

80MM'S 2002 CALENDAR INSIDE **LET CONCEPTS DRIVE AND FEEL IT!**

HIGH PERFORMANCE

PONTIAC

ARTIST'S
ROAD RUCKER
EXPOSED

**BIG
BORE
STRIP
BASH**

**6 CARS—
SEE HOW THEY RUN**

TECH

- **HOT NEW MODELS, DIFFERENTIALS AND TUNED-PORTS**
- **PERFORMANCE BASICS: WHEN TO CRACK YOUR WHEELS**
- **THE CORNER: WHICH WHEEL IS BEST (AND WHICH IS WORST) FOR YOUR TRAIL AND LANE POSITION**

PERFORMANCE



www.highperformance.pontiac.com

Readers' Service Dept., GM Corp., 300 Renaissance Center, Detroit, MI 48201

Poncho Body Basics

Part XVI: How to apply Big Bird and his little friends

Who woulda thunk it? Just two short years ago we had a nesting bulk on our hands.

And after countless hours of body work at Classic Restorations, we are now applying a set of GM Restoration Parts licensed decals, which were provided by Phoenix Graphics, to a pristine Carousel Red Trans Am. Marking one of the precious few HPP projects to actually reach completion, the *Poncho Body Basics* series will conclude with this installment. But before we end it all, we will see how a professional installs a complete set of Trans Am decals including the ever-intimidating one-piece Screaming Chicken. Melvin Benzaquen, owner of Classic Restorations, views the decal installation as the crowning touch on each Second-Gen. Trans Am restoration that rolls out of his shop and that is why he enjoys the task of applying the decals personally.

Having performed the procedure on many a T/A before, and even the special edition models that have stripes everywhere, we will not be able to see how a pro approaches the installation and pick up a few tips, should you decide to attempt the job at home. ▶



Our gold-yellow-black hood bird from Phoenix Graphics adds some serious pop to our Carousel Red T/A. Also note that our glass has been installed. Mounting of the windshield and back window was performed by the capable Del Custom of Desert Rose Auto Glass.



Since the Bird decal is rolled in a tube when delivered, you must make sure that it doesn't curl up during installation. So Melvin Benzaquen suggests that you lay the Bird out across the hood and tape it down at least 24 hours before applying it to the hood.



Many will tell you that it is also important to measure to find the centerline of the hood because eyeballing the peak can be deceiving. However, it has been Melvin's experience that it is more important that the Bird's center tail feathers and the top of its head line up with the peak of the hood, regardless of whether it appears to be at the exact centerline. If the Bird is not installed in this manner, it will appear to be off center. Nevertheless, our hood centerline was at 27.5 inches. Note our tape is offset to the side so that the tape edge identifies the hood centerline.



The factory diagram calls for the Bird to be applied 4.10 inches from the front edge of the hood. We marked it at 4.125 inches without incident because it was easier to read on our tape measure. Be sure to account for the extra masking paper area on the Bird decal, which extends past its outer edges. Note the measurement should be made to the edge of the decal not the masking paper.



Pieces of masking tape were used as guides at the wing tips as well. The Bird was centered and measurements were made from each side edge. The vertical line is 6.125 inches from the hood edge on each side. The cross line just provides a guide to line up the decal when it's applied.



It is essential that the hood be hospital clean, wax free, and warm—between 70° and 90°—before you even attempt to apply the Bird decal. The hood can be left out in the sun to heat it or the engine can be run to accomplish the same goal. Phoenix recommends, however, that the decal does not get applied in direct sunlight. It must also be very wet when decal is applied. Melvin uses a five-gallon bucket of water with dishwashing liquid and a clean towel to squeeze water onto the hood. Phoenix recommends a gallon of water with a teaspoon of dishwashing detergent (Ivory or Joy) and a spray bottle to apply the mixture. Melvin related, "To allow yourself time to move the Bird around to properly position it, you will probably need a good part of those five gallons to keep the decal and hood surface wet." Phoenix warns not to submerge the decals in the water, however, as it will run them.



As the masking paper is removed from the underside of the Bird (the head will face the passenger's side at this point so it will face the driver's side when applied), it's imperative that it is kept very wet. The step definitely requires two people because if the decal folds back on itself it will surely be ruined.

Things to Remember

- Make sure that you have all decals and supplies before you begin.
- Don't rush.
- You must wait 60 days after painting the Trans Am or the decal will trap solvents underneath it.
- Polish the hood (do not use a wax) before you apply the decal to ensure a clean surface, just to assure removal of any sort of residue.
- Never reuse a squeegee from a previous decal installation. The edge could deteriorate in the downtime between cars and, if used again, the squeegee could possibly tear the new decals. One is provided with the kit, so use it.
- After the hood Bird is applied, do not remove the masking paper for 24-36 hours, to allow for more drying time.
- Don't install the hood Bird in the winter. The cold outside temperatures are not conducive to good adhesion and it's difficult to keep the hood and decal warm during installation.
- Don't be discouraged if you see a fair amount of bubbles after you remove the masking paper. It could take a few weeks or even a month for them to disappear. After that time, a pin can be used to prick any remaining bubbles to allow the air or water to escape.
- Don't wax the decal.



After turning the heel over with help from me, again it's your turn to follow. Begin by position the foot on the foot to line up with our leg marks. A liberal amount of the water/dish-washing liquid mixture ensures that the foot does not set up too soon.



