Improve CLEAR parts with Future

Better canopies? They're soaking in it!

By Matthew Usher

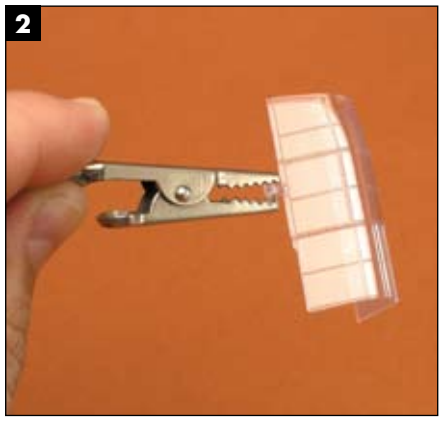
You've got to be kidding me.

That was my first reaction when someone told me about using Future to improve the clear parts on my models. "Future? The floor polish you get at the grocery store?"

It's true. Among its many magical properties, Future not only makes clear parts appear "clearer," it also makes them easier to mask and protects them from dust and fingerprints. Really. Trust me. Here's a step-by-step guide to this easy-to-learn technique.

First, you'll need a fresh bottle of Future; look for it in the household section of your grocery store. A 27-ounce bottle like this one will last a long time on the workbench. To treat the clear parts in Future, you'll need to submerge them in it completely, so look around for a deep, wide-mouth container. I use an old salsa jar.

Remove the clear parts from the sprue, but leave a small section of the tree connected to the part.



The piece of the parts tree makes a perfect handle while you treat the part. Pick up the part with a good set of alligator clips or strong locking tweezers, and make sure it's held securely.

Here's the easy part: Submerge the part in the Future. Just dunk it in. Look for any air bubbles that might be trapped in the part's engraved details. If you see bubbles, turn the part over using the alligator clip and let them float out.

Once the part's thoroughly submerged and you're convinced there aren't any air bubbles, you're ready to remove the part. This is the tricky part. Slowly pull the part out of its Future bath. Removing the part slowly will allow the excess Future to flow back into the bottle and prevent runs. Use the edge of the jar to rest your hand; take your time. When you can, have a corner of the part be the last thing that comes out of the Future.

Here's why: No matter how slowly you remove the part, a drop of Future will probably remain at the last point to come out of the bath. If the drop's at a corner, you can drag the corner along a sheet of paper, and the excess Future will wick away. Take a look at the part while it's still wet – if the layer of Future has runs, dust, or looks uneven, simply give the part another dunk in Future and try again. If the coat of Future looks even and smooth, you're ready to let it dry.

I use an "extra hands" stand to hold parts while they dry. I also place them in a plastic storage container to keep the dust off. After 24 hours, the Future will be completely dry and the parts can be handled as usual. You can trim away the parts-tree handle and get to work. You'll be amazed at the smooth finish and extra clarity the parts will have. You'll also find that masking materials (like Bare-Metal Foil) will be easier to remove.

What happens if you're not happy with the coat of Future you've added? Dunk the parts in Windex. It'll remove the Future without harming the plastic parts.

Once you get the hang of dipping clear parts in Future, you'll be able to use it on all kinds of models and all kinds of parts, from windshields to headlights to periscopes and vision blocks. In an upcoming issue we'll look at another great use for Future.