

Scuffing and buffing

By Jim Richardson

How to achieve show quality paint work

THINGS YOU'LL NEED:

1500 and 2000 grit microfine sandpaper
Flexible rubber sanding block
Variable speed orbital sander
Foam pad for sander
Laundry detergent (a couple of drops)
Squeegee

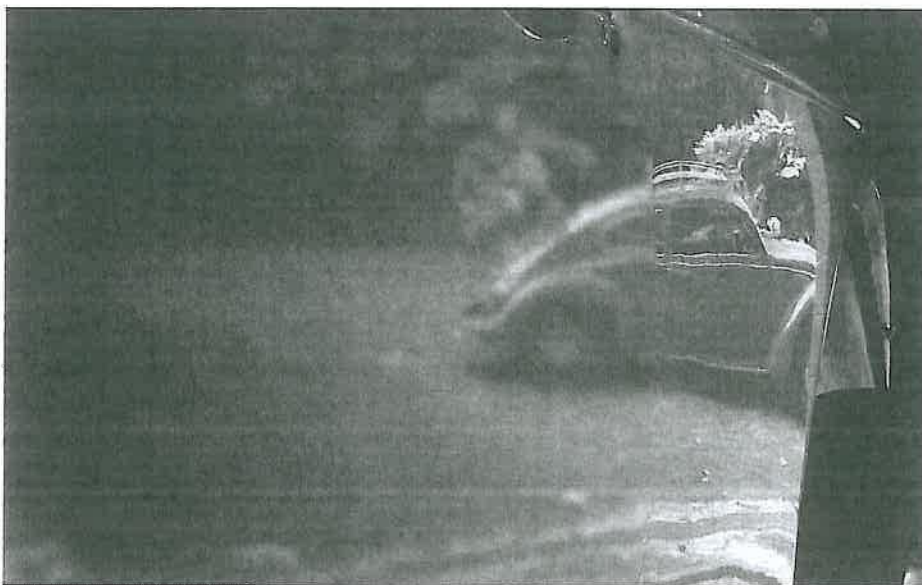
Large artificial sponge
Clean bucket
3M Finesse-it II polishing compound
Meguiar's pure carnoubia wax
Soft cloth polishing rags

If you've been following this series on the resurrection of my old rust-bucket '67 Morris Minor convertible, you already know that when we stripped off all the old paint, we found major rust problems. This meant that Bruce Hays at Hikui Panel Beaters had to do major surgery. The more rust, rot and bog he cut away, the more he found.

So much had to be cut out in fact, that Bruce had to make jigs and braces to keep what was left of the car in alignment while he welded in new subframes, sills and A pillars. This kind of work

sprayed on a high-build primer surfacer and turned it over to me to block sand. That task alone took a couple of days and was very hard on the fingertips.

Finally, Bruce shot on several wet coats of a quality two-pot finish. When that had cured, we applied underseal to the floor and sills inside the car – it is a drop top after all and could get caught in the odd shower with the hood down. We also shot cavity wax into the door frames, sub frames and sills to further retard rust. Now for the fun part.



The paint work on my Morris was better than factory original, but not good enough for show purposes. The door (rear of VW reflection) is what the paint looked like before colour sanding and polishing, the rear quarter (front of author's Dubbie) is after.

takes a real pro to do it correctly, and I learned a lot while watching Bruce's progress. Next, Hays had to patch guards and doors and do the metal finishing required to make them look good. It was a long road.

The whole project took several months as fill-in work for Bruce. When he had the bodywork and chassis where he wanted it, he prepped the metal and shot on an epoxy primer. After that he

The paint job that Bruce did was top quality and professional in every way and was actually better than it would have been when the car came from the factory. There was no orange peel effect, although any spray job will have a slight waviness or ripple to it. But I am a perfectionist. I wanted one of those perfect show finishes that is so deep you can walk into it, sit down and eat your lunch.



Fold the wet sandpaper in threes over the sanding block.

