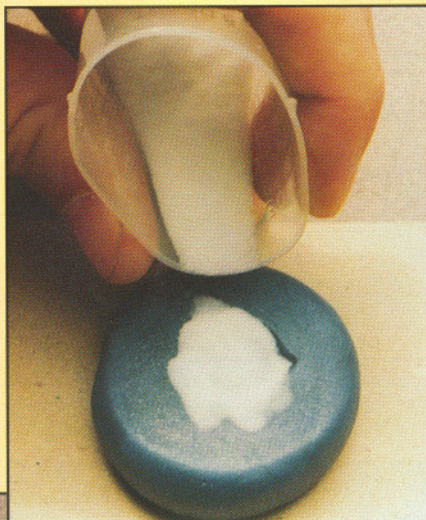
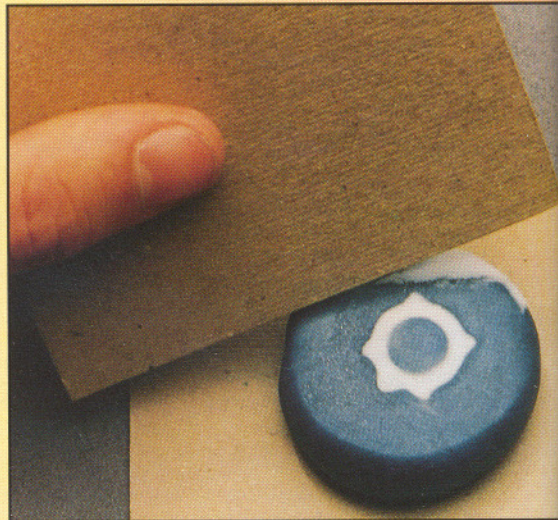


PANEL GAMES

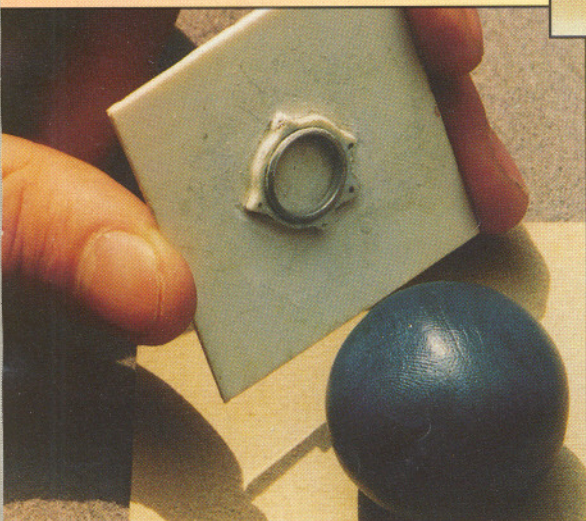
George Milner Smith wanted to improve the appearance of his models and came up with a quick and easy method of making bezels



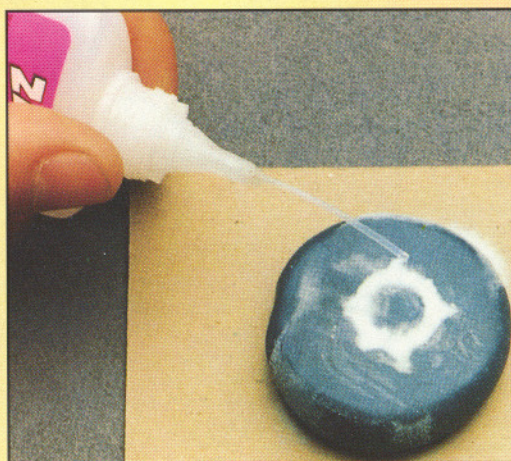
Microballoons is added to fill the mould cavity



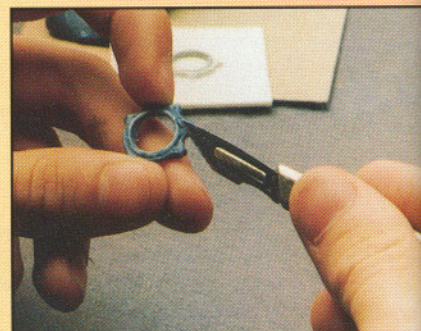
Microballoons is added to fill the mould cavity



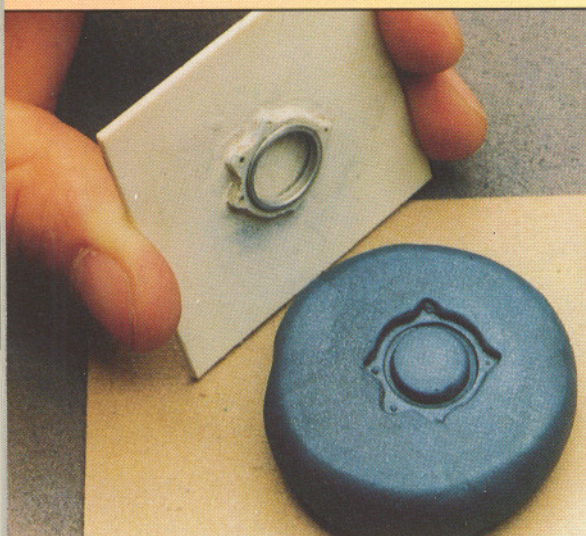
Pasticard and aluminium tube master will be needed for each size of instrument on the panel



