



The Project: Part THREE of Three Total Refurbishment Of A 1978 Cruise Craft Reef Raider

Why refurbish an old boat? There are many reasons why we do it, but at the top of the list, family finances loom large. To purchase a new rig like the sweet little Reef Raider above, will typically cost \$40-\$60K . . . nice work if you can stump up the reddsies, but many people can't. But hang on, if you could buy an old one, and do it up for around \$20K BMT all up and fishing - does that sound like a plan? It did for special guest contributor, Peter Crocos, who kindly agreed to share how it did with this fascinating Three Part Series. Now read on . . .

The final fit-out

At this stage it was very important to select items carefully in order to maintain the factory originality of the boat. While I wanted to achieve a modern interpretation of this boat, I also wanted to get the balance of the traditional aspects right. Before rushing out and buying a heap of chandlery (what fun!!), it was important to decide on that intended balance between modern and traditional fittings and fixtures, so that the end product will present as a classic restoration, but

with appropriate modern touches, as I had planned from the beginning. From experience, I also knew that any pre-used fittings would look pretty ordinary against this new-looking boat, so I decided from the start not to re-use any of the old fittings. Luckily, many of the original-style fittings could still be purchased new.

Windscreen

Since the old windscreen on the boat had cracked and crazed perspex, a corroded aluminium frame and lots of

now-redundant canopy buttons attached, it was discarded.

I was able to order a new windscreen from the same manufacturer that made the original back in 1978. This boat is a Mark I version of the Reef Raider, but there was a Mark II version released a couple of years later with a more-raked windscreen, which I felt looked much better, so I ordered the Mark II version. When ordering over the phone I was asked if I wanted "green" perspex. Envisaging an unattractive "Army

Green" tinted screen, my immediate thought was that "Hell no, I want clear". Luckily a bit of discussion revealed that all standard screens are in fact lightly green-tinted, so I went with it, and it looks "right". When the screen arrived it fitted perfectly even to the extent of the pre-bored mounting bolt holes matching the holes in the deck. Not bad for 35 years later!

Gunnel rubber

I sourced a new gunnel rubber from Cruise Craft, again trying to maintain authenticity. The gunnel rubber fits over a double flange at the point where the top and bottom moulds of the boat are joined; this structural joint is thus conveniently covered and finished off by the gunnel. The gunnel is fixed by an epoxy glue line running along a groove in the gunnel which fits over the joiner flange. As the gunnel is pressed on, the epoxy glue spreads to the flanges and thus makes a solid bond for the whole system. I am giving you this detail and complexity to try and justify why it took six of us to do this fit-up job!

There are two critical factors in fitting the gunnel. Firstly, the epoxy glue is 2-pack, so you have a limited pot-life once mixed, and therefore you have to move fast. My strategy was to mix the epoxy in batches about the size of the large caulking gun I would use for application. Secondly, the gunnel rubber needs to be warm and pliable to enable it to be stretched on smoothly. While the factory probably uses an oven to get the gunnel to that warm and pliable state, I found that the oven in our kitchen was nowhere near large enough for pre-heating the 13 metres of gunnel, so it never got to the stage of seeking permission to use this oven, and being denied. Instead I relied on a hot November day in Brisbane to pre-warm the gunnel rubber.

Now what about the five helpers? Well, the strategy was to firstly fix one end of the roll of gunnel to the rear corner of the boat with two screws which would later be covered by the chrome end cap. This fixed point enabled the gunnel to be progressively pulled and stretched to achieve the required tension to give a smooth fit. Now ready to go, the first person stands in place at the transom corner ready to progressively tap the gunnel firmly home with a rubber mallet to



This is Boat Number One . . . purchased for the hull,



. . . and this is Boat Number Two . . . purchased for the near new outboard

. . . and here is Boat Number Three . . . purchased for the trailer !

