

I Can See Clearly Now

Making those old show rod windows look like real "glass"

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Your original model show rods are between 25 and 35 years old. You've paid big money for them on Ebay. You know how to sand, prepare and airbrush the body with beautiful coats of acrylic or lacquer. But what about the "glass"?

Until recently, all model manufacturers simply threw the clear parts sprue into the box without protection. The result? No matter how mint the old kit is, the "glass" is always nicked up and scratched. In this article, I'll show you how to remove nicks, scratches and discolorations and make those parts look like real glass. For this demonstration Dave let me use his original MIB 1968 "Barnabas" Dark Shadows Vampire Van (a leap of faith since he paid \$200 for it.) It has four major panes of clear "glass".

The clear plastic sprue in the Barnabas van (*fig. 1*) had many small scratches and at least two rather deep ones. The depth of the scratches determines which polishing cloth you will begin with (deeper the scratches, the coarser the cloth). If your kit's clear plastic is not scratched, proceed straight to the Future step.

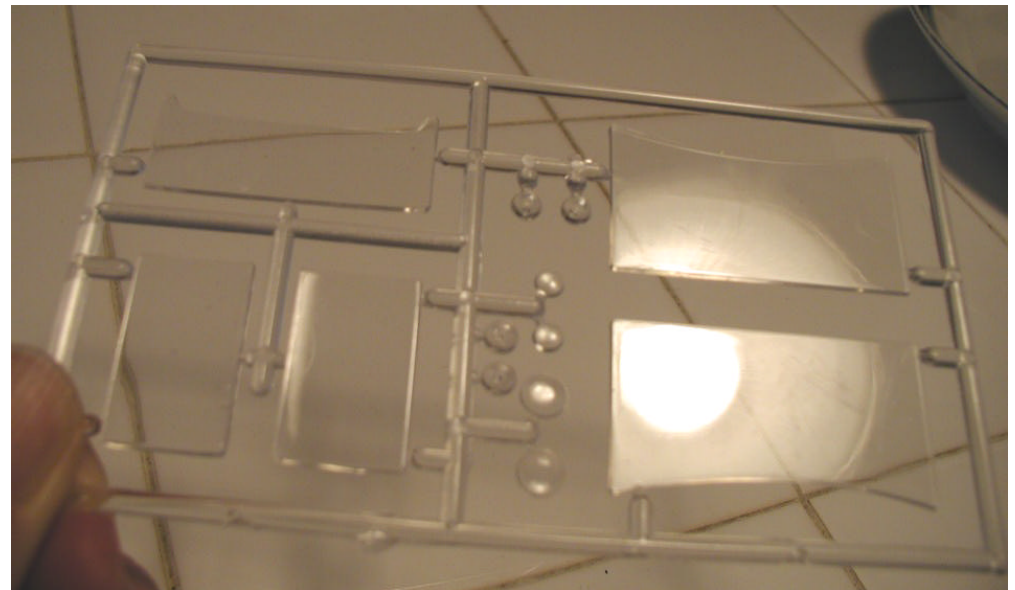


Fig.1 (original glass)

I use a polishing kit obtained from **LMG Enterprises** (see address at end of article). The kit costs about \$20 and is well worth the investment. Included are polishing cloths of 1800, 2400, 3600, 4000, 6000, 8000 and 12000 grit; bottle of polishing compound, haze and swirl remover, flannel application cloth and a hard foam polishing block. (*fig.2*)

This kit is mainly used for polishing out the paint on your model and I highly recommend it for this. An additional benefit is that the kit contains almost everything you need for polishing out the clear plastic glass.



Fig. 2 (polishing kit)

Because of the depth of the scratches on the kit glass, I began polishing using the 2400-grit cloth. I polish with the cloth wet (keep a small bowl of water handy) and the procedure is just like wet sanding a coat of paint. Because the Barnabas kit's glass was flat panes, I left them attached to the sprue for easier handling (*fig.3*).

The SAE article on fixing window scratches suggests using a large blob of silly putty to support the back of the plastic while you're sanding.



Fig. 3 (wet sanding)

After you are finished with the first cloth, wipe the glass clean and check to make sure it has a uniform, cloudy appearance (*fig.4*). Don't be alarmed at how opaque the glass looks. This is only the first step. If any large scratches are still visible, continue to polish with the same cloth until they are gone.

