

This review is a rendition of a review I've written earlier, redone especially for Wayne, a good friend and a great person and a family man who is more passionate about and dedicated to Abu than anyone I've ever seen or met before.

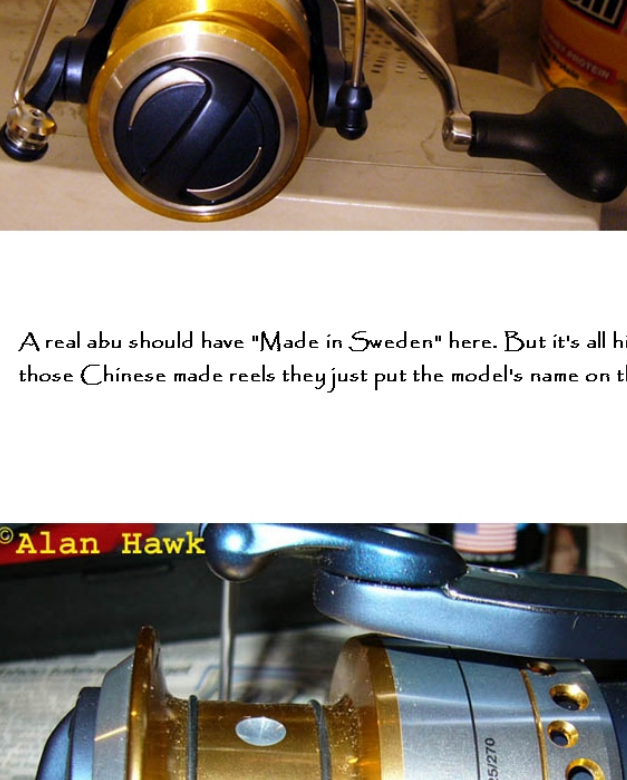
This is my first review of a non Swedish Abu. Was never impressed by any spinning reel they made since they started making them in China, but this reel forced a change of heart on me. What "this reel" is? I sorta have no idea! The reel reviewed here is from the Cardinal 8xx series, which is an upgrade of the 8xx (no "r") black coloured reels. This reel to the best of my knowledge is identical to the Soron. A carbon copy in every way except the name, and that the Cardinal 807i sells for about 1/3 the price of a Soron. My best guess is that they simply renamed the Cardinal to Soron for some reason or another. The 807i reviewed here is the same as Soron STX 70, the 806i is Soron STX 60, etc. With this out of the way, let's proceed.

The reel is a medium sized full metal saltwater reel. The body, side cover, rotor, and bail arm are made of a sturdy aluminum alloy. It looks very smart in this blue finish, silver handle and guards, and golden/silver spool.

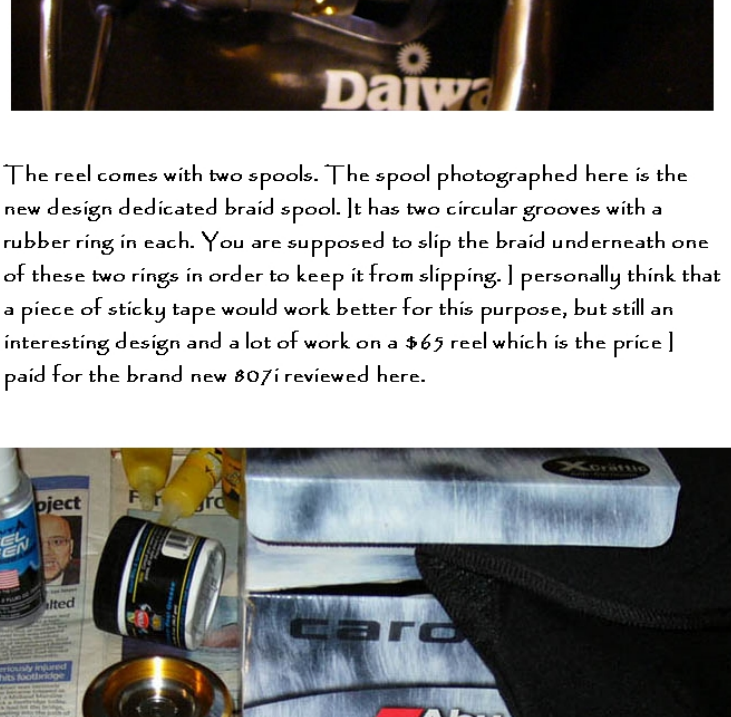
First thing you'll notice is that the reel is heavy for its size class. But it's "quality" heavy, not "clumsy" heavy.



