

OWNER
UPGRADESLAST OF THE
TOMAHAWKS

Paul Kilvington never forgave himself after selling his first boat fifteen years ago. To make amends, he tracked down another run-down Tomahawk MkII, Santa Monica, and brought back to life

Words & pictures Paul Kilvington



Santa Monica – as she is now and as she was before the redesign (left)



Fifteen years ago I bought my first boat, a Sunseeker Tomahawk MkII. While I'm a 'yachty' at heart, with my own design business to run and with little time or patience, I decided

to go for out-and-out performance and handling. Two years later, with a growing daughter, I needed more accommodation, but didn't want to compromise on the sheer exhilaration of the Tommie.

My boat of choice was a Hunton 43, another great hull and with the extra cabin that I was seeking. As a designer, this also provided an opportunity to put my own stamp on the Hunton by transforming the interior and making numerous modifications to the look and style of the boat. In fact, 13 years ago, *MBY* featured the boat on its cover. I think it's fair to say that it even played a significant part in the renaissance of the Hunton brand, with the boat's basic specification still available today.

As a classic car collector, I regret selling almost every car I've ever owned and deep down, I've always regretted selling the Tomahawk. So, now, spending my summer seasons in Menorca with Clearwater Marine, I've just launched another refurbishment project – and this time I've really pushed the boat out!

I managed to source a tired but fundamentally sound Tomahawk in

Menorca and following a sea trial that had me grinning from ear to ear, with the memories flooding back, I acquired her on the spot. Clearly she required an enormous amount of work to bring her up to scratch, but I had more than just a basic restoration in mind. With the help of Clearwater founder Ian Levine, whose team would engineer and build her, we decided to completely reinvent it. From that point on, I began to work on a more

modern look and specification. As with any design project, it was essential to establish the objective. Only then could I decide what should be kept and what should be changed.

The Tomahawk 37's hull is acknowledged by many as one of the best ever built so that provided the perfect starting point but the rest of the redesign is the manifestation of everything I have learned about

powerboat performance and handling combined with design and styling elements picked up over the years from many different boats and some new cutting-edge ideas.

STRIPPING HER BACK

Fortunately the sharp, angular lines of the Tomahawk lend themselves more comfortably to a contemporary boat than, say a Superhawk 48, with its more organic curves. It soon became obvious that a pared-down minimalist approach was the way to go, enhancing the purity of line. The first thing to go was the radar arch, the removal of which contributed significantly to creating the sleek, purposeful profile. This was further emphasised by continuing the rake of the screen line further aft, with a stainless-steel handrail, echoed in new rails to the stern. In so doing, all the covers were discarded, together with all the dated upholstery above and below deck. Fundamentally, the old Tommie was stripped back to its basic structure.



Stripping off 25 years' worth of antifoul took quite a while...



The graphics and colour dated the boat more than anything



The non-slip decking was covered with surfboard neoprene

In fact, below deck, only the heads remained, with the galley taken away and even the cross members cut back as much as possible without adversely affecting the boat's structural integrity. The overall objective was to maximise the space and streamline the surface areas, creating as light and airy a feel as possible. Imagining how the boat was to be used was key to my decision-making process. It became evident that *Santa Monica*, as she was called, would be primarily a dayboat for visiting the numerous *calas* of Menorca but also an occasional overnight boat for blasts to Mallorca or Ibiza with the family.

While generous berths for four and a practical heads were essential, a galley and nooks and crannies for nic-nacs were not! Instead, we simply made better use of the retained cupboard space. While this introduced some tricky carpentry requirements, with numerous compound curves, the end result, when covered in practical light coloured material, is the illusion of a space twice the size. A 'floating' ceiling panel, with concealed lighting and contemporary, recycled floor covering complete this feeling.

Perhaps the biggest decision was the hull colour. The Tomahawk's original turquoise and white colour scheme and



The old dash was revived with modern multi-dials but the racing throttles and switchgear were refurbished



The old heads compartment looked painfully dated



Everything was stripped out to reveal the bare structure

graphics dated the boat more than anything. To make the boat as modern and distinctive as possible, I was keen to lose every square inch of white GRP. I considered spray painting but there were concerns regarding longevity in the harsh sun of Menorca, so I settled on vinyl wrapping as the best way forward. This provided the opportunity to consider different colours, textures and finishes to help unify the different elements into a single new entity.

With the scope of the project and the basic direction finalised, it was time to define the colour palette and materials. The minimalist approach suggested a sophisticated, limited

palette, using finish and texture to define different surface areas. I chose a graphite-coloured vinyl for the main structure, with a gloss finish for the hull, matt for the topsides and a carbon-fibre texture for details such as the engine vent 'blades'. After careful consideration, I selected a brushed titanium textured vinyl for the dash area.

UPDATES ALL ROUND

The wrapping process created an issue on one particularly important area of the boat, that I resolved by utilising a very unusual and innovative material. Clearly the vinyl would not adhere to the non-slip, textured GRP of the side

and foredecks. Without guardrails to hang on to and with safety uppermost in mind, these areas needed to remain non-slip and ideally cool to walk on in Menorca's high summer temperatures. I managed to source a material that is usually used on surfboards, a high-density, hard-wearing neoprene. In graphite grey with a diamond pattern, it was the perfect, cool (in both senses!) solution.

