

I refinished all the wood in Roger Rabbit. I used paint stripper to remove the old coat. then I sanded with 300. Then I used Spar urethane in a can. I put on 5 or 6 coats and sanded to flatten it out. Did this 4 times then one final coat for shine. I have been told that what I did was all wrong but the wood in this car looks great and I have had numerous compliments from people who did not believe the way I did it. It was kind of slow but really turned out great. The trick is to take your time. The guy in Virginia named Dave something who passed away several years ago wanted 900 dollars to do these pieces. Since I could not afford that I did it myself> if you want to call me I will give you all the details. !-877-656-5411 and ask for Steve Wallace.

I've forgotten which car you have, but the back window surround is usually unveneered ash, stained very dark, then finished with polyester. First (among other things) I was a professional furniture maker/restorer for donkey's years, so have tried most products and found a few that are reliable (more on that later). Second - forget sandpaper till late in the refinishing process, when wet/dry paper is appropriate.

Use a good quality gel-type stripper, followed with a rubdown with 0000 steel wool and lacquer thinner - you may have to do this four or five times as the RR finish is hell for stout. When all traces of old finish are gone, rub down with 0000 and rottenstone with water as a lubricant. When thoroughly dry, sand with 400 or 600 grit garnet paper. Stain with dark walnut, then apply two or three coats of Deft Clear Wood Finish - it's a synthetic lacquer & it's never failed me in twenty years (including the entire interior of SWII LRK37662 and a brace of Jaguars).

After drying a day, rub down with 0000, clean with alcohol and apply two more coats followed by 600 grit wet/dry paper - you can repeat this process about every two hours till the grain is filled and you have a nice, smooth finish. After the last coat, wait a few hours, then do a final polish with 1000 or 1200 grit wet/dry with water, then finish off with Meguiar's fine-cut cleaner and Meguiar's Showroom Glaze. The usual disclaimer applies to the products mentioned. Finally, the above applies to rear-window surrounds and door cappings. When dealing with the veneered pieces, the same general process applies, but there are other considerations which must be taken into account, such as lifting, bubbling, sharp edges etc., but that's a whole 'nuther story as they say in Texas, I believe. Mernon

You may find it a little challenging to find his "rottenstone" but yes, such a product actually exists. Your Home depot most likely won't stock it though (it's a cabinet-maker and fine-furniture finisher's product), and I'm not at all sure nowadays who would stock this ultra-fine abrasive. I hate to sound like a great unwashed plebian, but I have personally had terrific success with a final rubbing out with ordinary Brasso (standard disclaimer), followed by Mernon's suggested glitzy top finishes.

Those window surrounds are prone to problems. They live in a rather hostile environment, and frequently their finishes fail - yours being no exception.

There's trapped interior heat that gets at these things, added to by ultraviolet breakdown of the finishing material over time from direct sunlight, not to even mention morning misty moisture on the inside of the glass migrating to the woodwork, or even frost. Then there's always the possibility of a window-seal leaking and letting in rainwater, or pressure-washing (some carwash places) can lead to more moisture accumulating. Heck, even mold and rot are

not uncommon!!

You need an impervious finish back there. One mighty tough. And yes, sprayed on urethane coatings like Varathane can work very well. You really don't need to worry about that dreaded "plastic look". The rubbing out with very fine papers followed by Brasso will gently meld that final finish into a rich rewarding one.

Remember to very thoroughly seal the backside of your woodwork too. Any moisture getting in, back in behind, will only serve to delaminate your urethane finish that much sooner (there's no such thing as "forever" with woodwork). The backside needn't be as spiffy as the front, of course, but your coatings ought to be continuous to succeed, ensuring adequate sealing of the backside.

Now then: about that break in the wood surround:

If the two broken ends closely "knit" back together again when dry-fitted, a good penetrating epoxy obtained from any marine chandlery, such as that made by System Three or WEST System (more standard disclaimers) will work here for you. If the break is nastier, with pieces broken out, or missing altogether, that's another matter entirely. Whatever you decide upon doing regarding your adhesive, brace the piece thoroughly so it does not move around on you, and clamp the piece snugly for 24 hours, or per the adhesive manufacturer's specifications. Wire can be used effectively. Tape isn't rigid enough, and will slip enough to be disappointing, or even dissolve its adhesives in the your gluing process, making it useless. Use positive pressure for sustained time and you'll be satisfied. Anything less is a disappointment, guaranteed. Do not be in a hurry. The material must thoroughly cure before you start playing around with the repaired piece, and slathering urethanes upon it.

/Brian Johnston