

SHOP NOTES King Midget Maintenance and Restoration

B-24 King Midget Gloss *By Lee Seats*

PUTTING PAINT ON A CAR IS for some a taboo, and for some it's kinda second nature. Some won't even attempt to paint a panel and others will paint a car just on a whim. There are several ways to approach painting a car or truck. Different paints do require different techniques to achieve the desired finish. In this article I will be talking about the formula I use, not to say it's the best or the only way, but it is a tried and true process I have been using for 25 years, so it works for me.

The King Midget is a different animal when considering paint and body work. I have painted several cars and scooters but the first King I painted was the biggest challenge; that King was mine. One thing to consider is that these little guys flex and bend with every bump—that's the way Claud and Dale designed them. That aids in a better ride. Given that bit of information it's almost impossible to make a King Midget body straight. It might be when you first complete your job, but take it for a drive and there will be a wave or two when you get back. The panels just move a bit and this has to be accepted.

Another item to keep in mind is you have two metals to work with. The aluminum doors and engine lid have more flex than the sheet metal parts so prep for painting is very important. When prepping the metal I do two things which may be overkill but I want the paint to adhere well. First, I sand the bare metals with a green or maroon Scotch-Brite pad so there will be small scratches for the paint to grab onto. Then I use etching primer. This stuff only requires a light coat; building it up doesn't affect the final finish as is the case with sand-able primer.



An example of what can go wrong is shown above left. As you can see the door was just wiped down with acetone before painting, and the primer flaked off. The right picture shows what to do for good adhesion. Remember aluminum has more flex than sheet metal. So extra care should be taken to get your paint to stick.

Automotive paint verses rattle cans

I have used both and a good finish can be obtained with spray bombs but a unique process is required. Spray cans include an additive to speed drying so flash and overspray happen easily. When using spray cans, paint one panel at a time with even strokes and consistent movement. The panel has to be kept wet to prevent dry-looking areas. If this happens, then 3000 grit wet-or-dry sandpaper and water can pretty it up, but with a lot of work.

Also the cost will be close to mixing your own paint and using a paint gun. So I learned for me a long time ago the latter was my path.

My paint of choice is Nason by Axalta (formerly DuPont). Its nickname is “peanut butter” because it is hard to make it run; it will, but you really have to put it on thick to make it happen. More thin coats are better than fewer thick coats, it just smooths out better. Also the reducer used is important. There are three different reducers to choose from depending on the temperature you are spraying in. I use the medium, which is good for 70 to 85 degrees. I paint in my basement so I can use heat in the winter or none in the summer to get the needed drying time. Too fast will

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cause flash; too slow will cause runs.

There are three main types of paint: acrylic enamel, polyurethane enamel, and base coat/clear coat. I've sprayed all three but I like acrylic enamel best. Polyurethane is hard on the lungs, even with a respirator. Base coat/clear coat is fine, just twice the work.

The main key to a great paint job: body work. If the body work is bad it won't matter how much you spend on paint or how well you lay it down, the bad body work will be what is seen by most and even more so by you. I'm not very patient and I hate body work; I'd as soon be tazed or have someone else do it, but I muddle through.

I mix Bondo hot so it hardens fast, but too fast will cause it to flake off so the color of your mix shouldn't be too dark or too light. A friend that has done some body work can direct you to what works, or try some on a test panel to get the feel of doing Bondo. Fiberglass or Kitty Hair (fiberglass-reinforced filler) are similar but harder to lay down. I do use these for rust areas 'cause its water proof. On the rust subject, if you can cut it all out and use a patch panel to replace the rust you removed, the repair will last longer because rust doesn't stop eating metal.

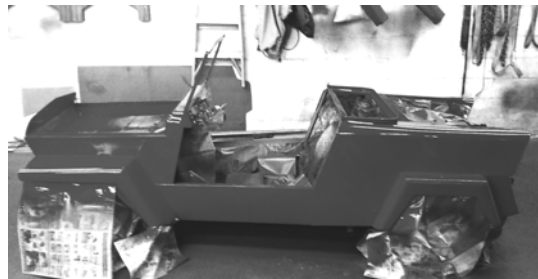
On King Midgets there are the usual places to Bondo, the four fenders, the top turns on the rear fenders, the corners under the windshield, and sometimes the hood. I also use spot putty to fix the little voids that can get in the Bondo, and filler primer. I sand to 220 grit; some people go finer to 400 grit.

So now when I'm ready to paint I get my area ready to paint in, clean, clean, clean. The better the environment, the better the paint, but it seems trash will get in paint even in the best situation. Once I am ready to paint I use Nason sealer on everything to be painted. This will keep any contaminants that may be on the parts to be painted from causing fish eye, and it creates an even canvas for the paint.

Once you are done painting let it set. Don't get in a hurry to untape. Time is your friend; let it cure for 24 hours or longer if you can; after more time you will notice the paint has laid down more and more smoothly. I wait about two weeks after I paint, then wash it to get any trash out that may have got in the finish.

The King Midget is a hard car to paint without runs. That's why I use Nason; it's very forgiving. There are so many different curves and edges it is so easy to create runs and sags. But the right reducer and temperature will minimize the risk. Also I use an HVLP paint gun which uses low air pressure compared to a siphon gun. So, less over spray and more paint on the car. My guns are an inexpensive set. Any guns can give a good paint job, it is in how you use them.

I hope this has been informative. It's just one how-to example, but it might give you the drive to paint your car if you have been thinking of doing so. The nice thing about a King is no matter what you do we love to see 'em. ◻



B. Restoration