



MAXIPAD

Adding extra gauges that look OEM installed.



1. Looks like a near-stock setup, right? But wait! How'd those three extra gauges get there, looking like a factory installation?

**Story and photos by
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You must remember – it was only * issues ago – when we installed our new Rocky Mountain Dashes instrument cluster, chock full of AutoMeter gauges, in our famous '69 Valiant, aptly named The Green Brick. This was really our *only* choice, since, by modern standards, the Brick was – how shall we say? – instrumentally challenged. But, a great number of muscle Mopars came with instruments that were truly superb. At or near the top of this exalted heap would have to be the rallye cluster on 1968-'70 B-bod-



2. Here's how: Just Dashes makes this super-cool replacement crash pad, which we've dubbed Maxipad, with three beautifully styled gauge openings neatly growing out of it. Note that, for obvious reasons, J.D. bases the Maxipad on the thicker-face "Plymouth" version of the stock pad, which will, however, bolt right onto any 1968-'70 B-body, from a 4-Dr. '68 Belvedere, thru a '69 Daytona, up to a '70 Charger R/T, and all permutations contained in this group. But how do you install it?

ies. Especially with the Tic-Toc-Tach option, what more could you want? After all, seven clear white-on-black gauges, in an era when most GM cars had two, was freakin' awesome.

Still, time marches on, and our lust for information moves in lockstep. Megadollar engines, trick carbs or SMPI packages, etc., require that the driver, who, in many cases is also the car's tuner, be well informed.



3. To a large extent, it bolts in like stock. Logical, because J.D. uses stock original substrates (the metal frame) and, therefore, the stock mounting studs are in the stock location. Stock it to me, baby.



4. Three standard 2-1/16" gauges, of any brand or type you lust after, slide right into the gauge holes, held firmly in place by friction.



5. The old pad comes right out. Right. Make that, it comes right out after you remove the mounting nuts, which are buried deep in the bowels of the dash structure. Access isn't easy; begin by removing the glove box.

EGT, fuel pressure, A/F ratio, vacuum – the parameters we'd like to monitor are myriad. What we at Mopar Action, clearly being amongst the information junkie set, have usually done is to hang a simple auxiliary gauge panel beneath the dash. In many cases, this was done a bit more neatly by utilizing the area formerly occupied by the ashtray. (Of course, if you're addicted to nicotine sticks...) The rice boys frequently use auxiliary gauge pods on their A-pillars, which, in truth, is really a pretty cool idea,



6. Both A-pillar trim panels (c) must be removed, along with the windshield header trim panel (b). It's just a few Philips screws. You'll also need to remove at least the front screw from the roof rail inside trim panel (a) because it traps the A-pillar trim panel.

but for our Mopar geriatric set, it puts the gauges clearly (blurrily?) in the "reading glasses needed" range. What's a Mo'gal or Mo'guy to do? No way are you gonna toss your cool, classic panel, right?

This question must have burned deeply

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7. You'll also need to lower the steering column to remove the entire stock cluster. Try not to grimace while doing this. Also drop the heater control panel (but do not disconnect it.) Again, all of these shenanigans is required just to get to...



8. ...the 3/8" hex Palnuts that retain the dash pad. You'll need a 3/8", deep-well, 1/4" drive socket and a few extensions. Or a trained rat.



9. Out it comes!



10. Before installing the Maxipad, we wired up and bench-tested everything. OK, you can see the truth; why lie? This is Mopar Action, not "Dream Car Garage". It was a rag-on-the-floor test.



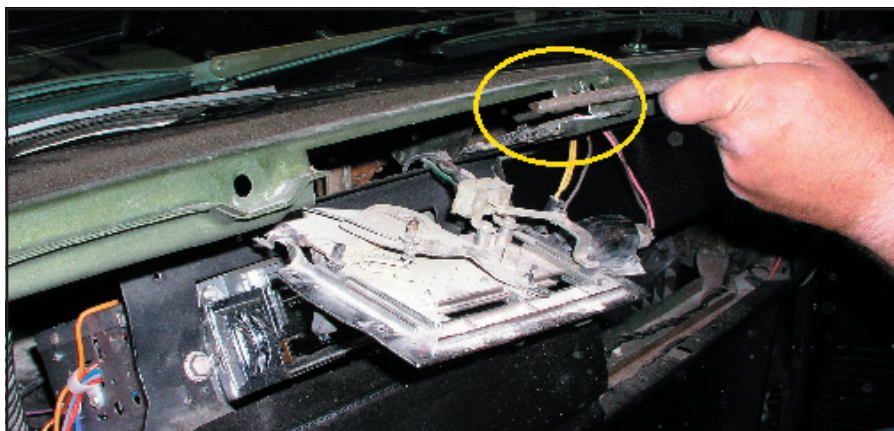
11. Next up was a trial fitting, where we discovered...



...that the wiring and tubing for the right-hand gauge wanted to occupy the same space as the portion of the dash's pinchweld just to the right of the (stock) rectangular opening. What to do?



13. Using the Lorena Bobbit method, we just cut it off – and we didn't even save the cutting!



14. After now effectively widening the cutout by about an inch, we smoothed the edges with a small file. Then we covered the scar with vinyl tape to prevent chafing.

in the vinyl junkies over at Just Dashes. In a stroke of brilliance, they came up with an answer that keeps everybody happy: A replacement dash pad that allows three standard 2-1/16" gauges of your choice to be installed easily and readable, at an ideal distance and level, while making virtually no major modifications to your classic Mopar. Yeah, you know already – we're gonna install

one and report, blow-by-blow, all the details, totally devoid of any candy coating.

After reading this, owners of other that '68-'70 B-bodies are gonna feel left out, and rightfully so. Just Dashes' contact information is provided, however, and we'll bet that a massive letter, e-mail, and phone call campaign will bring forth the desired results: Similar maxipads for a wide range of Mopars.



15. *With the Maxipad again trial fitted, we notice another possible problem: The heater controls' moving studs tended to snag on the new gauge wiring*



16. *Some super-strong duct tape was all that was needed to fix that problem, securing the wiring up to the bottom of the new Maxipad.*



17. *Hook up the gauges per the manufacturer's instructions, and install any senders required (here, a fuel pressure transducer is going in). Remember that lighting wiring should be connected to a stock orange variable-voltage (i.e., dimmable) wire on the stock cluster. Now simply reverse steps 92 thru 1 to bolt it all back together, and enjoy your new information sources. And the enviable glances the super-cool appearances will provide.*

SOURCES:

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