Draw the foot posteriorly to the tape marks and the lower calf features and the wing tips, and the heel is positioned correctly. A liberal helps the process of "squeezing out the excess water/soap solution and the air bubbles from under the foot using small overlapping strokes. Be gentle in the middle of the foot and work toward the edges using the technique provided by Thomas Clapham.

When you can see how air bubbles are pushed to the edge and "released" so that the foot can properly adhere to the foot. Make sure cushions begin to stick so that you don't see the foot and/or heel that come or bubble out and separate and work to the edge of the casting paper as they should. Do not touch them. You can't because during the drying process some will disappear on their own.



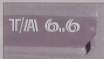
Once the foot was in position you can verify that Markin came across edge-to-edge to the mark at each tape mark, as shown on this wing tip.



With the tape pulled out of the way, the final squaring up is performed. But the marking paper will be left on for at least 24-36 hours to ensure that the foot is dry and properly adhered to the foot.



Moving up to the foot comes according to our factory diagram. The wing should always be positioned 1.25 inches from the edge and 1.0 inch from the tip. The edge measurement can be made with a ruler and again we rounded it to 1.25 inches because it was easier to decipher on the ruler. The tip measurement has to be made using a ruler or straight edge across the dorsal opening to identify where it began to slope into the side. The small pen line marks the tip measurement and the tape edge marks the proper distance from the wing edge.



After peeling off the backing paper, sliding the decal to white-letting the edge of the decal to the edge of the tape, repositioning and leveling for it to do and then peeling back the masking paper. Here we have the finished application (okay, so it's an original '87 T&A engine. I never said that the Formula was going to be stock. Did you notice the "R&R" grille?



For the front bumper decal, there are dimensions on the decal, "18.75 inches from the centerline of the car to the center paper" and "align the center paper to the bottom of the panel." However, these measurements are arbitrary since the center paper (masking paper) is not the same dimensions as the factory center paper. Since there isn't a straight line to use as a reference point, anyplace near, we installed this decal in position. The finished decal is seen in the next photo.



According to the decal, the fender decal is to be placed 32 inches to the fender crease, which was marked with masking tape. It provides a guideline and it should be three inches from the rear fender edge. They placed the decal as shown. Notice that the "T" almost wraps into the fender-crest.



Make certain the decal is on the fender, which looked much better. Here we see the rear position during the application step, after the area was coated with the water-based adhesive. The decal was applied and



The fender decal application completed.



As the car, the factory diagram recommended that the decal be placed 20 inches from the bottom of the spoiler and with the centerline of the rear splitting it and 14 in "TRANS-AM" the set up the decal to measure 17.5 inches from the end of the spoiler to the T and the 31 in each side. The height from the bottom of the spoiler was four to 20-inch because anything higher made the top of the letters come into the curve of the spoiler, which may be correct but did not look as good. It just so happened the masking paper measured 20 inches across. The bottom as it was applied a guide. The decal was installed using the water-based method as described last time.

About Phoenix Graphics

Though Phoenix Graphics has expanded over the years to offer complete decal sets for many different vehicles, it all started with Team Aves and the original "head" logo for the company that started in 1985 in 1987. The company is based in the T&A decal area and Phoenix Graphics is currently the largest manufacturer of licensed GM Performance Parts decal. Since then Phoenix has done into Honda's as of his life and currently owns a 1987 Team Aves '87 and a 1995 30th Anniversary Team Aves. The mission statement has been to "provide individuals with quality products that not enhance their "showroom" or hot rods by having any large production orders to create lower per unit costs for the customer." After using the company's products, we can recommend them highly.



For the Portac-decal on the lower-right of the grill guide, the factory measurement is 1.12 from the edge of the grille with no adjustment for the location of the letters in the bottom of the grille. We decided to use the masking paper as the guide, so we trimmed the right side to get 1.02 (cut excess paper on the bottom to get .25-inch excess paper to match the center decal). The decal was then applied to the wanted area with the edge of the masking paper tacked to the right edge and bottom edge of the grille. It was then sponged as the others had been.



Once dry, the masking paper is removed by peeling away from the decal at a 180° angle. Portac was steady if the decal began to lift; stop immediately and gently press it back into place with the sponge.



Here is the completed rear quarter decal.



Here are the factory measurements for the OEM decal placement.

SOURCES

CLASSIC REPAIRS/PRO

225 Orange Turnpike
Smyrna, GA 30081
800-752-0201

JEFFREY WOOD AUTO GLASS

221 Maplebrook Rd.
Tomball, TX 77380
881-281-9430

PHOTO GRAPHIC

1508 West South St.
Suite 410
Tempe, AZ 85283
www.photographic.com
800-881-8888

Special thanks is extended to all of the companies that contributed parts and services throughout this project and who continue to faithfully serve the Portac hobby.

JM

Visit your local JM Dealer

AUTO BODY SPECIALTIES

PO Box 400-96, 88
Maplewood, CT 06407
860-248-8888

PPG INDUSTRIES

1900 Progress Dr.
Birmingham, TN 38403
215-612-2800

PERFORMANCE YEARS

2880 Bayou Rd.
Houston, TX 77060
281-753-5600

AUTOMOTIVE LABORATORIES

PO Box 1000
Mantoloking, NJ 07020
800-841-8175

FINLEY STANGERS

PO Box 5548
Guthrie, PA 17033
717-237-2700

TEAM ONE

PO Box 128
Tucker, GA 30084
800-950-8800