

**How to Create Your Own
Alien Fossil Mouse**

Workbench
Learning
Guide

What's Inside:

- **Introduction**
- **Tools & Supplies**
- **Preparing the IBM Mouse**
- **Selecting Parts**
- **Assembly**
- **Painting & Finishing**

Instructions for Playing Your Super Video CD:

This compact disc was created using the SVCD video standard. An SVCD can be played on many standalone DVD players and of course, on all computers with a DVD-ROM or CD-ROM drive with the help of a software based player such as Intervideo's WinDVD® or CyberLink's PowerDVD®.

Simply place the CD into your CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive and open the appropriate software based player. Your video should start playing. If you have more than one drive (such as a DVD and CD-ROM drive) make sure the drive that contains the Instructional Video is set as the default drive in the player's options menu.

For standalone players, make sure that your make and model support viewing of SVCD titles. Compatible standalone players usually have an SVCD "badge" on the front of the player. Refer to the instruction manual to be sure.

**Free Software DVD Player Demos:
www.gpcyberlink.com - Power DVD
www.intervideo.com - WinDVD**

Notes & Ideas

addition to your PC Mod showcase. We hope to be bringing you more PC Mod Instructional Videos in the future. Your suggestions for subject and content are always appreciated and will be taken into consideration

Let us know what kind of projects you'd like instruction on by e-mailing us at videosupport@aol.com. You can also use this address for sending us pictures of your completed Alien Fossil Mouse mods. We'll be sure to post them up on the website!

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Introduction

A Brief History of "Kitbashing"

Believe it or not, there was a time when special effects model makers relied on some plastic parts, a little glue and a lot of imagination to create the intricate miniature props used for such movies as Star Wars and Alien

These model makers relied on a technique known as "kitbashing" where they used parts from many different model kits found in their local hobby store to create completely unique spacecraft, weapons and other props used in the film. For instance the unfinished Death Star in Star Wars was made almost entirely from the parts found in military model kits.

The Alien Fossil Mouse

For the Alien Fossil Mouse, I found the parts from a human skeleton model kit perfect for creating the illusion of a fossilized alien creature. Some say the mouse looks like a 300 million year old trilobite! You can scrounge interesting parts for PC Mods from just about anything. That old broken boom box in the closet, a VCR that eats tapes, or your little brother's forgotten toys. I would ask first about the toys though.

There is no limit to the PC Mods you can make using the kitbashing technique. You can use these methods on your case, keyboard, speakers and mouse..or anything that calls for a bit of personalized modification.

Have some fun! Watch the video and let your imagination take shape into an awesome PC Mod.

-Paul C.
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Tools & Supplies

- **IBM Optical Scroll Mouse (or similar)**
- **SkillCraft Human Skeleton Kit**
- **Rotary Tool such as a Dremel® (you can do without)**
- **Hobby or craft Knife with a sharp blade**
- **Plastic Auto Body Filler (Bondo, etc.)**
- **Small Putty Knife (We'll show you how to make one)**
- **Medium or Fine Sandpaper**
- **Small Phillips Screwdriver**
- **Super Glue (Zap! Brand or similar)**
- **Super Glue Kicker (Optional, dries the glue instantly)**
- **Masking Tape**
- **Small, Flat Hobby Paintbrush**
- **Enamel Hobby Paints (Testors brand is great)**
- **Clear Acrylic Spray Paint**

NOTE: You can substitute the SkillCraft Human Skeleton kit with either the Visible Woman or Visible Man model kits depending on what you can find at your local hobby store or online. At the time of printing www.hobbyplace.com had these kits available.

Most of the model making supplies we use are purchased from various online websites. Brick and Mortar hobby stores are fast becoming extinct, but supplies are easily found on the web. The websites we currently list are suggestions, and we take no advertising dollars from these folks.

As you can see, the brush is just barely touching the surface, and hitting the raised detail without covering the black primer.

This painting technique is called "Dry Brushing". Professional model builders use this method to bring out the fine details they've worked so hard to achieve during the assembly process. Remember, you can always start over and paint the mouse again with black primer.

Once you are satisfied with the darker colors you applied, we're going to use an acrylic white paint to raise the very subtle details on the surface. We use acrylic for the final dry brushing because it doesn't react with the enamel paints and become muddy.

Now is when you work with as little paint as possible on the brush, and very lightly scrub in a circular motion to hit the very highest detail on the surface. Practice a bit to get the hang of it. Too much paint and you'll cover the work you just did, and too little paint will not bring out the highlights.

If you apply too much white, just go back and mix up some dark colors and start over. As we finish up the painting you can clearly see the awesome detail this technique gives the surface of the mouse.

When the dry brushing is complete and you're satisfied with the paint finish, use two coats of a flat or semi-gloss clear acrylic spray paint as a sealer. Mask off the bottom of the mouse before you do this to protect the optical sensor.