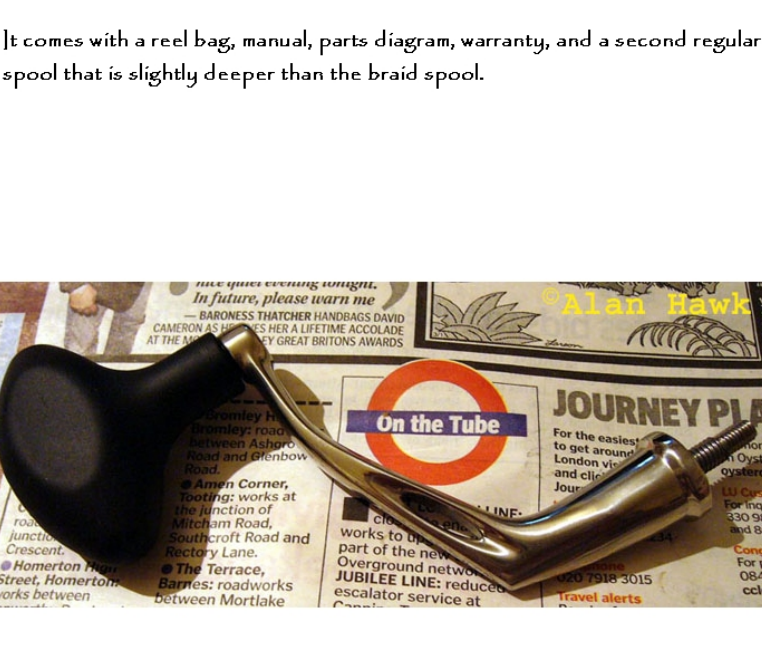
Front view. The drag knob is the click adjustment type, which is slowly becoming a standard in today's spinning reels.



A real abu should have "Made in Sweden" here. But it's all history now and in those Chinese made reels they just put the model's name on the foot.



The reel comes with two spools. The spool photographed here is the new design dedicated braid spool. It has two circular grooves with a rubber ring in each. You are supposed to slip the braid underneath one of these two rings in order to keep it from slipping. I personally think that a piece of sticky tape would work better for this purpose, but still an interesting design and a lot of work on a \$67 reel which is the price I paid for the brand new 807i reviewed here.



It comes with a reel bag, manual, parts diagram, warranty, and a second regular spool that is slightly deeper than the braid spool.



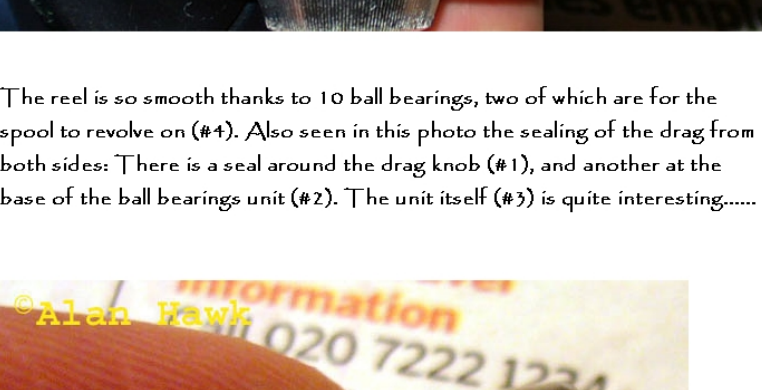
This is one of the best features in this reel. A one piece handle with no joints. It's one of the things that makes it a heavier reel, but to me it is quite worth it. It's durable, and it gives a pleasant solid feeling while reeling in a lure or actually fighting a fish.



