

TECH TIPS

A GUIDE TO MAKING YOUR BIKE LOOK NICER

BY BILL BUKER

Since I've never seen any tech articles in the D.I.O.C. Newsletter dealing with making motorcycles look pretty, I guess I will do one. Actually, I will do it in 4 installments because of the amount of information involved and also it will be easier to break it down into 4 areas:

- 1) One would be basic differences among refinish products.
- 2) Preparation of surfaces to be refinished and materials and methods used.
- 3) Repair of fiberglass components
- 4) Care and feeding of finishes

I will begin with the basics of refinishing products selection - First of all, there are several different types of finishes which I believe are suitable for use on motorcycles - they are;

- 1) Acrylic enamel
 - 2) Catalyzed acrylic enamel
 - 3) Acrylic lacquer
 - 4) Polyurethane enamel
- (Epoxy paint is not included because in my experience it has not had good glass retention properties when exposed to the sun repeatedly).

Each of the above systems has its advantages and disadvantages which I will briefly cover here.

1) Acrylic enamel is a good basic type of finish which is used on many cars and trucks produced in the U.S. Most all Ford, Chrysler and A.M.C. products come finished in acrylic enamel along with most commercial vehicles (trucks) produced by G.M. One disadvantage of acrylic enamel is that it won't air dry to as tough a film as it would if baked - like the auto factories do. Baking the paint produces a more durable film because the molecules polymerize into longer chains etc., etc., or something to that effect. Anyway, a baked finish is more durable. Also, another disadvantage of using acrylic enamel is that it is difficult to work with for those having very little painting experience, but if someone else is going to do it for you, that doesn't count. On the plus side, acrylic enamel is fairly inexpensive, is readily available and if properly applied and cared for should hold up well.

2) Catalyzed acrylic enamel is just like the above, but as the name implies, a special catalyst is added just prior to painting to make the paint more durable. (It also makes it more expensive). Also, it can be painted over after it has dried unlike non-catalyzed acrylic enamel which has a "critical period" when if you try to paint over it without a special re-coat sealer, the solvents in the paint you are applying will "lift" (wrinkle krinkle) the paint you have already applied. Non-catalyzed has this problem, catalyzed does not, so catalyzed is more easily reworked. Catalyzed acrylic enamel has only one disadvantage to my knowledge (aside from the fact that it is very unhealthy shit to breathe) and that is that it has been known to have a tendency toward crazing which is the belated formation of many small cracks and check marks when repeatedly exposed to harsh sunlight. I believe that this occurrence can be avoided (especially if you live where the sun never shines), if you keep your bike out of the sun as much as possible. That is don't park the poor thing out in the sun day after day. Also, if the paint uses slightly less than the recommended amount of catalyst in the paint, I have found that the occurrence of crazing is much less likely. A lot of newer cars are doing a clearcoat trip these days and while I'm not exactly sure what or how the factories do it, I know what we use for the repair of such and the results look very presentable. What it is is acrylic enamel, catalyzed with a special basecoat drier added, then clearcoated with clear urethane. This two stage system or clearcoat imparts a very high gloss or wet look effect. It seems to be fairly durable unless exposed to that old bugaboo, lots of harsh sunlight. (You guys back east probably don't have to worry much about too much sun). Also this same clear urethane can be used over acrylic lacquer with a similar effect of glossier-than-hell stuff. I guess I should mention that the clear is put over the basecoat within several hours or overnight at most so the base color doesn't need scuff sanded, but I'll cover that in a later article.

3) Acrylic lacquer is the finish which most anybody could apply and obtain professional results with the least amount of problems. Acrylic lacquer has the most reworkability and easiest application of any of the finishing systems I know of except latex. (Just kidding about the latex, heh, heh).

I've heard of guys applying 20 coats of it with a brush, wet sanding the final coat with 600 or 800 wet-or-dry sandpaper then buffing it out and getting beautiful results - lot of work though.

If you live in the desert and have to contend with bright sun all of the time, you probably won't want to use acrylic lacquer. It crazes the worst of any of the others. A lacquer job in Arizona for example would last about 2 years unless it only comes out at night or gets covered religiously. Metallics seem to deteriorate the most rapidly - they look up close like the surfact of a Ming Dynasty Vase. If you are planning on doing the paint work yourself and have little or no experience painting and less equipment (spray gun and compressor), use lacquer and you're going to get good results - eventually. It can be painted and repainted over properly prepared surfaces with the likelihood of drips or big hunks of dirt as one might encounter with enamel which dries much more slowly than lacquer. Also, it can be painted over with no lifting or wrinkling as there is no "critical period" with lacquer. Also, lots of colors are available in spray cans, which are suitable for painting motorcycles. (I wouldn't paint a car that way though). It can be wet sanded with 600 wet-or-dry between coats or on the final coat and buffed shiny. Lacquer jobs are a lot of work, (all paint work is incidentally), but will come out really nice if done properly.

4) Finally we come to wonderful polyurethane enamel which is 2-3 times more expensive than the other acrylic enamel and lacquer. It's a very durable material originally developed for automotive use by Dupont under the trade name Imron which initially was used on trucks and fleets. All of the jillions of colors available in enamel and lacquer are not available in urethane so don't be surprised if the man doesn't have the burnt orange metallic like you saw on that 73 Vette. Also, a word about urethane metallics - for some reason, all of the metallic urethane paint I've seen has this huge flake



DIOC KNICK KNACKS

- * BOLOGNA PIN (Enamel pin in red, silver, black and white. \$4.00 postage included.)
 - * MOTO DUCATI PIN (Enamel pin in royal blue, gold, white and silver. \$4.00 postage incl.)
 - * D.I.O.C. LOGO PIN (Enamel pin, green, black, red, and white \$4.00 postage included.)
 - * DUCATI LOGO PIN (Enamel pin, red with gold trimming, gorgeous! \$4.00 postage included.)
 - * KEY FOB (Genuine leather with old style Ducati logo, chrome ring \$2.00 postage included.)
 - * 1982 DIOC RALLY PINS, 4 COLORS, ONLY \$2.50 P.PD.
 - * D.I.O.C. DECAL (gold leaf, red, black \$1)
 - * CLUB PATCH (Embroidered 3" patch in green, red, white and black, same as logo pin \$3.)
- Please add 20% when using Canadian dollars.
Overseas members add 50¢ additional shipping.