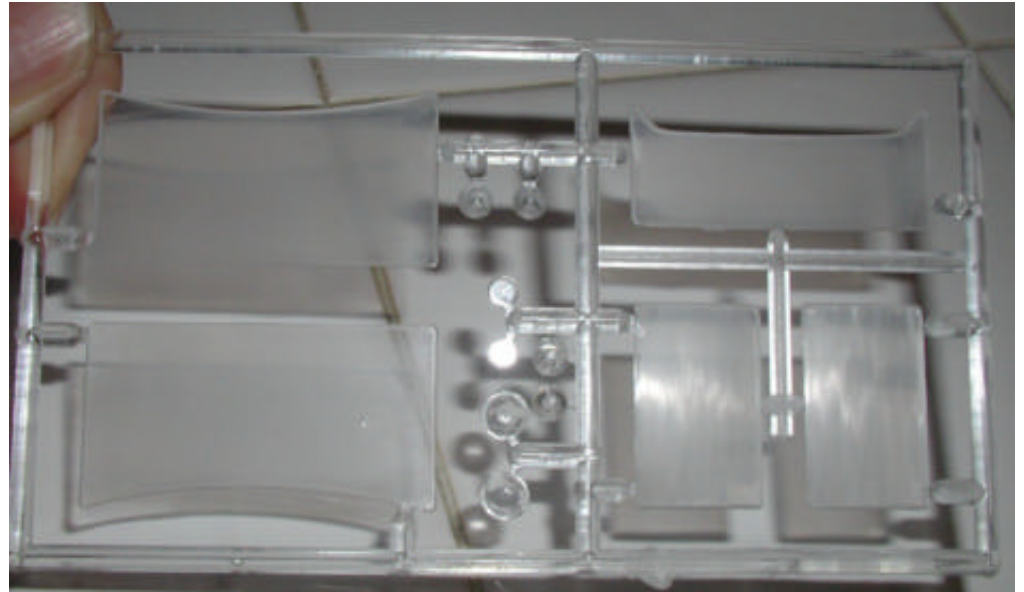


Fig. 4 (Appearance after first pass)

Once the uniform appearance is achieved, go to the next finer cloth and repeat the process. Work your way up until you are using the 12000-grit cloth. After all cloths are used, you should have glass that is pretty clear with the exception of small, almost hazy scratches (*fig. 5*).

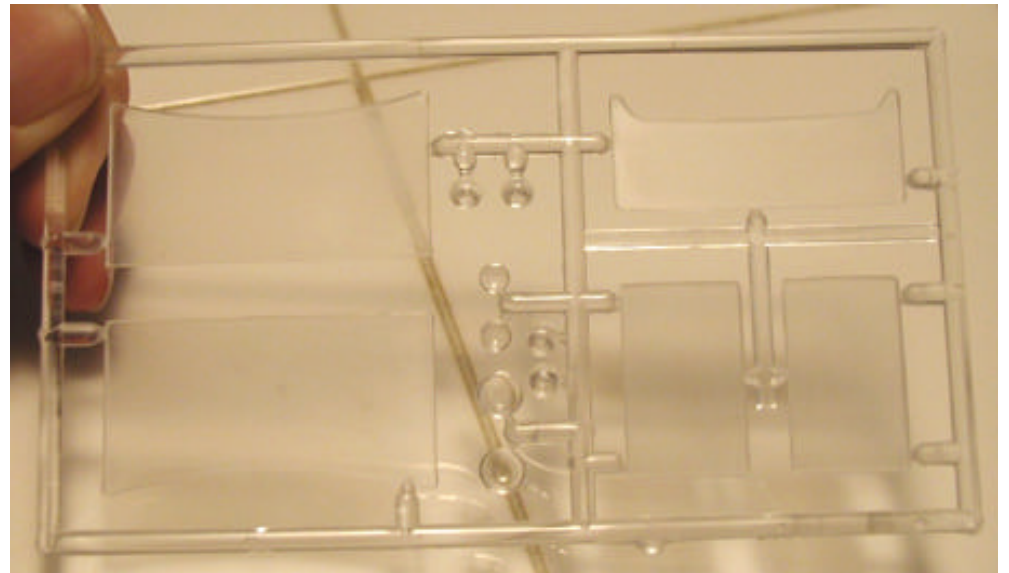


Fig.5 (After all cloths, quite clear)

Apply a small amount of the polishing compound to a clean area of the flannel polishing cloth. Begin to spread the compound over both sides of each piece of glass. Let dry for a few minutes and then begin to buff the glass using a clean, dry area of the polishing cloth (*fig. 6*).



Fig. 6 (Polishing compound)

You want to do this in a vigorous fashion, with as much pressure as possible. You will probably need to do this step at least twice, maybe more until you are happy with the result. The glass should be clear with very slight hazing (*fig. 7*).