To get that, a process called colour sanding is required. It takes a lot of time and must be done carefully, but the results are dazzling. I have a den full of first place plaques and silver nut dishes to prove how well it works. Colour sanding doesn't require any expensive equipment, and if you're careful you can do it right the first time. Here's how:

SCUFFING

You will need to start with a good paint job. Acrylic enamel or the new two-pot systems work well, as does acrylic lacquer, but cheap enamel shouldn't be colour sanded. Base and clear coat systems can also be colour sanded but they require great care to avoid cutting through the



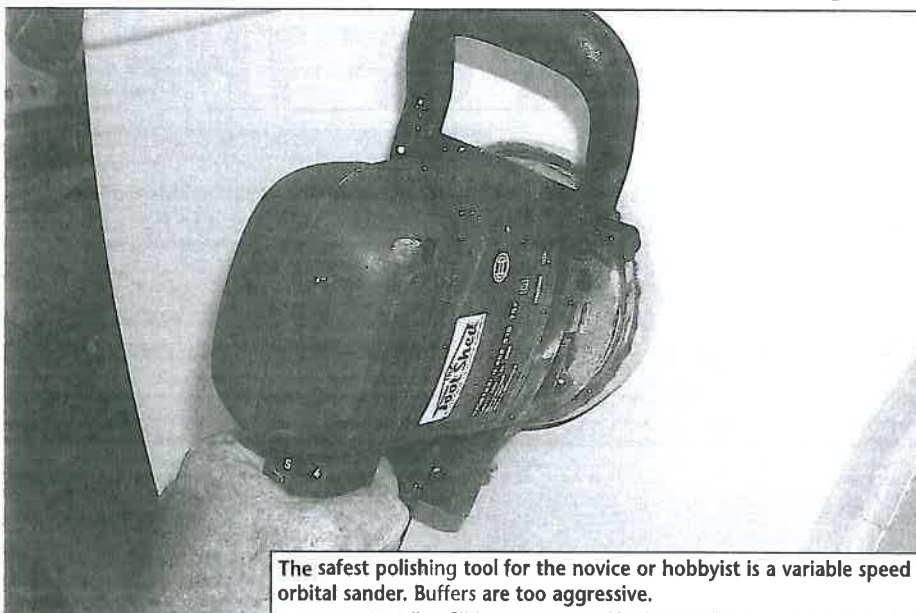
Work in a criss-cross pattern across the wetted surface to avoid making grooves. Don't press hard. Let the sandpaper do the work.

clear top coat. Only lightly scuff a clear coat with 2000 grit before buffing it out.

Wash the car or the part you will be colour sanding and make sure that there is no grit on it anywhere. One tiny bit of grit can put a deep scratch in your finish if you're not very careful.

The sandpaper you'll be using is extremely fine, so it doesn't take much dirt to really mess you up.

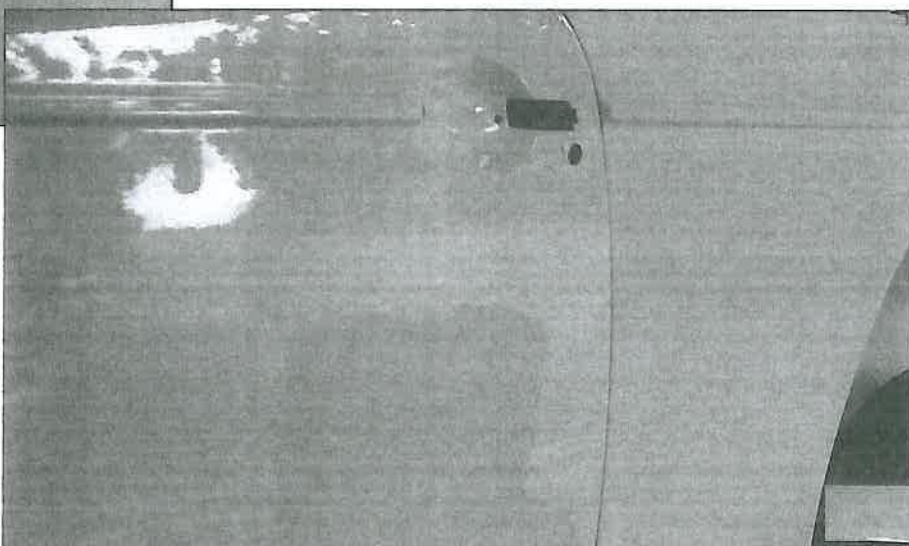
Cut the .1500 grit sandpaper sheets in half, then place three or four in a bucket of clean water along with a couple of drops of liquid washing up detergent to soften the paper a bit. Let this stand for 15 minutes, then wrap a piece of the paper around your sanding block. Wet the surface you are going to sand using a



