

Cleaning berth cushions

Grubby Project Boat berth cushions seemed ideal as a test bed for a range of vinyl cleaners. Ben Meakins reports

The vinyl berth cushions on *Hantu Biru* are original. They match those in the brochure, which makes them 50 years old. Like the rest of the interior, they looked pretty grim at first glance, and not something you'd like to sit near, let alone sleep on.

But there was life yet in the foam, and there were no rips or tears in the vinyl coverings, so we resolved to give them a good clean.

Accordingly, we gathered together a variety of cleaners, from household products to those sold specifically for vinyl on boats.

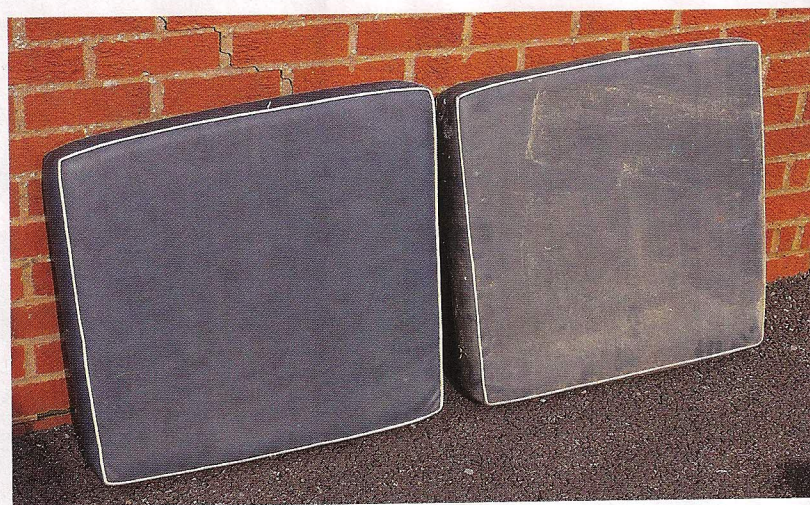
A full-on test

Most of the marine-specific cleaners are designed for light-coloured exterior vinyl cushions on motor boats' sundecks – for the removal of suncream and other spillages – so this was going to be a full-on test for them. Most also require the

application of a conditioner afterwards to protect against UV and the elements, but as these were interior cushions we stopped after the clean. Our tests done, we settled on the best of the bunch to do the rest of the cushions...



ABOVE Best results were achieved with the ardent deployment of a scrubbing brush



LEFT The berth cushions came up remarkably well after cleaning: the cushion on the right shows the general condition they were in before PBO set to work

HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

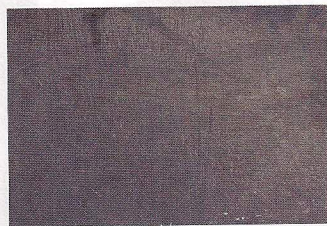
Cif Cream Original

PRICE: £2 500ML

Supermarkets everywhere

Cif Cream required more elbow grease than the spray-on products, but was very effective on deep and rusty stains.

However, while it worked well on our 50-year-old cushions its mildly abrasive solution would be too violent for newer ones, for which a more gentle product that also restored some shine would be better.

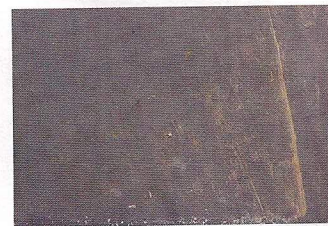


Cif Easylift Actifizz

PRICE: £2.89 750ML

Supermarkets everywhere

This household product was impressive: as the name suggests it 'fizzes' on contact, and this did a good job of removing the stubborn stains. It dissolved away a rust stain with minimal effort, and is antibacterial into the bargain – no bad thing on our manky-looking cushions. The surface it left behind wasn't as good as with the Renovo, Vinyl Brite and Starbrite products.