Previously owning a Tomahawk proved to be very useful in recognising opportunities to improve the original deck configuration. A walkway from the bathing platform to the cockpit, (rather than treading on cushions), that also

continued on to the foredeck, was both practical and provided a 'spine' for the boat. I selected a pale Flexiteek for its endurance and the opportunity to create a pattern around a king plank, with as few caulking lines and small shapes as possible. A natural, sun-bleached colour suggested the tonal values for the upholstery to complement the graphite grey.

I chose Taupe Diamanté marine vinyl for the custom-made helm and passenger seats, sitting on refurbished pedestals, which I extended throughout the boat, both on deck and down below. This was complemented with off-white Polaris material for all head linings.

The same materials were used to line all the stripped-out bins, port and starboard. Those familiar with the Tomahawk will remember the slight *Miami Vice* vibe of the heavily bolstered and patterned vinyl upholstery. While perhaps cool in the 1990s, times have, thankfully, changed and the new upholstery scheme clearly reflects this.

The dash area also needed to be updated and minimalised. Out went the old dials to be replaced by modern multi-dials for all the major functions, including speedo, rev. counters, gauges, trim tabs and a depth sounder. An iPad Mini loaded with Navionics charts and mounted in a cradle in the centre of the dash became the perfect satnav and on board entertainment centre. I retained most of the existing switchgear but updated them, providing a retro feel that reflects the classic automotive approach. The racing throttles were also retained as they complemented the look and suited the performance and handling of the boat perfectly.

In the engine bay, both engines were removed and compression tested. Modern injected engines don't have quite the same grunt or sound as these classic big blocks, so I took the decision to rebuild the existing engines, replacing the carbs and restoring them

to their former glory. The fuel tank was also replaced after discovering evidence of leakage and finally, the whole engine bay was painted red.

The most demanding task was two weeks of sanding off 25 years' build-up of antifoul before repainting it with hard black International. The legs and trim tabs were also refurbished.

THE PERFECT BOAT

Finally, some 12 months after purchase, *Santa Monica* was launched for her inaugural sea trial. One engine started on the button, the other required a new coil. Once sorted and filled up, the mouth of the harbour beckoned. With 700bhp on tap from her twin 7.4-litre petrol engines, straight through exhausts and custom stainless-steel props, she leapt onto the plane almost immediately. Underway, with the trim tabs balanced, she flew like an arrow, dancing over the wave tops and responding instantly to the slightest helm correction.

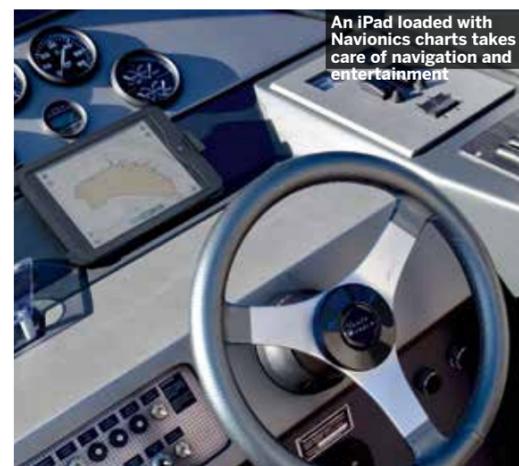
In my eyes she is now the perfect Gran Turismo. Equally as happy cruising with the family for a weekend away in Puerto Portals as she is blasting about the bay all morning at 40 plus knots, I like to think of her as an Aston Martin DB11 for the water.

It has been a long project but despite all its challenges, it has proved to be a very rewarding experience. *Santa Monica* has been reborn.

She has already attracted a lot of attention in the Port of Mahon and around the calas of Menorca. Even some Sunseeker owners have failed to recognise her as a Tomahawk. She's also a great mobile billboard for what Clearwater Marine can do and the company has now launched Clearwater Bespoke to enable owners of other boats to personalise their craft.

From a personal perspective, I have designed and created my perfect performance powerboat. Every time I start up those big V8 lumps, a shiver of anticipation shoots down my spine. She's an absolute joy to drive and handles incredibly well even in rough conditions.

The two large stern sunbeds are in the perfect spot for relaxing at anchor and the new bench seats in the cockpit are a secure and comfortable place for passengers to watch the world whizz by. But, perhaps most importantly for me, she's absolutely unique and created to my own design without compromise. And at significantly less cost than anything remotely similar. What's not to like about that? **MBY**



An iPad loaded with Navionics charts takes care of navigation and entertainment



Taupe Diamanté marine vinyl upholstery added a modern touch above and below decks



A gloss finish for the hull, matt for the topsides and a carbon-fibre texture for details



A practical heads was essential, though it is fresh and modern too

The finished article looks so fresh that even Sunseeker owners struggle to recognise her as a refurbished Tomahawk



Every time I start up those big V8 lumps, a shiver of anticipation shoots down my spine. She's an absolute joy to drive and handles incredibly well

THE COSTS

- Stripping out, removal of radar arch, all upholstery, engines, legs, opening up interior space and supports **£14,000**
- Scraping and sanding antifoul from hull **£3,600**
- Removal and repair of fuel tank and reinstallation **£6,500**
- Supply and fit of new polished stainless-steel rails **£4,800**
- Making good and preparation of hull ready for wrapping **£7,900**
- Templating, preparation supply and fit of Flexiteek **£3,500**
- Dashboard and instrumentation **£8,500**
- Interior fit out **£9,750**
- Wrapping and associated costs **£19,800**
- Engine and ancillary works **£15,750**
- Electrical works **£12,800**
- Upholstery and associated costs **£19,500**
- Ancillaries and fitting **£7,570**
- Lifting and storage **£3,900**
- Materials and expenses **£5,750**
- TOTAL £129,620**