



BITS: TECH NOTE

APPLYING A WRINKLE FINISH

Bill Eastman

I have played with a number of different products in an attempt to reproduce the tight wrinkle pattern of the paint that Alfa used on their dashes and steering columns.

Most products yield large, irregular wrinkles. However, Harley Davidson sells a paint that produces very good results. I prefer Eastwood's Black Wrinkle Paint for no logical reason. You should buy more than you think you will need so you have plenty to experiment with. I find that four, or so, fairly heavy coats work. A consistent application must ensure that no one portion of your target receives more, or less, than any other.

Most folks like to "force" the reaction with heat. A hot sunny day might be enough. For the more impatient, a space heater may be used to heat an enclosed space, say a metal barrel. Maybe you have a smoker. For real risk takers, barbeques might work, as does the kitchen oven. If you happen to like the taste of your supper and/or value domestic bliss, I'd avoid using anything that might receive scrutiny by family members. I have found that the surface tension of the curing paint almost always gives satisfactory results without resorting to heat. It really doesn't need to be forced. I hang it, shoot it and wait. On a hot day, things wrinkle in minutes, and on a cold, wet day it might take a day, or even two. The forced method is pretty slick if you have a dedicated shop oven. There is an increased danger of screwing things up by over-handling (dropping it on the floor under the vise where it rolls through hack saw debris and oil puddles), but you have good temperature control. I have not played with convection ovens, but it seems they would work best.

The unforced, hanging-from-the-rafters method does require patience. Sometimes it takes months for the paint to get hard. Premature handling WILL leave fingerprints. For this reason, I have an extra old spider steering column that is painted, fully cured and ready to install. I make sure to paint the ugly one and let it hang until needed so I am ready for the next time.

As far as preparation goes, bare metal and primer (esp. newer etching primers) is always best. For the dash, be sure to wet sand the shiny catalyzed paint before application. There will be a slight variation in finish if the eyebrow does not have the same substrate as the dash top, but the texture of the finished surface may well disguise this to your satisfaction. Feather edging the old typewriter paint is easier said than done, but give it a try. Alternatively, you can shoot directly onto relatively unblemished surface and get good [looking] results. There is a non-adherence risk if the old surface is dirty.

A note of caution: The overspray from this stuff is particularly pernicious, by DIY'er standards. When I spray the dash, I bag the entire car. Bribe someone at the autobody place in your neighborhood with a ten spot, or maybe cookies, and get a car bag. Expose only the area to be painted. You won't be using Meguiar's #2 to take this stuff off a white hood.

Observe the usual precautions, wear proper equipment, protect yourself. If you screw up, a big, quick douche of lacquer thinner will wash it away (with a little rubbing, of course). You will want to wipe the floor, and the bottom of your shoes, immediately after application. Do not enter the house until your shoes are clean. You heard Mama say it, and now you are hearing it again!

As always, experiment, experiment, experiment. While I just poof it black and wait, other guys tell me they can only make it work over a smoky wood fire, under a full moon. I don't know if swinging a dead cat over your head in the grave yard helps, but it might! Experiment on your Underwood, an old lamp base or your rolodex file. Something in your world needs this finish, look around.

Editor's Note: This article was lifted from the 750/101 Digest. Thanks Bill!