When the sealer coats are dry (about 4 hours!) your awesome alien fossil mouse is ready to use and showoff. It would be a good idea to take the masking tape off first. ☺

That just about wraps up this PC Mod project. With a little time and patience, your Alien Fossil Mouse will be a kick ass

Enamel Paints: Testors Brand

- Metalizer Gunmetal
- Flat White
- Military Brown

Acrylic Paints: Any Brand

- Flat White

Primer: Krylon

- Ultra Flat Black

Sealer Paint: Krylon

- Clear Acrylic Spray

The first step in paint finishing is to use some tape to mask off the scroll wheel and the cable. Then, give a good coat of flat black spray paint as a primer. Black paint is needed here...don't use gray!

Blend metallic gray with a little white and add some highlights to the mouse with a medium sized flat paint brush. Always start out with the darkest colors first, and work your way to the lightest. Don't cover the black primer completely, or we'll lose the overall sense of depth we want to achieve.

Next, clean your brush with some paint thinner. Then mix a dark brown with a little white to make a coppery color. Work with your brush a little drier than before. Use some scrap paper to remove most of the paint from the brush before applying it to the mouse.

We're using enamel paint for the darker colors because they dry slower, and give you better control over the paint flow than acrylics.

Preparing the IBM Scroll Mouse

The first step in our project is to prepare the mouse for modification. Remove the screw on the bottom with a small Phillips screwdriver and store it in a safe place for later.

Remove the upper half of the mouse from the bottom half, and be careful not to break the plastic tabs inside that hold the mouse together. A little wiggling of the two halves usually does the trick. Resist the urge to poke around the circuit board inside. ☺

Next, lightly sand the top half of the mouse with medium grit sandpaper to allow better adhesion of the mod parts we're going to use later on. This creates what's known as "tooth"...something for the glue to bite onto.

On the inside of the top half, you'll notice small tabs located on both ends of the mouse. These become guides for transferring a center line to the outside.

Make a "tick" (a small dash) mark with a Sharpie pen. Then connect the tick marks with masking tape and use the tape edge as a guide for drawing a line along the center of the mouse. This line will help us in having an even composition when we glue the mod parts on later.

Wipe the top half of the mouse with a damp paper towel to remove the sanding dust.

Selecting Parts from the Model Kit

The Skilcraft® Human Skeleton kit has lots of great parts to use for this project. Take your time to explore the possibilities, and remember that your imagination is the single most important part of any PC Mod.

Don't be afraid to experiment and use different parts than the ones we show here.

The shoulder blades and pelvis are perfect for the mouse buttons. Just make sure whatever parts you select will feel comfortable under your fingers. The ribcage fits perfectly over the top half of the mouse. The spinal column is another excellent part to use. It's all up to you

Once you've selected the parts, it's time to put it all together.

Assembly

First we'll take the ribcage and position it on the top half of the mouse using the line we made earlier as a center guide. Professional model makers use superglue for fast and permanent bonds on most plastics (except plastics like milk containers...that's called high density polyethylene, or HDPE, and no glue is good for that stuff).

Using a super glue accelerator (known as "Zip Kicker", or just plain Kicker) helps to speed up the drying process.

When using an accelerator make sure you have proper ventilation. That stuff is nasty, but it's a must for gluing sometimes. One trick I learned is to spray the parts before you glue them on. Be very careful because it's hard to reposition parts once the super glue dries.

Make sure all the ribs are firmly glued to the body of the

filler when it was applied. To complete the top half of the mouse, grind and sand away any excess plastic parts and filler that might be hanging off the edges

Now it's time to add some texture to the bottom half of the mouse and blend it in with the upper half.

Use a sanding drum or sandpaper to scar and slightly gouge the plastic. This allows better adhesion of the filler. Remember the "tooth" thing?

Apply the filler in the same method we used earlier, leaving lots of bumps and valleys to create texture. You can either work with the two halves of the mouse together, or you can mask the circuit board and sensitive parts inside with some tape and work with the mouse apart.

If you work with the two halves together, use a blade to carefully cut along the seam of the mouse. Be sure to do this in stage two of the curing process, before the filler completely hardens.

If the filler becomes loose or peels away from the mouse, use a few drops of super glue to bond it back in place. This actually happened to me when I was making the video. I cut that part out. 😊

We're just about ready for painting. Lightly sand the bottom half, then use some canned air to clean the inside and outside of the mouse

When you are done sanding, carefully reassemble the mouse. Don't forget to put the small screw back on the bottom

Painting & Finishing

Let's give you the list of paints that were used when I made the mouse shown in the video.

cover the empty areas. Work slowly and patiently, and give yourself a break if it becomes too tedious. Have a sandwich, watch an old episode of X-Files.

There are three basic stages that the filler goes through after it's mixed properly. The first stage has the consistency of frosting, allowing you to fill gaps and spaces easily, and lasts about 5 minutes. In the second stage it becomes stiff and rubbery. This is a good time to use a blade to cut and shave any excess from the piece, and lasts about 3-5 minutes. In the final stage, the filler becomes hard and is easily sanded, drilled and shaped with a rotary tool.

