

Formula Paint Process Transcript:

0:00 - The following opinions are solely those of BoatTEST.com.

0:07 – It is no secret that the hulls of formula boats have a shiny, high-gloss mirror-like finish that are the envy of nearly everyone on the water. That is not an optical illusion! They are some of the best looking finishes on the market because what you are seeing is not normal gel coat, or even highly polished gel coat, rather it is paint and these boats are finished much the same way as our luxury cars; In fact, some would say that the Formula painting process is even more sophisticated.

0:42 – We went to the Formula factory in Decatur, Indiana to find out more about the process. There we found John Adams, long-time exclusive designer for Formula Boats. We asked him why formula started painting its hulls in the first place.

0:59 – (John Adams, speaking) “Well the painting process at Formula here actually started back in probably the late 80’s. When we have the opportunity of producing what I would call off shore high performance boats and they require special graphics as we all know so we had to quickly learn how to do that. And that’s over the years actually evolved where we actually provide that on all of our boats. And again the commitment at formula to be able to paint our boats has been very critical and very important to our overall image of the company. We’ve invested dearly in the opportunity to provide the best to our customer. For example we have probably 8 spray booths which we use to paint our boats. It’s a very time consuming and a very heavy commitment financially to be able to do that. Plus over the years we’ve been able to train people to do very exotic things and again because of FASTech where obviously graphics are very important we’ve been able to develop those techniques and apply them to our PCs our Sun Sports and our Super Sports.

1:48 – We asked John why paint was better than the standard gel coat that the rest of the industry uses

1:57 – (John Adams, speaking) “Well the advantages of paint over gel coat are obviously quite visible. When you take a look at boat s that are several years old obvs the gel coat fades over time. That doesn’t mean you cant buff them back to some original character although with the painting process you never have to do that. And we can get metallics, we can get the really deep, deep character paints that you would see in a very high end automobile for example, and we can certainly achieve that in paint. Plus the flexibility of colors and variety of colors. And again, because of the formula flex process, our opportunity; again we can take advantage of that and create a lot of really great graphic packages for our clients.”

2:31 – Formula applies three separate coats of Imron poly-urethane clear coat over the paint. But why?

2:38 – (John Adams, speaking) “Well the Imron clear coat process is really superior to gel coat in that it has UV inhibitors in it, it doesn’t oxidize, it’s repairable, and again the real setting advantage is that the depth of colors you get that you receive in perhaps in very high-end automotive products. So it is certainly superior both aesthetically and functionally.”

2:57 – At one point Formula offered only a few basic colors of paint, but now they offer any one of thousands pantone colors. We asked John why.

3:08—(John Adams, speaking) “The need to offer more colors than we had in the past is basically trend driven, you know we are seeing just more colors than people enjoy they want to see on their boats. And

again because of our process and our commitment to the painting process with the number of spray booths we have and the talent of the people that we have painting our boats we were able to really expand that offer and again it's just something that we think is important with our image and the fact that we want to differentiate ourselves from our competition by providing a vast variety of colors. "

3:35 – Formula's hull painting process is actually a 32-step program divided into three main parts, each of which require skilled personnel, just 18 men and women who specialize in creating the finish that sets formula boats apart. Phase one is the taping and masking part of the operation. All lines must be absolutely straight and true. Graphics are created on specially made paint masks which are carefully applied.

4:09 – Phase two takes place at one of Formula's 8 allocated spray-painting booths. And the Formula plant in Decatur, Indiana is the only boat building factory on the planet that has anything like it. Chroma color paint is carefully mixed and then sprayed on by two technicians at the same time: one painting on the starboard side, and one on the port. After drying, masking comes off and more goes on to create other colors and other graphics. This process may be repeated four or five times until the colors are all applied.

4:49 – Phase three is the sanding, re-sanding, then compounding and buffing process. 3000 grit sandpaper is used on orbital hand-sanders, and then more compounding paste is applied and buffed out. This process is repeated again and again, and more time is actually budgeted for this phase of the operation than any of the other two. This is the process that brings out the deep, rich colors that John Adams referred to. The result is a finish that is glossy, rich, and with an apparent depth that one can see only in fine cloisonné.

5:31 – We're boattest.com, I'm Jeff Hammond reporting.