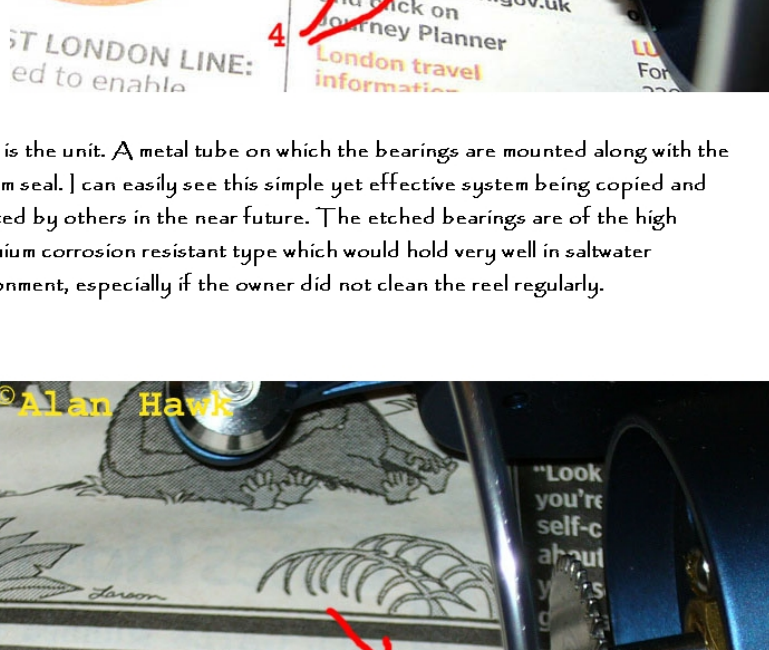
Side view of the reel. It has a slotted rotor both for cosmetic and weight reduction purposes, and there are metal guards (red arrows) to absorb hits in the most susceptible areas where plastic would get dented or scratched. More impressive work for the small amount the reel costs.



Removing the rear guard exposes a rectangular opening in the reel's body. Very useful for spraying grease on the gears every few fishing trips without the need to fully disassemble the reel.



Also present is the Royal warrant that is a part of almost all Abu reels. This time it's embossed on the small cap that covers the main gear axle (blue arrow).



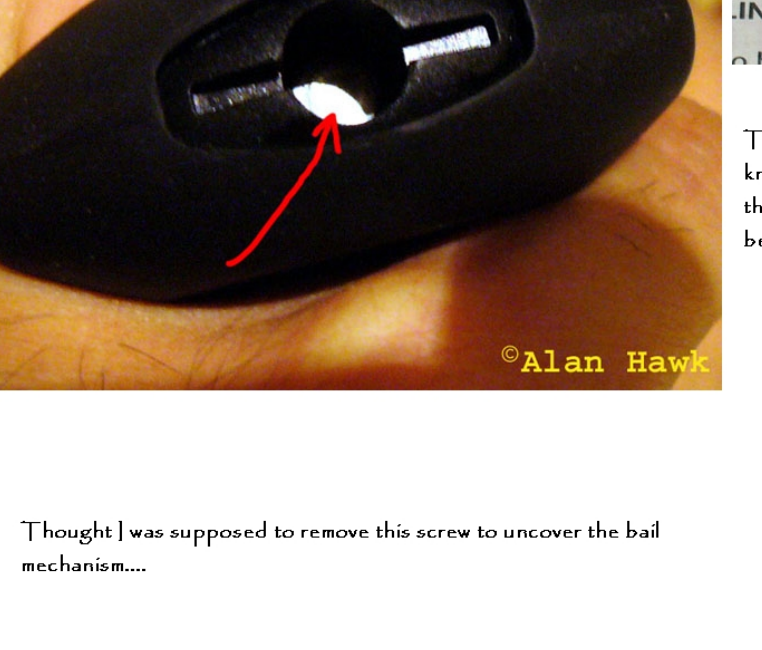
Here is the unit. A metal tube in which the bearings are mounted along with the bottom seal. I can easily see this simple yet effective system being copied and adapted by others in the near future. The etched bearings are of the high chromium corrosion resistant type which would hold very well in saltwater environment, especially if the owner did not clean the reel regularly.



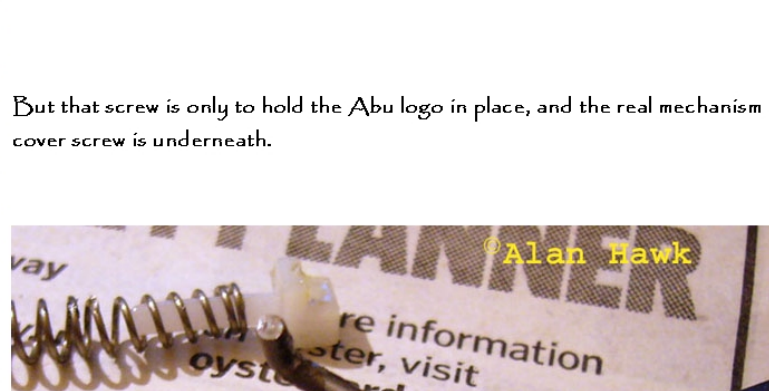
And to make sure water won't leak to the drag from the space between the shaft and the unit, they put a rubber seal on the shaft that fits in a recess in the back of the unit.



