

Heavy metal mad

TALKING to people in the shop each day gives me some idea of how many fisherman have had encounters with kingfish once or twice in their lives; they all have one thing in common. They want to catch another one!

Most of us know that there are a few successful ways to snag a kingie. Live baiting, shallow and deep, trolling with lures and jigs, even taking them on dead baits seems to be effective - then there is jiggging.

Jiggging has taken on many changes over the years. Original primitive versions were made from the humble kitchen knife and other bits of steel or lead shaped to represent a fish. These days its big business and the jigs coming off the production line are taking on a more sophisticated roll. We will talk about shapes and dimensions a little later but here I want to focus on why they are so effective.

I often give this example when explaining jiggging or soft baiting to customers. Imagine you were in the lounge with a kitten and you waved a feather in front of it. The kitten would crouch low and get ready to pounce on the feather, right? Now move the feather along and watch what happens, the kitten races after it. Now stop the feather and the kitten stops and if it doesn't move again soon the cat loses interest and wanders off.

That is a perfect illustration of why kingfish will chase a solid metal lure. It's movement that catches their eye and they can't help but respond to it. It's like when a guy sees a pretty girl walking down the street, his eyes follow. It's a natural response.

For as long as man has been fishing, fish have been attracted to flashy bits of metal. The more science and technology that goes into the lures the more deadly the lures have become. Fortunately more and more anglers are in it for the fun and releasing kingfish is



widely practiced, in fact most will frown upon taking kingfish unnecessarily.

For years it seemed like there could never be a major improvement to the shape of the old style Grim Reaper jig or the Lethal Lure, they were the real thing, the lure that worked for all the charter boat operators and the experienced guys that got out there regularly. And they worked, they really did.

One of the noticeable things about the new knife jig or speed jig is that they are almost effortless to drop and retrieve. With the old short style that had treble hooks it felt like you were winching up another part of the island and the reels that were available didn't make life any easier because of their slow speed retrieval. Since the new long needle jigs came into fashion there has been serious tackle upgrade. We can no longer get away with using old, standard tackle if serious about landing loads of kingies.

Reels got an upgrade to 6.1-1 retrieve speed and a beefed up drag system. There were other issues also that need addressing, the reel body strength needed improving to match the heavier line weights.

Braid came onto the market in a big way with the demand for more capacity on smaller reels. Rods became shorter and lighter and more parabolic with the advent of high compression carbons and resins that were developed to have more elasticity so that the weight of the fight worked its way to the handle of the rod.

Things were never going to be the same in the tackle industry

when anglers became savvy about fishing with GSP (Gel spun polyethylene) otherwise known as super braids. We are even starting to get used to the price if it now. GSP is quite an expensive raw material and all the processing that it has to go through before it becomes a line makes it quite an expensive option. Still, as more and more anglers use the product the cheaper it will become. Theoretically!

The lure itself has become longer and narrower with the progression of jiggging. Actually it was the Japanese who are responsible for the innovations in jiggging. They are demons at catching kingfish in their own country and because of the state of the fishery and the fussiness of the fish they needed to develop



'Confessions of a speed jigging junky'

By John Pellew



a better way of fooling them into taking the lure.

The Japanese began bringing their technologies to this country to have fun with our bigger fish. When we finally cottoned on to what they were doing we asked them to supply our market with their amazingly simple, new twist on the jigging concept.

At first there were only a couple of shapes shipped into the country but since then every supplier has begun knocking up his own version and style and importing them here so they can have a piece of the pie.

I'm sure that many of the models out there are just as effective as each other however I have noticed a major difference and it's the luminous paint. The luminous lures have definitely proved to be popular with the fish. Just like the Pakula Lumo Sprocket marlin lure that has accounted for so many marlin in waters all over the world, the lumo jig is a winner in my books. There is no doubt in my mind that colours and light effect the fish.

Let me explain a little about my view of how a high speed jig should be used. When I first tried one I was in Russell, Bay of Islands on the Major Tom II, a very popular charter up north. We had been fishing for hapuku at 200m on a sloppy sea. On the way back we decided to do a couple of drifts over two nice little pins near Hole in the Rock. On the first drift I dropped a blue 200g Zest jig over and instantly hooked up on the retrieve.

Wow!

I was using a Black Magic rod and reel set loaded with 10kg braid which was a little under gunned for that kind of fishing but fortunately the fish we proceeded to catch weren't too big, just rats that were hammering us every time we were in the spot.

Over the summer and with numerous kingfish trips under our belts I began to notice that there were patterns emerging. Kingies



would quite often hit the lure on the drop but seemed to miss hooking up more often than not so we began applying the rubber band theory whereby a band is placed on the bottom end of the jig and attached to the hook so that it doesn't flap around as the jig travels down.

This method didn't make much difference to the hook up rate so we went back to a free swinging hook.

Next we noted that when we dropped the jig into the strike zone and started getting the usual bump, bump of kingies hitting it, we would stop for a second and wham the kingies would usually hit it at that moment. I guess that his logic says that he better not miss the opportunity to grab it while its there.

When winding up you don't always need to go flat out! Sometimes that big one is right at the bottom and if he sees a jig lingering around the bottom for a moment it seems to turn them on. I'm a fan of stopping and starting as I lower and retrieve the jig.

If you have found the perfect spot and fish are showing on the sounder be sure to drop your jigs before drifting off the mark, sometimes the fish will not follow the boat out when there is a strong current. They know they are safe around the reef so you must time it right.