BENDING PERSPEX (FOR A SERIES 'D' SCREEN)

Dave Hills

Stuart Jenkinson says I talk a load of "codswallop" (actually I think his word was a obit more expressive! ). Well, at least that's what he thinks of my notes about bending perspex (August "D" review). To be honest I hadn't tried it and after talking to Stuart, I think I'd better tell you about his experiments before some of you try it. Firstly the cost of perspex is likely to be nearer £10 than the £1 I quoted and the chances of warming perspex with a flame to a temperature where it will change shape and not fog the surface are very remote. The ability to bend perspex is a highly skilled job and only comes with experience and first time experimenters are unlikely to have much success. Have we anybody who has experience of bending perspex?-perhaps a few notes in MPH would be appreciated by determined do-it-yourself types; I, for one, would like to know more on this subject.

Bernie Morgan

[This letter was originally written to Dave Hills, who passed, it on to me for publication - Ed.]

I read your remarks in a recent MPH with some interest with regard to the bending of Perspex and your further reference in MPH 406 has prompted me to drop you a line.

I have some experience of this operation and it is not easy. Firstly it depends if you have an adequately-sized electric (not gas) oven, or if you can make an electric "hot box". You need, first, to make a non-inflammable mould or die of aluminium sheet of the shape and contour required.

Cut the Perspex sheet to size and shape and place on the "die item". Place in the hot box or oven and allow the oven to warm up to approximately 180°C. If you keep an eye on the operation you will note the "collapse" point of the Perspex as it moves under its own weight onto the surface of the aluminium die plate. Maintain the temperature for a few minutes only and then remove the die from the oven.

The operation can then be repeated if necessary to produce a number of items.

Dave Hills

The Perspex bending competition goes on! Alan Gregory of Western Australia sent me two samples of Perspex moulded over an ATD cover and I must say that the shape and clarity of his moulding are impressive. He has detailed exactly what he does and he makes it sound quite straightforward - certainly for small parts anyway.

His method is to immerse the Perspex in oil and heat to about 240 degrees fahrenheit and then drape it over a "former" or pattern. Lots of details need to be noted, like how to handle "soggy" hot Perspex, not getting the oil too hot, and finding containers big enough to hold screen size pieces of Perspex etc. He didn't say why he was making Perspex ATD distributor drive covers, but wouldn't it be interesting to see into a timing chest when the engine was running! Imagine a timing cover made of Perspex; if the inside of the cover wasn't permanently covered in oil we could see exactly what happened to those cams and alloy idlers.