

Might As Well...  
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Anyone that has known or talked to Terry Tanner about work being done on a Bricklin knows the phrase that I choose for the title of this article. As I write this, I have a backlog of stories/articles that I should write but I've lacked the motivation to do so as my car has been "down" now for the last 16 months for reasons beyond my control...

As we roll well into spring (summer by the time this is published) my car is finally nearing completion from the latest round of improvements that all started innocently enough with having an oil leak addressed. The leak is a leftover issue after a complete engine rebuild that I had to do after my trip home driving from Terry's shop in Virginia during the early part of 2001. The intended fix of the oil leak turned into one big "might as well" that seems to have had no end to roadblocks and opportunities. I will focus on the most recent accomplishment since it is actually done and others are not yet finished but will be written about later...

I just finished a project refinishing the appearance of both the lower dash unit and the upper dash or crash pad depending on what you want to call it. I had taken apart the entire dash structure (refer to John Blair's article on the BI Tech Articles section on our website) with the intent on doing some modifications to the air ducting system. That project is still in the works with the blower motor and heater box out of the car and the evaporator box taken apart. The blower motor is being replaced and the last thing needed to complete this A/C improvement mini-project.

While looking at my upper dash, I noted that the surface exposed to the sun was much darker than the sides that get very little sun. I want to be clear here...I think that whatever dye agent originally used to manufacture the dash had pretty much been "baked-off" by the sun to a very dark brown. I suspect the natural darker color of the untreated dash material was showing through the original dye or paint they had used. This got me thinking about the general appearance of the dash. Since it was out I also had the chance to look at the portion of the dash that the instrument cluster mounts to and decided that I needed to address the uneven color of the upper dash to make the interior look better. I called Terry's shop and spoke to John Lodge about the original color of the dash hoping to get a line on the paint/dye formulation to restore the dash to the correct color. Since we have current paint codes for the exterior colors and the paint code for the interior metal, I expected to find this information easily...no such luck per John. After a few minutes of conversation it was decided my best bet would be to take a sliver of the dash cover material from behind the instrument cluster to have the color analyzed and come up with a match with today's available paint materials. John suggested that I contact PPG to see what luck I would have going down that path...

I went to the Internet (great tool sometimes!) and found PPG's website which included a dealer locator. I found a dealer about 10 miles from my home in Southern California so I

called them and they informed me that they did not carry PPG vinyl paint products, but carried DuPont instead, and that it would probably work for my needs. At their suggestion I went to their shop and spent about 30 minutes comparing my dash color sample to a large book of their color samples and settled on DuPont Spectramaster YS254. The color was almost a perfect match so I choose not to pay for a color analysis and custom mix because it just would not have been cost efficient for my limited needs. Based on my choice of that color formulation, they mixed a quart of low gloss finish for me that included the appropriate reduction and flex agents needed for the vinyl application. They also sold me a Preval spray unit for application of the material since I didn't have easy access to a paint sprayer. The paint was \$61 for a quart and the hand sprayer with additional aerosol power units came to about \$12. For surface preparation they recommended that I use a very light mixture of Comet cleaner and water to ensure the dash pad surface was prepared for the paint by removing any remnant of Armor-All and similar treatments. I spoke to a couple other folks in the Bricklin world and another acquaintance that is involved in paint, body and interior restoration work. They all recommended that I go one step further to ensure the best possible results. Following their advice, I used plastic primer (suitable for soft vinyl) as a base coat to ensure better adhesion of the paint to the vinyl surface. Once the surface of the dash had been carefully cleaned and primed, it took about four spray applications; the first two coats were light, followed by two medium coats to prevent runs. These coats gave me the appearance I wanted. With the upper dash restored to match the surface protected from the sun, the lower dash was too dark in comparison to the upper dash and had to be lightened. About 18 months prior to this project, I had repainted my lower dash to address uneven finish issues and had painted the lower dash to compliment the then "darker" upper dash. I've seen many different color combinations on the dashes so I went to original sales brochure pictures as a reference. I decided to go to a tan color and used some interior plastic paint that was available to me. I had my choice of several colors and after test spraying decided to use Ford Mustang's "67-68 Saddle". This is an interior lacquer no longer available, but if useful, the paint code by Ford was 5739-26AL. Perhaps there is a current formulation/cross match that is available but I really don't know...

Since the upper and lower dash components have been refinished with browns that look like original shades, I needed to clean-up and refinish the black portion of the lower dash to get it looking as good as the other dash surfaces. Once all of the paintwork had been completed I left everything alone for a couple of weeks to ensure a completely dried/cured surface. To finish the project I needed to make the treated surfaces smooth and allow the "grain" of the surfaces show under the coats of paint. This was accomplished by using a pad of steel wool rubbed very lightly across the surfaces until smooth. I can now say that I'm completely happy with the look I've achieved. According to John, while we may get close to the original dash color combinations, it really is a matter of an individual owner's taste in deciding what color combinations work best in their cars.

In conclusion...Mission accomplished! Now the dash is waiting to go back into the car once the heat and A/C systems have been put back in the car. Some pictures have been

sent along and may be published with this article but will probably not do justice to the end results. If all goes as planned (ha ha ha! Shoot me now please!), I will drive my Bricklin to our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary meet being held in New York where other B owners can see the results of my efforts and judge for themselves.

I would love to join other owners driving out to New York and am planning on driving via Interstate 15 (I-15) to I-70 to Denver eventually picking up I-80 passing through the northern parts of IL, IN, and OH and then on to New York. I plan on arriving at our meet location on Wednesday July 28<sup>th</sup>. Please contact me if you are interesting in making a caravan to NY. My contact information is listed on the inside front cover of the Bricklin.