Cyano is now added to harden the microballoons - extra powder added as necessary



Cleaning up the moulding needs a deft touch



Mould is formed by pressing the master firmly into the modelling clay



The delicate part, removing the bezel needs care as the moulding is quite delicate



The end result is a super light replica of the plasticard and tube master

I wonder how often a modeller looks into the cockpit of a well finished scale model and thinks (like me) "I wish I had the skill and the time to add detail like that." The instrument panel can add a great deal of atmosphere to any model, not just those heading for the Nationals. Even a black background with some paper instrument faces stuck on will lift the feel of a model.

But unless you have a lot of time to spare or are going in for competitions it can be hard to justify the extra work involved in reproducing the detail of tiny instruments and switches. Many of our best modellers have written highly informative articles on how to do it..... and I wish I could! Sadly my instinct is to say "how can I do that in ten minutes and only spend a couple of quid?"

When I had finished making my 1/7 scale Ju87B Stuka it was obvious that, with so much

Panel Games

cockpit area, I was going to have to do some work. The main instrument panel was very much in evidence. It was a mass of dials of different sizes and with different shaped bezels.

In the past I have tried various methods of moulding the bezels using plastic wood, resin, even glue. But there was always a disadvantage. The mouldings came out either too brittle, pitted, or just not able to pick up the fine detail. This time I tried a technique I use to fill small holes or repair 'hanger rash' in a hurry, using microballoons and cyano. What surprised me was that I produced a perfect bezel on the first attempt, and it only took five minutes. The secret is that the microballoons are so fine that will take up the finest detail. And when bonded with cyano, they are pretty tough too.

Method

Make a one-off copy of the basic shape of the bezel from wood, metal tube or plasticard. There might even be a commercial one which you could adapt to the right shape.

Do not worry about the fine detail at this stage, just the outline of whatever stands proud of the instrument panel. Of the ones I use, one mould is made of a slice of aluminium tube surrounded by plasticard and another is a slice of plasticard tube with a triangle of plasticard at each corner.

Mount each bezel on a square of something smooth like plasticard sheet (there's a reason for the smoothness) and then push them firmly face down into a small block of FIMO modelling clay (from a toy or art shop). If the plasticard sheet was stiff enough and smooth enough you should be able to prise it off without difficulty leaving a clean impression of the bezel.

Now fill the mould with microballoons, very gently making sure that there is no space left unfilled by clearing across the top with a piece of card to remove excess microballoons. Do not sneeze at this stage or you will loose the lot!

Gently prise out the solidified shape. I can guarantee that you will break some at this stage....but since it only takes minutes to do you can quickly make a replacement.

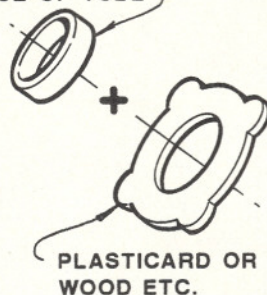
They do not always come out cleanly, but it's only a little work to clean off the mould material. Use a small screwdriver for safety, but a modelling knife if you have a steady hand and a steady nerve. I gently sandpaper the back, at this stage, to provide a flat surface to help when gluing to the instrument panel.

Cyano them onto a previously prepared thin plasticard instrument panel with the appropriate holes already cut. Paint as necessary and place over instrument faces already stuck to a backing sheet in the correct positions.

This process gave me an (almost) scale panel for the Stuka in two days. The really sharp-eyed will notice that the instrument faces are in English rather than German. I had to draw the line on scale fidelity somewhere.

To my mind, the overall effect is worth considerably more than the effort expended. Mine have lasted over five years without breaking. I am sure this is not the only way to produce instrument panels quickly. I would love to learn of a better one.

SLICE OF TUBE



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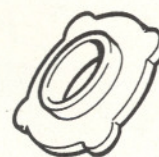
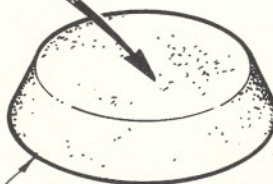
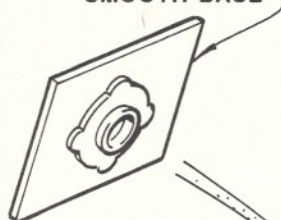


