

REFIT GUIDE:

WHEN DOES MAINTENANCE BECOME A REFIT?

The Most Important Part of Redoing an Older Boat Is Deciding Where to Stop

By John Brownlee

There's a difference between maintenance and a refit, although it can be a little hazy in terms of definition at times. Common maintenance items like oil and filter changes and bottom painting aren't a refit, but what if you decide to throw on some new electronics "while you're there," or maybe some new Isinglass. A little new paint would be nice too, right? It's a slippery slope and once you start down that road it can be easy to build up speed and start adding items to the growing list.

For many of us, one of the best parts of owning a boat over time comes when it's time to spruce the old gal up a little. The process can be frustrating and expensive as well, but when it's all done and your boat is shining like a new penny and sporting the newest and latest gear, it all seems worth it. At least we hope it does.

If you've really swung for the fences, maybe she's sporting new, more powerful engines as well. Repowering probably represents the ultimate expression of a refit since it's a major task to remove old inboards and drop in a set of fresh powerplants. It's not like with outboards, where

Leslie Marie sports a new faux teak transom and new name lettering.



An all-new suite of Garmin electronics at the helm.



A satellite dome gets prepped for painting.



The brow shines with new Awlgrip.



The massive tackle station in the cockpit with a fresh coat of paint.



Replacing the newly-painted sat dome.

you remove six or eight bolts and pull the old engines off with a hoist before bolting on a new set. Inboard repowers are a major undertaking. Newer diesel inboards typically weigh considerably less than the older versions even though they produce more horsepower, potentially changing the boat's center of gravity. You might need a different size exhaust system, bigger shafts, and new propellers. Lots of considerations that might require further modification of some sort.

Many Levels of Refit Options

But refits don't have to include repowering and in truth, often don't. There are many other things you can do to breathe new life into a tired boat short of new power. These include but are not limited to:

- A fresh paint job
- New electronics (maybe adding an Omni sonar)
- A refreshed interior
- A new tower or half-tower
- New teak in the cockpit, on the toe rails, or on the covering boards
- New teak (or faux teak) on the transom
- New outriggers
- A new generator (or two)
- Adding a gyro stabilizer
- Adding a mezzanine
- Replacing fuel tanks
- Adding a bow thruster

The list goes on and on. If you undertook all the above changes to your boat and didn't change the engines out, you would still have a major refit on your hands. It's easy to get carried away and drop too much money into

an older boat from which you'll never see a financial return, and there comes a point where maybe you should consider a new boat or at least a newer used one.

Choose Carefully

Making a realistic list and knowing where to stop adding to that list will help you get the refit you need without going down a financial black hole. Of course, if you really love your current boat, plan to keep it forever, and don't care what it costs, dive right in. The sky's the limit and it's only money, right? Given the realities of what a refit is and what it can become, we thought we'd look at two recent real-world refits to see what a couple of owners decided to do with their boats, and how they went about it.



The 41-Jarrett Bay Lobster House had the tower removed so the engines could be extracted.



Lobster House with a new teak cockpit deck and covering boards.

Hatteras 90 *Leslie Marie*

Former Miami Dolphin Bob Baumhower bought the *Leslie Marie* from Butch Stewart, the owner of the Sandals resort chain in Jamaica, and he considers it his "last boat," even though he has owned many other vessels over the years. The Hatteras will be based in Alabama but will see considerable duty in the Bahamas as well.

"This boat is being redone expressly for my family and me to enjoy," Baumhower said. "It's perfect for what we want to do with our kids and grandkids. We can't wait to get her all put back together because we're excited about having a lot of family fun with her."

Baumhower hired John Fitzgerald and his crew at Saunders Yachtworks in Gulf Shores, Alabama to handle the refit. "I couldn't be happier with the job they are doing," Baumhower said. "This refit involved a lot of renovation." Fitzgerald added that the Saunders folks enjoyed working with Baumhower on the project as well. "The best part about this job was our relationship with the customer," he said.

A Fresh Coat of Paint

The biggest part of the *Leslie Marie* project involved a total exterior repaint, a huge undertaking on a vessel of this size. Items receiving a new coat of Awlgrip's Awlcraft 3000 paint included the skybridge, the bridge, the hull, the house, the mezzanine and the swim platform. Pretty much everything.

New Release Marine helm chairs and tables were added to the bridge, and a new faux teak transom with new transom graphics got added as well. An all-new Garmin electronics suite got installed along with the latest Starlink system to enhance navigation, fish-finding and communication capabilities. Saunders also added an array of updated multi-color LED underwater lights and installed all-new SmartTVs throughout the boat.

Jarrett Bay 41 Lobster House

The *Lobster House* is Jarrett Bay's hull number 44, a 2004 41-foot express boat, which the current owner has owned for 20 years. He recently decided it was time for a refit, so he got in touch with Safe Harbor Jarrett Bay (SHJB) Project Manager, Donnie Lee. "I wanted to bring the boat back home for her refit, and the Jarrett Bay reputation has always impressed me," he said. The owner and Lee discussed the refit over



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Lobster House is ready for another 20 years.

several calls outlining a plan, and after a visit to Jarrett Bay's 175-acre Marine Industrial Park on the ICW in Beaufort, North Carolina, he pulled the trigger.

"When a Jarrett Bay boat comes back to us for a refit, we all get excited to give it the very best service possible," Lee said. "But that is truly the same with all the boats that come here, especially our many loyal customers. The *Lobster House* refit has been one of my most favorite projects since I became a Project Manager at SHJB 9½ years ago. The owner made this project an extremely rewarding one for our entire team. He listened and gave us leeway on our update suggestions, truly taking our ideas to heart, while we made sure to keep his vision and influence present across all aspects of the project."

Time for New Power

This refit included a full repower, so the SHJB crew started by removing the tower so they could get to the old engines to remove them and to make repairs to the decks and cabin sides before paintwork. The *Lobster House* previously had 660 hp Cummins QSM11s, and those engines were removed. The crew installed new, upgraded 715 hp QSM11s and new transmissions as well. New seacocks and all new hoses throughout the engine room completed the repower portion of the job. They installed new rudders, new shafts, a new fuel manifold, new engine room lights and new engine seacocks as part of the repower.



The tired Cummins QSM11s are about to come out to make room for a new set.

Paint and a Lot More

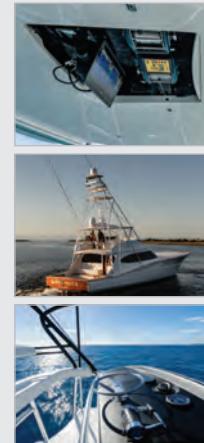
She received a full paint job, including the deck, hardtop, buggy top, bridge deck, bow deck and the hull, and she got a fresh coat of bottom paint as well. The boat got fitted with new teak covering boards fitted with new rod holders, a new teak cockpit deck, and new transom hawse pipes were fabricated and installed at the same time. The transom got a new painted name.

The boat received new exterior cushions for the bridge deck seating area, along with a new full enclosure. In the salon, she got new carpet and new plumbing fixtures, plus a new headliner. The SHJB crew installed a new lightbar on the top as well. And before reinstalling the tower, they gave it a fresh ceramic coating along with all the other metal surfaces.

These two examples of what a refit can entail offer differing insights into the types of things one can choose to do. The levels of complexity differ but the result comes out the same: The owner gets a boat that's revitalized, looking like new, and ready to do what he wants it to do. And that's why we do it. 



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