Fending Off Life's Little Dings & Scrapes

There's no doubt about the little 3.4m Ocean Craft. It's a "cylinder" concept where the tubes are made from very light gauge 1.2mm aluminium, but has great potential as a multi-function vessel. OC's are now being used by the divers, yachties, inland fishermen, Search & Rescue groups, etc..

In our case, it is the dedicated fishing dory to our mothership project. This is quite a complex task, and has involved a fitting out program more suited to a 19' sportfisherman than a baby 10' fishing dory.

However, this is to misunderstand the role of this dory - whilst it might be *little*, it certainly doesn't lack the power to pack a punch in the sportfishing department.

It's got a seriously big live bait tank, rod racks, sounder, GPS and VHF. It's designed to handle multiple fishing tasks including working the outside of the GBR, barra fishing in creeks, and working sportfish around headlands - not a bad task list for a 10 footer!

But there is one problem we had to overcome. Hard edged aluminium fishing dories such as this were clearly going to crunch our very expensive blue paint job on the mothership in short order, so we had to come up with a fender solution that involved fixing permanent fenders to the sides. Not wanting to trust lashed down fenders (which can be blown off in strong winds) we were keen to permanently install suitable fender material.

As you can see in these photographs, Ruth Cunningham came up with the absolutely perfect fender strip material - ordered specially from foam specialists just for F&B.

Because we can't drill into, or even self-tap into the fully sealed cylinders, we had to invent another way of fixing the foam strips to the sides.

Once again, the boat builder's magic brew, Sikkaflex, came to the fore. Having worked out how we could apply pressure to the fender strips to hold them in situ as the Sikkaflex dried out, we were able to complete the task with just a few hours cutting, glueing and cleaning up.

Footnote: In a moment of dubious inspiration, doubtless inspired by the Sikkaflex fumes, RC decided that the best name she could come up with for "Faraway's" dory was "Over The Hill". I'm not sure whether I want to laugh or cry!

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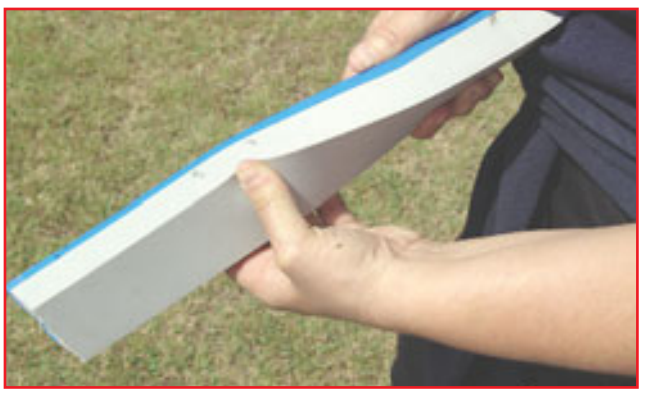
Above: The basic ingredients - Sikkaflex, masking tapes, the special foam fender strips and vaseline.

Here, we've used the cling tape to hold the strips in place. It's important to get quite a bit of pressure on the strips, but equally, it's vital that the edges of the fender strip are fully sealed off with Sikkaflex, too.
As shown here, there's plenty of Sikka on the blue stuff, but the job needs a bead of Sikka running right along the edge of the join between the top edge - and the bottom edge - of the fender strip and the hull.



This is a composite of foams very similar to those used in the fenders sold by Whitworths, Bias, etc. It has a very hard, tough outer layer, with a much softer but nevertheless tough other side. We Sikka'd the blue, and left the softer side on the outside.

It usually takes three runs to get the Sikkaflex into and behind the fender strip. First off, we zig-zagged down the back of the fender strip and then squished that onto the cylinder sides. We then fixed the cling tape to apply pressure to the strips, holding them into the tubes, and ran the extra beads of Sikka into the top and bottom joins.

Positioning the masking tape is important if you want to get a neat, professional edge later on. Another tip from the pros - don't leave the masking tape on a minute longer than necessary. In this case, we were taking the masking tape off about half an hour after the Sikka went down.

But wait, there's more . . .

Softly, carefully, the masking tape is pulled away to reveal a nice straight edge, and because the fender was masked as well, there are no black Sikka blobs or marks on the grey fender material.

One of the hardest parts to finish off neatly was the actual pointy bow bit - made more complicated than usual in this case because of the cylinder's odd intersection. It looks a bit crude, but importantly, it is VERY strong, and compliant.

Ruth was very careful not to get the Sikkaflex onto the fender strip, so she used electrical tape to make sure that didn't happen. This is something you have to be very careful about, to prevent chunks of the fender material coming off because it was stuck to the Sikkaflex. Similarly, everywhere the cling tape crossed the fender strip, we had to liberally apply the vaseline to the fender directly under the cling tape - to make sure that when we took the cling tape off - it didn't take chunks of the fender with it. They don't call it 'cling' tape for nothing.

The finished job is neat and professional - but the same couldn't be said for Ruth's shorts, hands, arms, much less her hair. She expects to have the Sikka in her hair grow out some time in the next 5 to 6 months . . !
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