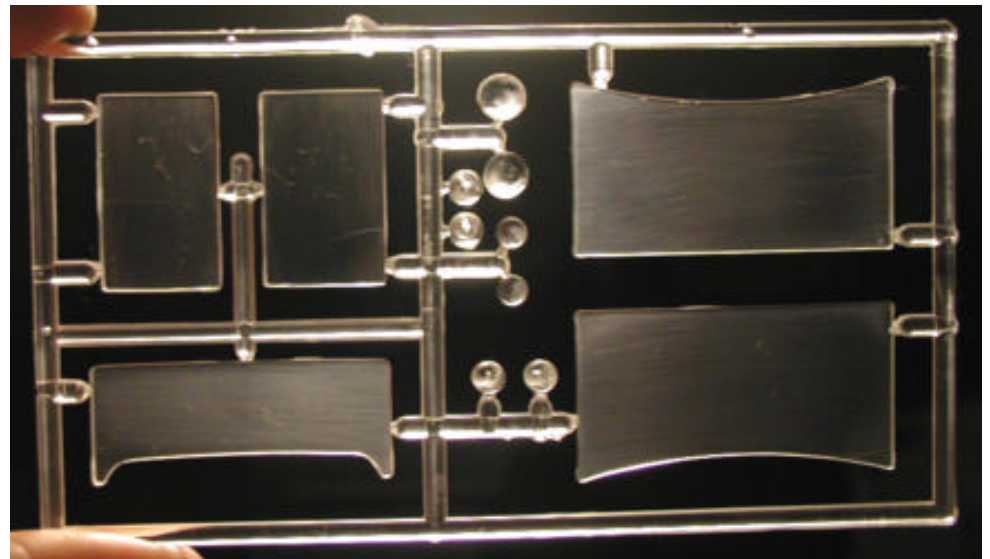


Fig. 7 (Repeat polishing)

Now apply a small amount of the haze and swirl remover to a clean area of the polishing cloth. Buff as you did with the polishing compound. The finished product should be very clear (*fig. 8*).

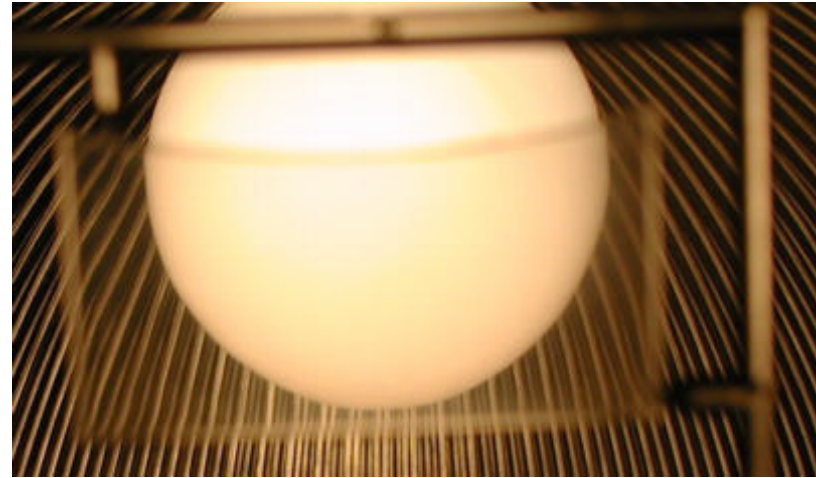


Fig. 8 (Buff with haze and swirl remover)

Future (*fig.9*) is a clear acrylic floor wax that can be found in the cleaning section of your local supermarket. In Europe, the product is known as Johnson's Klear. As an avid aircraft modeler, I use Future for many things other than the application being discussed in this article. I airbrush it as a gloss clear coat for decal application; I seal decals with it; I use it as a barrier for oil based washes (the acrylic protects the oil-based paint from being attacked by the thinner used in the wash) and I attach clear parts with it. Future has amazing self leveling qualities that allow it to fill scratches and correct distortion caused by variances in the thickness of the plastic created in the manufacturing process. It also creates a protective barrier for the clear parts, particularly if you apply paint to any of the clear parts. Windex (*fig.9*), also found in the cleaning aisle, has an ammonia base that removes Future as well as any acrylic paint. To remove Future from your glass, dip the Future coated part in Windex for a couple of minutes and the Future and anything applied over it (including oil-based paint) will be removed.



