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STICKER SHOCK

Follow along as we install the Big Kahuna of musclecar decals — a Trans Am hood bird

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFFERSON BRYANT

WHEN IT COMES TO SPECIAL EDITION CARS, THE DECALS AND BADGES ARE THE CRUCIAL EYE CANDY. NOWHERE IS THIS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WITH THE PERFORMANCE CARS OF THE 1970s, SUCH AS THE VARIOUS INDIANAPOLIS AND DAYTONA RACE CARS. THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY FEBBIE TRANS-AM DAYTONA 500 RACE CAR HAS MORE DECALS THAN YOU CAN SHAKE A SQUEEGEE AT. GET ONE WRONG DURING A RESTORATION, AND YOU HAVE A PROBLEM.

There are some tricks to applying automotive decals that make the process go a lot smoother. Above all, have at least one helper around. The larger

decals require multiple sets of hands — they cannot be applied correctly just by yourself. Use lots of soapy water; the water provides a barrier between the adhesive

and the car. This allows the decal to be repositioned and tweaked. Keep spraying the decal, especially the large ones; they require a lot of work. Once the decal is in the appropriate position, a good quality squeegee is important. A cheap squeegee can scratch or tear a decal, which would be a costly mistake, as a quality-decal kit can run \$500 or more.

Don't let that scare you, though. With some help and the right tools, most anybody can install decals.



1 The 100th Anniversary Ford Focus is the only F&A that has a two-tone paint scheme. The unique part is that the hood bird covers the transition edges.

2 The first step is wiping the hood with alcohol. The alcohol cleans the surface and leaves no residue, which is important for the adhesive to stick.

3 A Phoenix Graphics decal was used on this car. It comes pre-cut to align the bird with the shaker hole. While it is close, it isn't perfect.

4 We followed along with the installation at Postline Auto Sports. They suggest marking the decal in several places to help keep everything aligned during the application. The staple mark comes right off of the paint with a little soap and water.

5 The crew at Postline sprayed the hood down with a generous helping of soapy water. The more the better, as the adhesive dries quickly, and the decal will have to be moved around to get it properly placed.

6 As the backing is pulled off, we sprayed down the underside of the bird with soapy water.



7 We laid the bird on the hood, and removed the entire backing. It is the only way to ensure no rips, stretch marks or wrinkles are created while the backing comes off. As always, the decal is sprayed constantly with soapy water.

8 Normally, flipping the bird is a one-handed process, but this one takes eight. Take extreme care to ensure no part of the decal touches itself.

9 With the decal in place and adjusted, the squeegees are used to move the water out from under the decal.

10 With such a large decal, several hands are needed. Working slowly and attentively, the Redline crew keeps the wrinkles away and bubbles out.

11 The edges of the feathers wrap around the hood. Cleaning the edge is important.

12 Again, the squeegee works out the bubbles.







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13 With most of the bubbles worked out, the top paper is removed, and the water is wiped away.

14 The paper hides a few bubbles, so continuing to work the decal is important, albeit more carefully.

15 Working the water together to form a larger bubble will work out easier than a bunch of smaller bubbles.

16 The fender leathers must match up to the hood leathers precisely to be accurate.

17 The completed hood bird fits perfectly.

18 The pace car signage on the doors must be centered perfectly. The door is measured and a mark placed at dead center.

19 The "Daytona 500" decal is placed correctly on the center of the body line.

20 The pace car decal is centered above the Daytona decal to the appropriate dimensions.





21 The race date completes the door signage application.

22 The doors are finished off with a set of red and black stripes. The backing is only peeled off a few inches ahead of the actual placement on the door.

23 The completed Trans Am in all its glory. A little more complicated than decorating your grade school notebook, but the Phoenix Graphix kit looks great. ■

SOURCES

PHOENIX GRAPHIX

400 S. 79th St.
Chandler, AZ 85226
(800) 941-4550
Local: (480) 941-4550
www.phoenixgraphix.com

REDLINE AUTO SPORTS

W'born, Oklahoma
(866) 213-1576
www.redlinemusclecars.com