

EYE-POPPING CHROME SPINNERS

By Mike Isermann

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A few years ago a friend ask me if I would mind vacuforming a spinner for his new FAC Military Trainer entry that he was planning to fly in an upcoming FAC Nats. He built a nice version of a plane that had recently been commissioned by the USAF as their new turboprop-driven trainer, the Raytheon T-6A Texan II. The color scheme was a striking red, white and blue pattern consistent with late model USAF trainer aircraft. But one of the details that really stood out in my mind's eye was the prominent chrome spinner.

I began to contemplate what a scale rubber model would look like with a chromed spinner. I had not seen one before and became intrigued with the prospect of creating a shiny spinner for this unique rubber scale trainer. Of course I realized this was not a new idea in the modeling world. Chrome spinners had been around since ignition engines pulled model airplanes around U-control circles. But I had never seen a realistic lightweight chrome spinner on the nose or tail (I love pushers) of a rubber scale model. So I began to research and test ideas. I soon found out that surface painting vacuformed styrene with an assortment of chrome/silver/grey paints was not going to produce the kind of see-yourself shine I was looking for.

I was about to call it "good enough" when I stumbled upon a guy running a gas powered model race car in a nearby parking lot one afternoon. I know there is nothing unusual about seeing someone racing a model car around a parking lot. What caught my eye was the car and its *chrome* paint scheme! I mean you could see yourself in the hood of this little race car! I ask the guy how he was able to achieve such a super looking chrome finish and he replied, "Alclad." "Alclad?" I said He answered, "Yeah, you can get it at your local hobby shop. It comes in a little bottle. I So I hopped in my car and went straight to my local hobby shop. Sure enough, I found Alclad II on the shelf in the model car section. Turns out it is a lacquer based paint designed specifically for Lexan model car bodies. I asked a few questions about how it is applied and the guy behind the counter told me that car enthusiasts airbrush the stuff on the inside of a clear shell, let it dry and then back the silver finish with flat black. The outside of the clear plastic body simulates the deep shine and slick finish you would expect on a real race car. I thought to myself, *how simple and yet brilliant is that?*

When I got home I set up my vacuform system, located some .015 clear plastic and pulled three spinners for the Texan II. Once I had them trimmed and ready for paint I loaded up my airbrush with the Alclad solution and carefully sprayed the insides of the spinner. Alclad is an interesting solution because it is clear when you pick it up off the shelf. All of the silver pigment lies on the bottom of the bottle so you have to really shake it well before every use. Make sure you completely cover the entire outside of the spinner surface before painting. I shot two thorough coats and let them dry. You could already tell this was going to be the ticket!

The last step is to shoot a flat black paint over the silver inside the spinner. I used TamIya flat black. Because the Alclad is a lacquer, it may be better to use an oil based paint. Applying the black paint is a necessary step because, despite the application of two coats of Alclad, the spinner was still a bit translucent. The black really ensures the reflective properties of the paint are activated.

When I removed the masking from the spinner surface I was completely blown away by the shine of the spinner. I could actually see myself in the spinner. My buddy was very surprised and pleased with the results of the experiment and I have used the technique several times since. I no longer steer away from subjects that have chrome spinners or cowls for that matter. Give it a try. You will be amazed!



