



AS TAXIDERMISTS, WE ARE ALL STRIVING to make our work stand out in front of our competitors' work with accurate anatomy, finishing, and composition. Our work needs to have realistic groundwork to elevate the standard of our mounts.

This article is to show you a few techniques I use when molding and casting large impressive rocks. These are the rocks we all see with large cracks, shaped edges, and uneven voids.

The rock I chose was 25" high, 18" wide, and 16" deep. The rock you choose should have multi angles and levels. Molds are not cheap to make so the more variations you can get from one rock mold the better. (These rocks are harder to find than you think.)

1. Full Rock Table Mount
2. Half Rock Table Mount
3. Half Rock Landscape
4. Half Rock Wall Mount

MOLDING & CASTING

The rock was placed at a good working height with ample working room around the rock. All the loose soil and moss were cleaned off with a soft brush. Using a toothbrush, I worked around the rock cleaning out all the small cracks and fine details.



5. Silicone rubber was brushed over the rock, working it into the cracks and crevices. Once it fully covered the rock, I used a hair dryer set on a cool-fast blow setting and moved slowly over the rock. This removed any air bubbles trapped in the cracks and details of the rock.



6. Once the first coat was fully cured, thixotropic additive was added to the second coat, which thickened the silicone so it became spreadable. A good coat was worked over the rock, mixed in small amounts to give me more working time.

To extend the life of the mold, I built an air valve into the silicone mold, which was used to blow air into the mold to help release the casts without putting too much stress onto the silicone mold.

7ab. I use the valve from an old inner tube to make a mold valve. First, remove the valve from the



tube. (The rest of the inner tube can be cut into strips for reinforcing strips. Cutting across the tube makes large and very strong rubber bands which come in handy for strapping together small molds.)

8. Wash the valve and cut around the edges so it will follow the shape of the rock.



9. Cut a small X through the silicone mold down to the rock beneath. This was done at the top of the rock, but can also be done on an edge of the mold.



10. Glue the valve to the rock using silicone. Make sure the valve is over the X.



11. Apply silicone over the valve to secure it to the mold. A final coat of thick silicone was worked over the rock. On a rock this size I want a good 1/4" (5mm) layer of silicone over it at this stage.

The next problem was that the rock had several voids which needed to be filled to create a smoother rounded shape and to make a more simple backing jacket.



12. Using a wire brush, I scraped apart a piece of polystyrene packaging to use as a filler. This was perfect as it was bulky and flexible.

13. I added the polystyrene to a small amount of silicone, mixed it in well to produce a putty-like filler.



14. This photo shows the large voids filled in with the filler. Once fully cured, a final coat of silicone was worked over the rock, bringing the final thickness of the silicone to 3/8" (8mm).





15. Once the rock was covered in the final coat of silicone, I generously coated it with talcum powder and smoothed it by hand.



16. When the silicone was fully cured, all the talcum powder was removed and any unwanted silicone was trimmed from the edges of the mold. Now I drew a line over the mold to use as a guide to follow when making a backing jacket.



17. For making a backing jacket, I tried out a plastic paste, a new material to me. There are many on the market, and the one I used is a Smooth-On product called Plasti-Paste. It's a two-part product that is clean, very easy to use, and has a fast setting time of around 8 minutes.



*Forms sculpted by
Jet Smith and Allen Palermo*



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MOLDING & CASTING



18. As I worked the plastic paste over the rock, I used playing cards as separators between the two halves of the jacket.



19. The area around the valve can be very loose as the strength of the valve will support the mold.



20. I used 5 kilograms of Plasti-Paste on this backing jacket, but ran out when I got to the flanges, so these were built up with a little Bondo just for extra strength. The flanges were drilled to take small bolts before releasing from the mold. Then the playing cards were removed.



21.

21. I now connected a foot air pump to the valve, and pumped just a small amount of air into the mold to help release the silicone.



22-23. The rock was removed and the silicone mold placed into the backing jacket and bolted together. I drilled screws around the opening into the jacket to be used as anchors. Thin wires were pushed into the silicone mold around the edge, then bent over and wrapped around the screws in the jacket.

The resin mix I used was the same one I used in my previous article in *BREAKTHROUGH* (see Issue #84, page 77, "Competition Base Work with a Difference"). The mixture was worked into the mold, pushing the resin into the details, but not trapping any air in the mold. Once fully cured, a second coat of the same resin mixture was worked over the first, producing a thickness of about ¼" (5mm). Then I layered the casting with 2 ounces of fiberglass matting. The casting now should have a thickness of around ⅜" (8mm) of resin.

Once fully cured, the casting was removed from the mold using the same techniques as removing it from the original rock. This was finished the same way as the gargoye was in my article in Issue 84.



24. Here is a closeup of the cast rock details.



25.

25. This photo shows the artificial rock, straight from the mold with no finishing work done, next to the real rock.



26-27. The cast rock was given a base colour. I

did this with thinned wood stain, giving one complete coat, working the stain into the cracks and details of the casting. This dried quickly. I then gently rubbed over the casting with steel wool just to highlight areas which stood proud. I used several coats of an oil-paint wash to get the correct finish. ■

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