Once the top half of the mouse has been textured, repeat the same procedure for the left and right mouse buttons. Fill in the gaps and blend the edges into the buttons.

Before the filler completely hardens, use the edge of your blade to carefully scrape and shave any excess from the areas where the mouse buttons and lower half fit back into place.

When the filler has hardened, (stage two) take some fine paper and begin to sand and blend in the surfaces we textured. As you sand lightly, you'll notice all the detail begin to pop out.

Now you can sand the mouse buttons, and once again remove any excess filler that might get in the way and prevent the buttons from working properly.

It's a good idea to check the fit of the buttons by installing them back onto the mouse. The buttons should have a slight spring to them. If they get stuck or feel stiff, check to see if any filler is in the way.

With a small grinding attachment, you can easily shape the filler once it hardens. Grinding between the ribs is a good way of raising detail that might have been covered up by the

mouse before proceeding.

Hint: Try not to use too much glue, or you'll wind up bonding your fingers to the project. In that case, a little nail polish remover will do the trick. Super glue is very strong. All you need is a few drops. You can always pour out some super glue on a scrap paper and use a toothpick to apply it.

With your Dremel fitted with a cut-off disk, trim the excess ribs that hang from the edge of the mouse. You should run the Dremel at low speeds, so you have better control over the cutting. You don't need to have the tool running at light speed to cut. Model kit plastic is pretty soft.

Follow the contour of the mouse as closely as you can. We'll clean off the rest later by hand using a hobby knife.

After you've trimmed all the ribs, it's a good idea to check the fit by placing the two halves of the mouse together.

Next, lightly sand the ribs and the edges of the mouse. This helps blend in the ribs where it meets the edges and gives a more organic look.

Now we're going to attach one half of the spinal column to the mouse. This adds a great raised detail effect. If you want you can skip this step and apply any parts from the model kit you find interesting.

With your Cut-off disk, remove the bottom part of the spine where the pelvis would normally go.

Glue the bottom of the spine onto the mouse as shown in the video. Use a little extra glue here because we're going to heat-bend the spine and we need a strong bond to do this.

With a small candle we're going to heat up and soften the spine so we can curve it to fit the shape of our mouse.

Hold the candle just below the spine, but not close enough to burn it. Apply a bit of pressure while moving the flame along the piece. Soon it will begin to soften and take the shape of the mouse. Please don't burn your fingers with molten wax.

This technique really isn't as hard as it looks. If you work slowly, carefully and have a bit of patience you'll be rewarded with some awesome detail.

Next we added a small detail piece (the coccyx..no I didn't want to say that word in the video for some reason) near the opening for the scroll wheel. Before we do that, mark and trim the spine so we get a better fit. Use whatever pieces and parts you like, keeping in mind an overall sense of composition and alignment.

With a sanding drum and a rotary tool, soften up any sharp edges to blend in the detail pieces and to give an overall smooth look.

Polystyrene plastic, most commonly used in model kits can be sanded and shaped quite easily at slow speeds.

Take a moment to review your work before moving on to the next steps. Here you can add parts or remove the parts you aren't satisfied with.

Now we're going to attach the mod parts to the mouse buttons. Figure out how you want the parts to be positioned on the buttons. Remember that you still want the mouse to be as comfortable in your hand as possible.

Use the sanding drum to trim and fit the parts as needed. You want to add detail to the buttons, however they still need to function properly.

Use only a small amount of glue in case you have to reposition the parts on the buttons.

Now you can do any final trimming and sanding of the button parts. Test them out and make sure they work properly before moving on. Get a cup of coffee, have a donut.

The next step is to use an auto body filler (a brand name like Bondo works well) as a modeling paste to fill in the empty areas between our skeleton pieces. This simple technique creates a highly textured surface and once painted, brings out a good deal of detail.

It's easy to make your own putty knife or applicator by heating the end of a piece of scrap plastic or sprue (Sprue is the tubular pieces that model parts hang off from in the kit). Once the plastic is soft, simply flatten it with the handle of a hobby knife.

Before we apply the modeling paste, carefully remove the buttons from the mouse. Inside you'll find small release tabs. Just lift these up gently and the buttons will come right off. You can also cover the mouse buttons with masking tape if taking the buttons off makes you nervous. ☺

Auto body filler works in a two part chemical process. One part is the filler, and the other a curing agent (usually a small tube of red or white). If you add too much curing agent, the material will become ridged too fast. Not enough of the agent and it may take too long. If you want, experiment first until you get the hang of mixing it.

After mixing a small batch begin filling in the empty areas. Spread the body filler on like frosting leaving lots of swirls and bumps to add detail. When we sand it later, even more detail will be revealed.

If it gets too messy, simply wipe the excess away with your finger. I find that it's the best tool sometimes. Just don't stick it in your mouth later. Or your ear.

It's going to take a few batches of body filler to completely