



How to

Refurbish steel wheels

Follow along as the pros dip, strip, prep and powdercoat a Mexico steel to make it look as good as Ford originally intended.

It doesn't matter what type of wheels you have – either steel or alloy – if they look awful then your car will too. Providing they're straight and true, getting them refurbished is pretty straight forward if you give them to a specialist company. In fact, it can work out pretty cost-effective too because our chosen firm, Paint It UK based in Billericay Essex, strip the paint, shot blast and then powder coat their wheels to virtually any shade you want.

Info

Contacts
Paint It UK
01277 634968
www.essexwheelrefurbishment.co.uk/

Powdercoat is great — providing you get the right type, because there's more than one quality. Your wheels will resist dirt and corrosion for years. Try doing this at home and it takes hours and hours of hard graft in preparation and a fair amount of money in paint and wet and dry to get them anywhere near the standard that powdercoating achieves. With a typical price of around £65 per wheel, you simply can't do it yourself for that. The process Paint It UK use means they apply a

powdercoat primer in either grey or black, which is baked on. Then the wheel is removed from the oven, wet-sprayed to the shade you want and then lacquered using clear powder coat lacquer to seal the colour coat in. As we'll see this last bit looks like you've painted the wheel snow white, but once baked off, the lacquer goes super-gloss clear.

We follow Paint It UK as they stripped and powdercoated our Mexico wheel.



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92

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102



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108



Preparation

Our barn-fresh Mexico steel in used condition really needs a makeover.



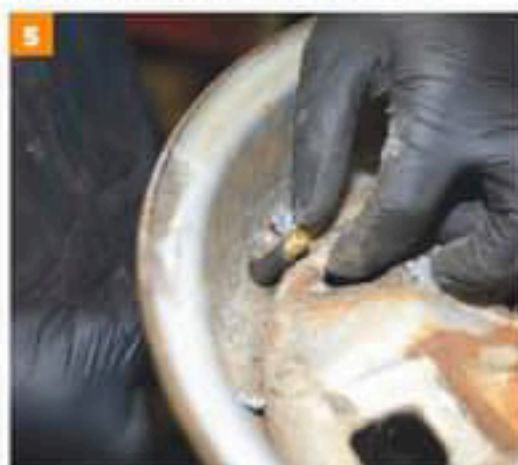
It's an OK rim but the back is pretty rusty and Ash wasn't sure that it would come up that well.



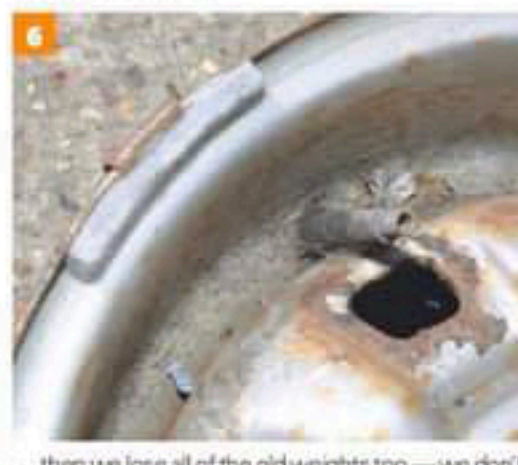
Powdercoating hides pits really well as it's a lot thicker than paint, but there's still a limit to how much can be applied, so if you want it completely blemish-free, the better the surface before, the better it will come out. Luckily, the worst damage is around the back so it doesn't really show!



The first job we need to do is spin the wheel up to check its true-ness. Serious wobbles need to be dealt with and Paint It UK have a man that can straighten seriously deformed rims. Luckily ours was acceptable, so we're onto the next stage...



...strip it of all its old hardware. First the old valves are cut out...



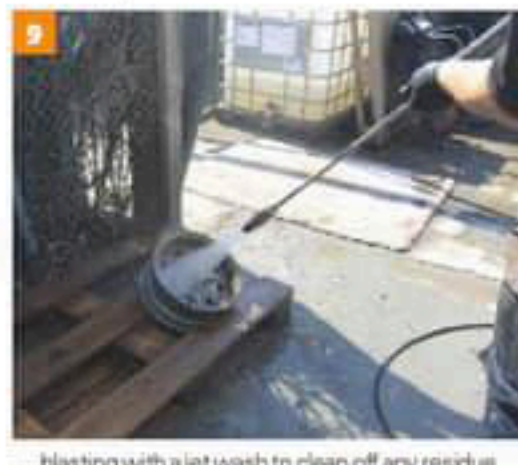
...then we lose all of the old weights too — we don't want to powdercoat them because we'll get an uncoated patch of steel!



What comes next is Paint It UK's new way of stripping, which far less toxic, safer and more environmentally friendly. The trouble is, it takes a lot longer and the tanks have to be kept at 70 degrees C.



Once it comes out, all the paint's gone, it just needs...



...blasting with a jet wash to clean off any residue and neutralise the chemicals.



Once the wheel's dry, we start on a bit more preparation — the serious rust spots are knocked down with a DA sander and coarse abrasive paper before...



...it goes in the shotblasting booth to remove all the pitted-in rust.



Painting

Now we start the preparation to apply the paint. The rim is hung up into a purpose-made frame...



...and wheeled into the oven, to heat the rim to around 200 degrees.



After 10 minutes it comes out and is hung up in front of the water-backed paint booth. There, it's finally dusted down with an air line before...



...the first layer of powdercoat primer is added. We're using white here because the colour that will go on top is light. The gun is an electrostatic gun that fires powder at the statically-charged steel rim, making the powder attract and stick to it.



The rim then goes back into the oven, where the powder is melted and fuses together forming a layer for the next stage.



After a further 45 minutes the rim comes out and is wet-coated in the silver colour required.



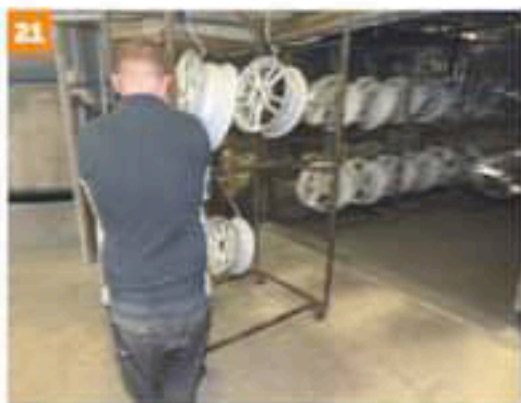
When that's dry, the rim moves to another booth, where the powder coat lacquer is applied...



...only it looks totally white!



Back in the oven again, to allow all the coats – primer, wet-coat and lacquer to fuse together.



When it comes out, as if by magic, the lacquer goes clear and we have a powdercoated wheel fit for any top-quality car!



And we're done!