The reel does not come without its flaws. One of them is the knob fitting. The knob couldn't be removed to be fixed or to clean and lube the two ball bearings inside the knob.



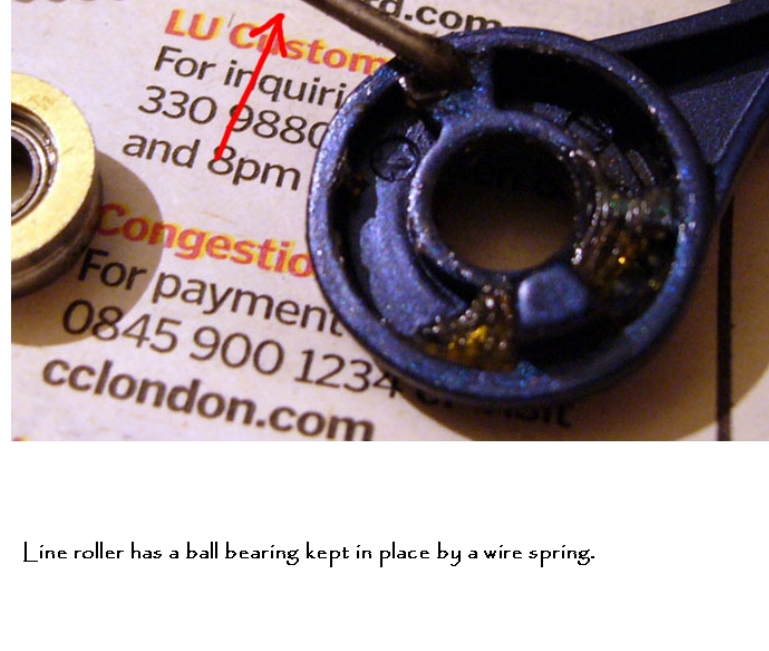
Thought I was supposed to remove this screw to uncover the bail mechanism....



But that screw is only to hold the Abu logo in place, and the real mechanism cover screw is underneath.



Bail arm, made of good quality aluminum alloy, and has a lever to reach the spring which is located unusually further away in order to achieve a curvier rotor cam design.



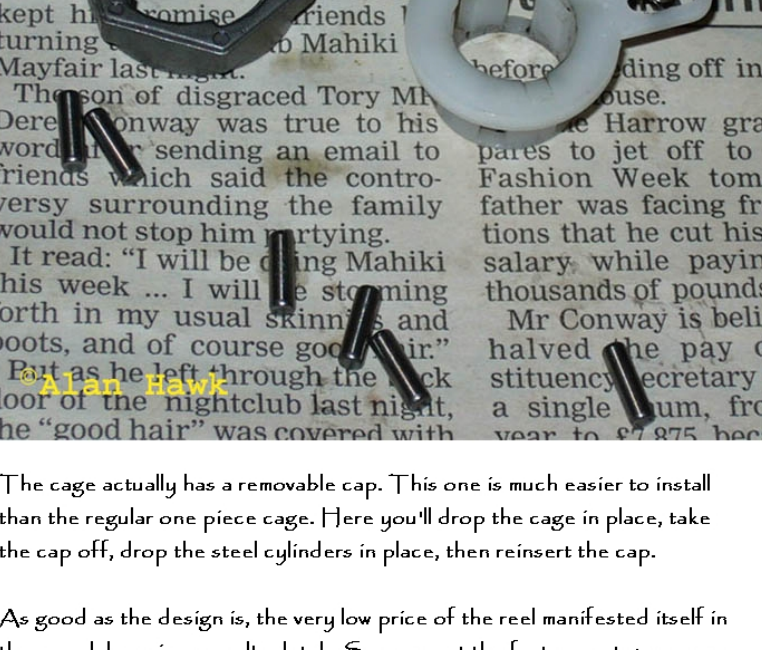
Line roller has a ball bearing kept in place by a wire spring.



Nothing unusual here. The common selective antireverse setup, with the switch right beneath the rotor.