The safest polishing tool for the novice or hobbyist is a variable speed orbital sander. Buffers are too aggressive.

polished by hand. That way there was no risk of burning through or taking off too much paint. But these days my shoulders are getting a bit arthritic, and it seems the paint has gotten a whole lot harder, so I found a good compromise power tool that is safe in the hands of even a novice. It's called a variable-speed orbital sander. Don't try to save money by using a constant-speed orbital sander, it will spin too fast and damage the finish.

Dampen the foam pad designed to attach to the sander, then shoot a little 3M Finesse-it II onto the pad. Place the sander on the part and turn it on at a slow speed. Don't apply much pressure. Just let the polishing compound do its work. Polish an area about half a metre square, and when the polish starts to dry, wipe it off with



Door is before colour sanding, rear quarter is dull due to sanding, but is perfectly orange peel free.

g, artificial sponge. Start sanding in a criss-cross fashion to avoid making grooves.

Don't sand along bonnet, boot lid or door edges or sharp crowns in guards because the paint will be very thin in those areas. Just work the broad panels, and give each area the same amount of attention. Don't bear down on the sandpaper and keep the surface wet at all times. If you are working outdoors, use a garden hose and a small, steady stream of water to keep the surface wet.

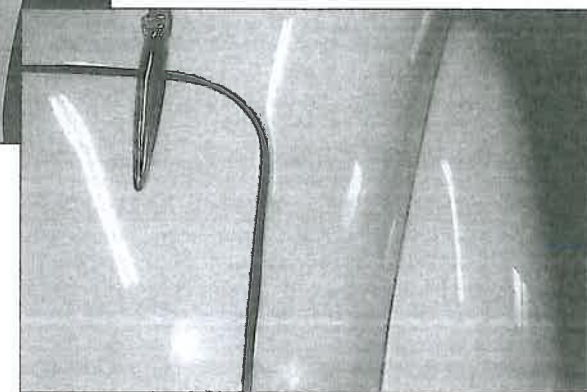
Rinse the sandpaper frequently to keep it from clogging, when the paper

no longer cuts with light pressure throw it away rather than running the risk of making grooves. Use your squeegee to check your progress. You are done when all traces of orange peel and rippling are gone in every area.

Switch to the 2000 grit and work the entire surface again. Make sure you give every area the same amount of attention, keep the surface wet, and check your work by using your squeegee frequently. When you are finished, the surface you are working will have a satin sheen to it and none of the scratches from the 1500 grit should show. It takes almost a Zen contemplative state of mind to do this job right.

BUFFING

Pros use big, powerful buffers to make short work of the polishing, but until the new, hard-as-rocks two-pot paints came out, I always did my



The final result is spectacular. The paint work looks so deep you could fall into it.

a soft cloth.

Keep working until all traces of sandpaper scratches are gone. At this point you'll be amazed at how great your paint looks. Finish the job with a couple of coats of carnuba wax to protect the finish and make it dazzling. When you get the whole car finished, go around it carefully in different lighting situations to check for any traces of orange peel or spider web scratches. Next issue we'll go into final assembly and installing new rubber.