

WHITE LETTER RESTORATION

FOR BLACK SHIFT KNOB, and WIPER/LIGHT CONTROLS

What I do is soak the knob in full strength Castrol purple cleaner. This loosens most of the old paint. Then I pick out the remaining paint with toothpicks or an awl.

Next, the shift knob should be mounted on an M10x1.25 bolt and the bolt clamped in a vice. "Sanding" consists of stepping up from 320 to 600 grit wet & dry paper. The sandpaper s/b used wet, folded, and strapped around the shift knob, as though you were polishing shoes (if anyone remembers doing that).

After the 600 grit, any metal polishing cream can be used with a non-fluffy rag. Blue Magic Metal Polishing Cream works excellent to remove the sanding scratches from the 600 grit. Nylon and silk works great for polishing, but can overheat the plastic knob in a hurry. Linen (bed sheet/pillow case/shop rag) works better, I have found.

Then lightly buff the shift knob with polishing compound on a buffing wheel to eliminate marring and signs of aging. The buffing also helps on the next step. Be careful if using a buffing wheel - it takes only an instant to overheat the plastic shift knob and mar the surface. If this happens, return to the 320/600/polishing cream to work out the burn.

Using Testor's white enamel model paint with a cotton swap, the numbers get flooded with paint. After drying for a few hours, I soak a piece of white bond paper in mineral spirits and lightly burnish the surface of the knob. This removes all of the white paint on the surround areas above the lettering impressions. The polishing step above helps prevent the paint from penetrating and being absorbed into the black surface.

Finally, after a final dry, the knob is polished using silk or nylon with polishing cream. The fine, tightly woven cloth prevents pulling the paint out of the impressions while polishing the surrounding areas.

Nothing to it, really. It's just one of those filler tasks to keep from idling on less useful stuff. Steven Walker used to refurbish the early black shift knobs and I always wondered how it was done.

It took a lot of trial and error to discover a process that looks right, lasts long, and won't destroy the part. Flat surfaces like those on some wiper/light switches is much easier, but basically the same process.

The same technique above also works well for plastic tail light and parking light lenses, though most of it is done on a buffing wheel.

From the pen of: Pete Angel