



With practice and patience, an amateur DIYer can spray on a glossy Awlgrip coating.

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DINGHY EXTERIOR: TWO-PART LPU

The final part of the practice project was the exterior painting of the dinghy with a two-part linear polyurethane paint. It proved to be a true measure of paint quality as well as a test of shelf life. In fact, the paint was from an unopened can of Awlgrip that Technical Editor Ralph Naranjo purchased in 1984.

First we had to test the quarter-century-old paint. The off-white Awlgrip stirred easily and behaved normally, and after mixing a small amount with new catalyst and a spray reducer, it was strained through filter funnels. Very little residue was found, and the mixed paint was spread on a flat piece of Plexiglass. A few hours later, it was surface cured, and the next day the paint was hard and sandable.

Spraying it on the dinghy was a three-pass process starting with a light mist coat that provided a substrate for wetter second and third passes. One of the best aspects about Awlgrip, in our opinion, is its flow-out behavior during application. When properly mixed and reduced with brush or spray thinner, the paint has a cohesive quality that allows it to self-level and smooth into a slick, glossy surface. Awlgrip dubs its paint a "pro use only" product, but an experienced amateur with a deft hand, good attention to detail, and care in covering up can certainly tap into its quality as a finish material (with practice). The bottom line was an A+ grade for the gloss and durability from paint a quarter-century old.

This follow-up look at the fine performances of Pettit Z-Spar 100, Interlux Brightside, and Awlgrip highlights the value of practicing with a paint product on smaller surfaces first. It affords a less daunting do-it-yourselfer learning curve. Tackling a topside refinishing job before you have renovated a few tired dinghies is too big a challenge and basically ensures wasted energy and unnecessary frustration.

Practice Projects Fare Well After a Year

Sometimes it's good to take your own advice, and in the August 2008 issue, we suggested would-be DIY topside-painters do a few practice projects before tackling a big paint job like the freeboard of a boat. We advised readers to "paint a pair of oars with quality enamel, then paint the inside of a dinghy with a one-part urethane and finally flip it over for a trial run with two-part LPU paint." It sounded like such a good idea, we added a dinghy and oar makeover to our to-do list. And we figured no one-year checkup would be complete without an update on our practice projects.

WOOD OARS: ENAMEL

Testers brushed Pettit Z-Spar 100 (white) on a pair of often-used wooden oars. We discovered that traditional alkyd enamel is a user-friendly product that covers well,

sands easily, and delivers a very nice initial shine. It likes to be spread over a well-adhered primer, and it tends to keep a wet edge longer than higher-tech coatings, making it a forgiving paint product that can be repaired easily.

Part of enamel's appeal is that it doesn't look like the surface of a new automobile, so flaws from application or use are less glaring than with a urethane. After a year of staying stuck to the oars, the Z-Spar coating had a few chips from physical contact and a slight bit of lifting near the very edge of the handle where bare wood meets the painted surface. All-in-all, the coating remained intact, and though less glossy than it initially was, the Z-Spar still held plenty of aesthetic appeal.

DINGHY INTERIOR: MONO-URETHANE

The inside of a rigid dinghy takes a lot of abuse, and the Interlux Brightside mono-urethane we used took the wear and tear in stride. The paint was roll-and-tipped over Interlux 404/414 epoxy primer, a durable high-adhesive undercoat that refuses to let go of the surface it is applied to.

The Brightside finish got a solid Excellent for both its ease of application and the condition it remains in a year later. The gloss is better than an alkyd enamel, but a far cry from a two-part paint. However—as mentioned before—the less gloss a coating has, the less it shows dings, making a mono-urethane the appropriate choice for a high-traffic, frequently recoated area like a dinghy interior.



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The Interlux Brightside painted on the inside of the dinghy easily handled a year of hard use, including our four-legged first mate's scratch-resistance testing.