MARINE PRODUCTS

Unika Marine Vinyl Brite

PRICE: £7.49 500ML

www.unikamarine.co.uk

This comes in a trigger spray bottle and is applied with a soft cloth. We found it very effective, especially if left for some minutes to soak in. It didn't work as well on deep-ground dirt as foaming cleaners like the Cif Actifizz or the Renovo, but left a stain-resistant sheen, like the Meguiar's product. It was more effective than the Meguiar's at stain removal, however.

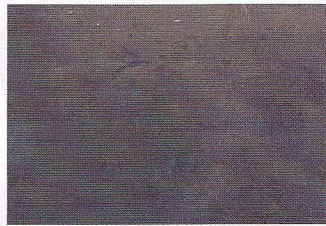


Starbrite Vinyl Cleaner/Polish

PRICE: £17.95 473ML

www.marathonleisure.co.uk

This worked extremely well (and rapidly) on surface stains, with minimal effort. We followed the instructions by mixing one part Starbrite to 10 parts water. A scrubbing brush had to be deployed to remove rust stains, but it required less effort than the household cleaners to achieve a good result on the ferrous stains. It left behind a nice shine to the cushions.



Renovo Boat Vinyl Cleaner

PRICE: £10.95 500ML

www.renovomarine.com

As instructed, this was applied with a soft brush and left for 10-20 mins to loosen any grime. After 20 mins you should agitate it with a brush or sponge, before rinsing off the lather and repeating if necessary. Like the Starbrite, this required less elbow grease than some of the other cleaners. It was particularly good on rusty or stubborn stains, when applied neat to the stain.



Meguiar's Vinyl and Rubber Cleaner No 57

PRICE: £13.50 473ML

www.meguiars.co.uk

This removed surface stains readily, but initially resulted in a fairly dull finish. However, use of a scrubbing brush eradicated deeper rust stains and 'polishing' with a soft, dry cloth brought out a bit of a gleam. It wasn't as effective on the deep stains as the Renovo, Starbrite and Vinyl Brite, but left behind a nice finish.

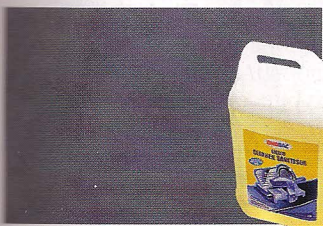


Endbac Liquid Cleaner Sanitiser

AROUND £15 5LT

Industrial cleaner suppliers

This product, available in bulk quantities from industrial hygiene suppliers, is diluted in a bucket of water. It swept through surface stains with ease, but wasn't quite as effective on the deep stains as the Renovo and Starbrite products. But at around £3 per litre, it's cheap!

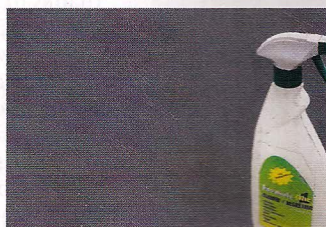


Formula One Cleaner/Degreaser

PRICE: £8.75 750ML

www.sheridanmarine.com

This multi-purpose, biodegradable marine cleaner and degreaser worked well on surface stains and degreased the stickier ones well. It wasn't as effective on the more deeply-ingrained stains, but with a stiff brush did a good job on the rusty marks.



Fairy Liquid Original

PRICE: £1.50 530ML

Supermarkets everywhere

We used Fairy Liquid neat, poured on to a cloth and rubbed in. It wasn't at all bad, giving a workmanlike result, but was not as effective as some of the other products at removing the deeply ground-in stains. Diluted in a bucket it was also good for the initial clean, but the Cif and the dedicated products were better at the deep stains.



PBO verdict

Our cushions were in a far worse state than most – so expecting even the best products to deliver on the 'restore to new' promises was a little hopeful.

However, all the products did a good job at removing the surface dirt, with the Cif Actifizz being the preferred 'spray on, scrub and wipe off' product of choice. For deeper cleaning, the Cif Actifizz was again very effective.

The dedicated marine products left behind a nicer finish to the surface, with the Unika Marine Vinyl Brite being particularly effective at both cleaning and finishing.

Best Buy, however, goes to the Renovo cleaner, which required minimal elbow grease to eradicate deep stains. The Starbrite product also performed well, but wasn't quite as effective overall.