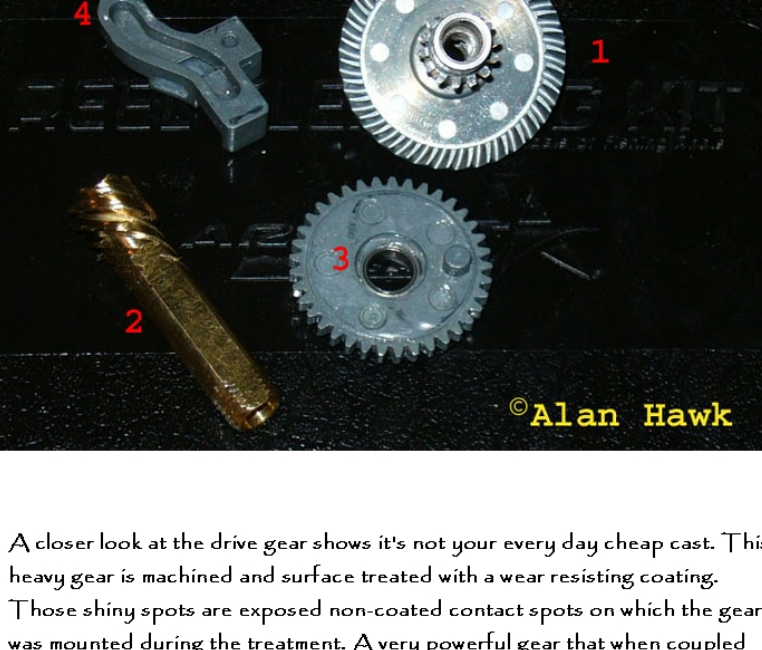
Looks like a regular one way clutch. But there is a twist...



The cage actually has a removable cap. This one is much easier to install than the regular one piece cage. Here you'll drop the cage in place, take the cap off, drop the steel cylinders in place, then reinsert the cap.



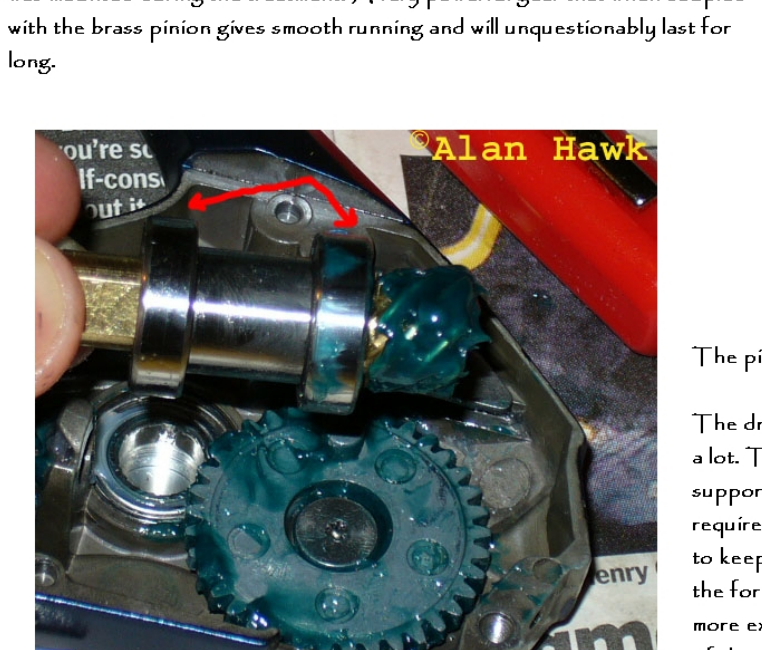
The drivetrain. #1 main gear, #2 machined brass pinion, #3 the oscillation gear, and #4 the traverse cam.



