating a unique new dual-drag system, and the **Cardinal 600 GT**, a fixed-spool whose chief features were the new dual drag system and an ingenious Strike Set/Free Spool function that proved to be an excellent feature for live bait fishing.

Then in 1989, came the largest and most sophisticated range of fixed-spool reels ever to leave the Abu Garcia factory: The **Cardinal Dragmaster**. This outstanding series features a sleek, modern design and drag surface that's 30 % larger than the original 700, yet even more precise and responsive than its predecessors. The Dragmaster series was also unique in that it comprised a truly lightweight reel: the Cardinal Dragmaster Ultralite, a compact, precision-built, ultra light reel, perfect for lighter game fish species.

Now, as we enter 1990 and the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Cardinal reels, Abu Garcia is proud to introduce a brand new series of spinning reels that promise to add new meaning to the term "casting distance". Never before have we offered a series of fixed spool reels that cast as far, or with as little effort as **Cardinal ULTRACAST** Design spinning reels. Thanks to an ingeniously engineered, extra-long, lowfriction spool, anglers can now cast as much as 15 % farther. And because line literally flows off the uniquely designed spool, you'll also be able to fish lighter lures without having to switch to a lower test line.

Cardinal ULTRACAST ... cast farther, cast easier with the most noteworthy spinning achievement in twenty five years!

For a closer look at what the Cardinal ULTRACAST has to offer, turn to page 16.

I was now firmly in the grip of “ABU fever” and becoming obsessive about anything ABU. Who says a psychologist cannot become ‘obsessive’ and ‘compulsive’ about the fine things in life? I don’t care, label me if you’d like! No medication or therapy can cure what I got...

In one of the pawn shops during 2006, (yes I am still looking for vintage reels, but this time I have money in my pocket!) I saw an ABU Cardinal 57 in a very good condition and bought it. This was my first Swedish spinner. Opened the reel up to see what the fuss was all about. (Oh I forgot to mention, I also service and repair all kinds of fishing reels, old and new, as a second leg of my hobby- obsessed... yes, I know!). To my shock I could see why this reel could last forever and a day, except for the spool, but that is a topic for another day. The internal working of this reel greatly differed from current spinning reels, even Abu’s currently produced. I immediately realised that this was a beast of a different breed... Later on I learned the name of this particular gear system, a helical worm gear drive made of solid brass and stainless steel. No zinc diecast gearing to be seen! Please see the review of the Abu Cardinal 57 by Alan Hawk that is also listed on this wonderful web site. In the near future I would like to make an important contribution to this review, if I may?



While busy collecting, I decided to repair my first Abu Matic 290 C and started to enquire about spare parts. This endeavour led me to one of the biggest two collectors of ABU reels in South Africa and who became my dear ABU mate- Gert Delpert (RIP dear friend...). He’s

influence on my knowledge of ABU and collecting as a hobby is far reaching. You see how ABU can bring people together and even became good friends? This is just what ABU does...

This concludes *Part 1 of ABU and me*.