



## The Fly Reel Company RB1, £599



THE FLY REEL Company is a relative newcomer and interesting for reasons other than that it is a British manufacturer. The RB1 is unique in this group in that it has an anti-reverse winding system – ie the handle stays still when line is drawn off. The medium-arbor spool gives plenty of capacity at some sacrifice of recovery rate. It rotates around the centre shaft on two ball races and drag is applied to surfaces on either side of the spool. Adjustment is made with a knurled knob that screws on to the centre shaft and also retains the winding handle plate. The handle is a little skinny for my taste (though I quickly became less bothered by this), but tapers outwards to reduce the chance of a loop of line catching on it. The reel back plate is entirely free of encumbrance. I would personally prefer a cageless design, but this is a serious contender and my pick of the bunch.

**Key features:** British made; unique anti-reverse system; titanium/kevlar/carbon fibre disc-drag system. **Spare spool:** £299. **Weight:** 12.6 oz. **Saltwater use?** Yes. **Spool capacity:** AFS shooting head + 300m of 30 lb Dacron backing. **Stockist:** The Fly Reel Company, tel: 01423 709 741.

# CONCLUSIONS

AS I SAID in the introduction, a salmon fly-reel's function is largely a passive one except when playing a fish. Countless huge salmon were landed on the tackle of yesteryear, when reels were much simpler affairs, unencumbered by sophisticated drag systems, the efforts of style departments and marketing hype.

The reels in this review include some of the very best examples of the current art, with a few "traditionals" thrown in for good measure. So what of the future? We have probably seen the zenith of what might be achieved through the best practices of CNC machining. Impressive as this has been, I predict that there are several developments yet to come.

Aluminium alloys have been the material of choice for nearly all high-quality fly-reels in recent years. These alloys are relatively inexpensive, sufficiently light, adequately strong and easy to machine. They can be anodised and stained for cosmetic appeal and to give some, though limited, corrosion resistance in saltwater environments. In the next few years, the cost of titanium and Ti alloys, especially in powder form, will be coming down. Trust me on this! These alloys are far stronger than aluminium alloys and have hugely superior resistance to marine corrosion. With techniques such as metal injection moulding and additive layer

manufacturing using lasers, we will see vastly improved "buy to fly" ratios with these materials. There will be far less wastage of material during manufacture and the economics of relatively small production runs will be enormously improved. In addition, there is a whole world of polymers (plastics) and composite materials that the fishing-tackle industry has barely peeped into. The materials scientist is becoming ever more important in all areas of manufacturing.

I believe that drag systems on fly-reels will become even more sophisticated in future. We have had anti-reverse lever drags with pre-sets on our big-game, saltwater multiplier reels for years. If these can be made in lightweight forms, there is no reason why fly-reels shouldn't have similar features.

## TONY'S PICK OF THE BUNCH

The 14 fly-reels here reviewed all have their qualities. Certainly, all appeared very well made, though, as I have commented, some seemed rather expensive for the simplicity of design involved. Of the 14, my pick would be the **Fly Reel Company RB1** for its anti-reverse wind and interesting drag system followed by the **Orvis Mirage** and **Lamson ARX4**: both very nice reels and good value for money.