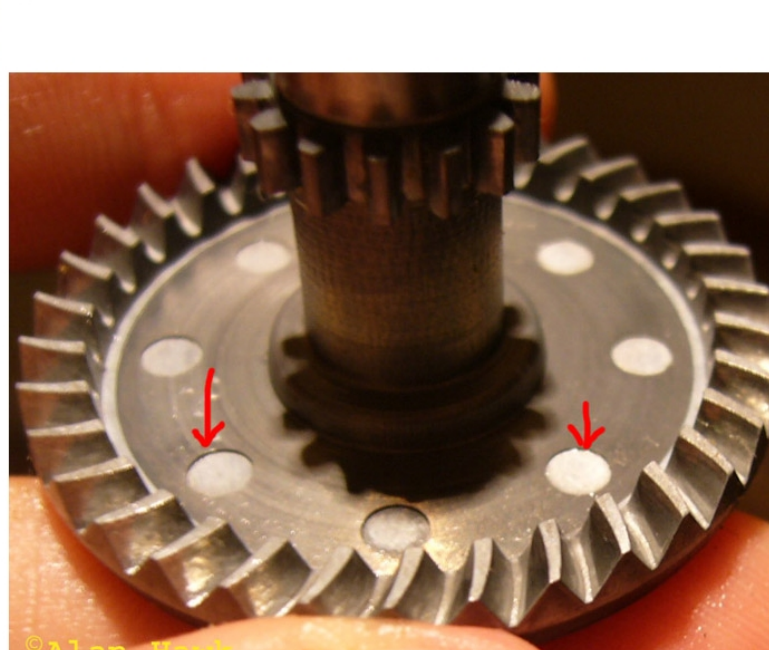
A closer look at the drive gear shows it's not your every day cheap cast. This heavy gear is machined and surface treated with a wear resisting coating. Those shiny spots are exposed non-coated contact spots on which the gear was mounted during the treatment. A very powerful gear that when coupled with the brass pinion gives smooth running and will unquestionably last for long.



The pinion has two ball bearings to run on, not just one.



Main shaft is cut on one side only. Leaves more metal and accordingly gives more rigidity to the shaft.



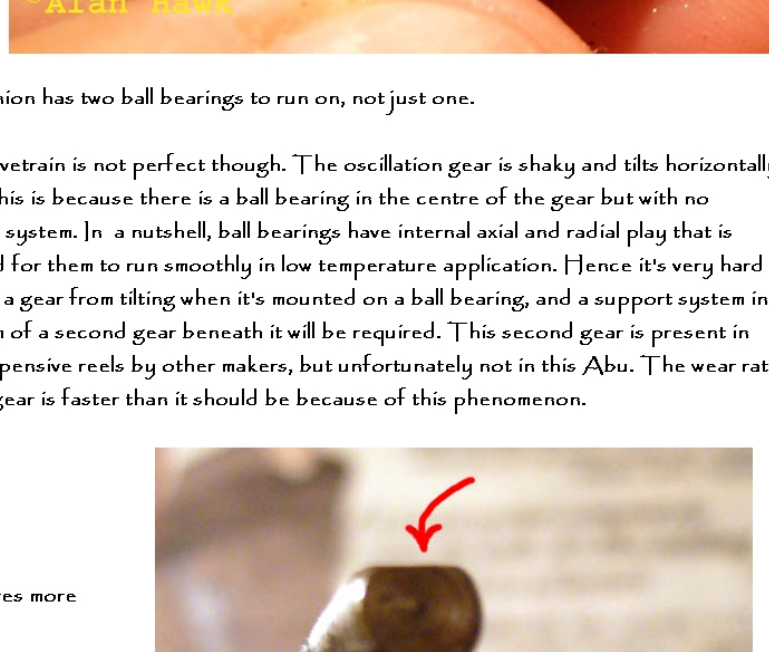
The drag washers are the same common mesh type used in top reels. They run dry which is something I very much prefer to the grease covered drag type.



In most other reels, including some pricey ones, they simply keep the drag washers in place by a wire spring. But here they machined a metal disc with threads on its side (red arrow #1) that locks the drag washers securely in place, and it even has a rubber seal to keep water out (red arrow #2).



What would one make of the Cardinal 800i/Soron reels? They obviously share a common value with all Chinese made Abu spinners. They lack the personality, character, and passion that came with the dear old Swedish built ones. If you compare this review to the one I've written on this site of the Suveran, you'll see the lack of soul in this reel compared to the Swedish Suveran which was based on design features directly derived from a long line of Abus going back 70 years or about. Still, I was quite pleased to finally see a reel from Abu that could be called "top of the line", as every spinning reel of their production since the move to China looked so cheap and generic to me.



The reel does not come without its flaws, which I've mentioned in the review. But the thing is that I've seen similar problems such as clutch slippage and less than perfect fitting in reels that cost me \$300-\$350. So regardless of its imperfections, I have no doubt in my mind that this reel is the best value for money out there today. Can't deny that I loved it, but it will take a miracle for me to ever review a Chinese Abu again. It took them nearly a decade since the introduction of the Suveran to make another interesting reel, and for some reason I can't see this happening again for another decade.

Alan Hawk  
April 2009