FIG 1

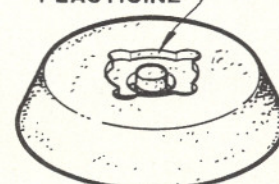
SMOOTH BASE



PLASTICINE OR MODELLING CLAY

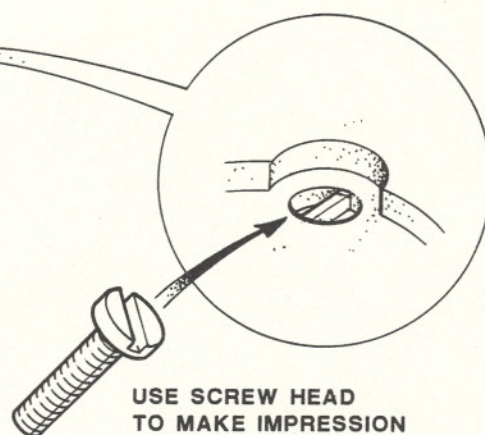
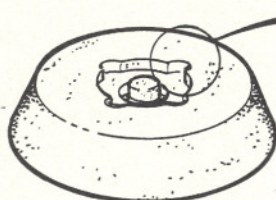
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IMPRESSION IN PLASTICINE



THE MOULD

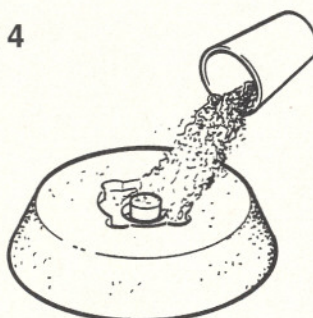
FIG 2



USE SCREW HEAD TO MAKE IMPRESSION

FIG 3

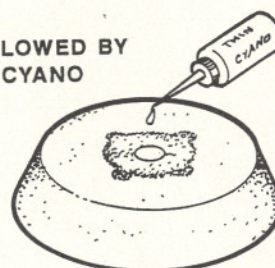
FIG 4



CAREFULLY ADD THE MICROBALLOONS...

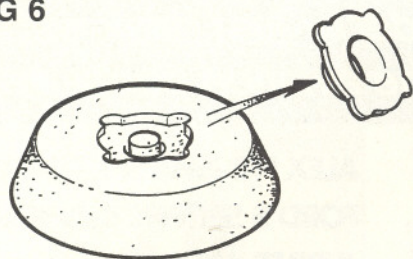
FIG 5

...FOLLOWED BY THIN CYANO

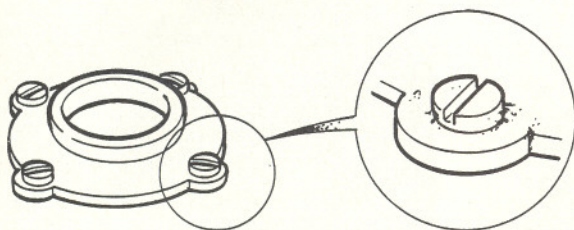


Panel Games

FIG 6



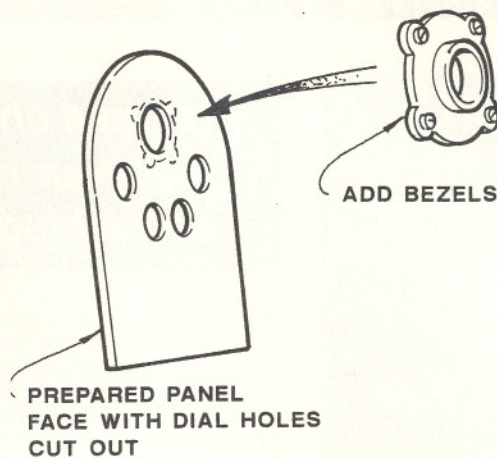
RELEASE PART
FROM MOULD



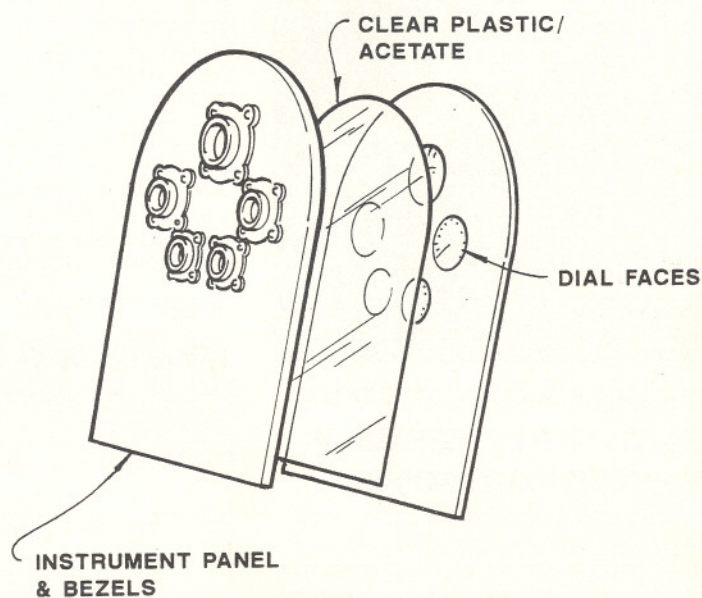
CLEAN UP ANY
DETAIL AS REQUIRED

FIG 7

FIG 8



PREPARED PANEL
FACE WITH DIAL HOLES
CUT OUT



It's bound to fly better with scale instruments