Fig. 9 (Coat with Future; remove with Windex)

Cut the clear plastic sprue so that each piece of glass has a small section of sprue attached at one or two points. The sprue will serve as a place to hold the part during the dipping process. Pour enough Future into a glass so that the largest part will be totally submerged. Using an alligator clip or tweezers, hold onto the sprue and dip the part into the Future (*fig. 10*).



Fig. 10 (Dipping the glass in Future)

Remove the part from the Future and dab the edges onto a piece of paper towel (*fig. 11*). This will remove excess Future from the part. Rotate the part in all directions so that the Future will spread evenly over the whole part. Blot on the paper towel as needed.

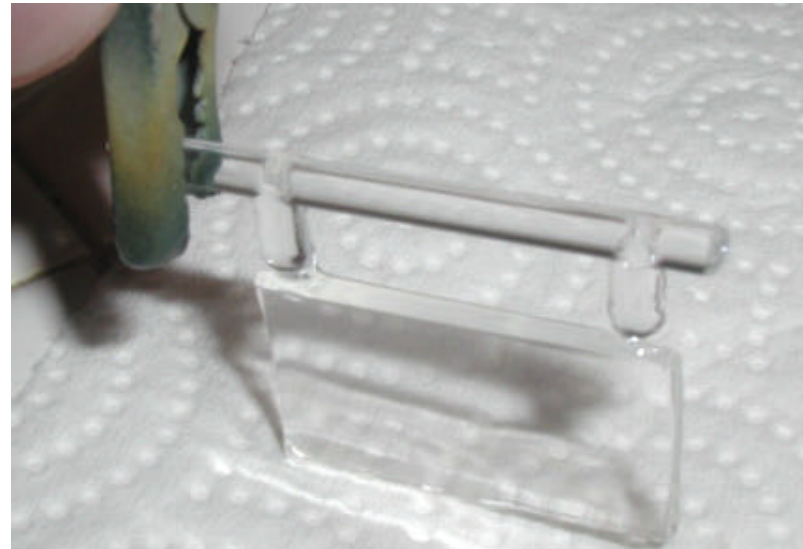


Fig. 11 (Blot off excess and level it out)

After the part has been dipped and blotted, you will need to find a safe place to let it dry. I use a piece of ceramic cookware with a plastic cover (*fig12*). This allows the Future to dry while keeping it free of dust and pet hair (I have two cats). If the piece begins to cloud while drying, don't worry. It is just an area that has more Future than the rest of the piece. This should go away when it is completely dry.

I usually do the glass parts first so that they will have dried for at least a week before I need them. While Future is dry to the touch within an hour, I prefer to let it sit for some time prior to masking it.



Fig. 12 (Keep it covered for drying)

There you have it--nice clear glass with no scratches. If you are unhappy with the results after the first dip, you can simply soak the part in Windex and the Future will be removed. Dry off the part and re-dip. The complete process from start to finish took about 1 hour to complete. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions: doyleless@earthlink.net

To contact LMG:
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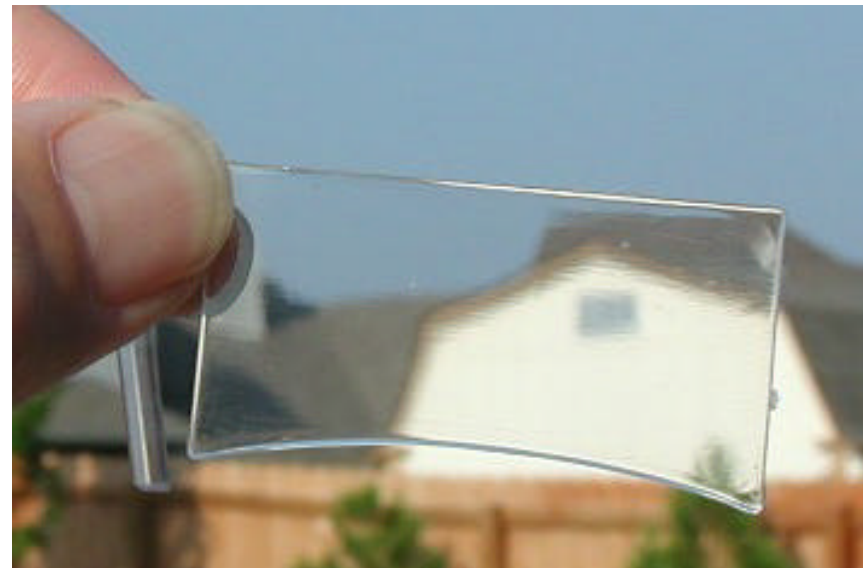


Fig. 13 (Clear as glass!)