

in association with LaSalle Trim



KEEPING YOUR HEAD



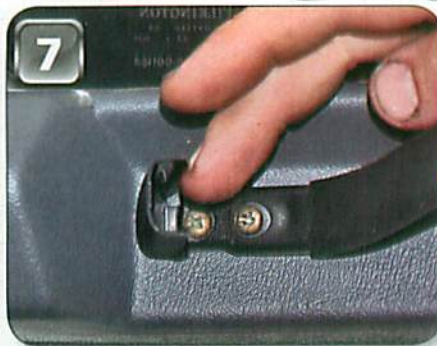
"Wrap your ass in Fiberglass" said the Yanks about the early Corvette. Well, now Land Rover owners can wrap their heads in it, too.

I RECKON the Spanish company Santaña had the right idea when their version of the Land Rover was fitted with a GRP hardtop. Among other things, it provided better insulation – much better insulation, in fact – as well as a headliner that was extremely difficult to damage, instead of being all-too-easy to damage, as in the case of headliners in UK Land Rovers.

Here, we show how to fit a LaSalle fibreglass headliner to my 110 'project' Station Wagon, DiXie. LaSalle also produce headliners for: Series II and Series III – SWB,

LWB, Safari, Truck Cab; Defender 90 – Station Wagon, Truck Cab; Defender 110 – Truck Cab, Double Cab; Defender 130 – Truck Cab, Double Cab as well as Range Rover – Classic. Also, they make: a huge array of trim sections, so their website is worth a look.

PICTURE 1 There are so many variations, even within Defenders, that Andrew Lloyd at LaSalle Trim is to be commended for the range available. Here and in the main picture you can see that this is a 110 headliner but with the speaker pod options and Alpine light inserts.



PICTURE 2 You don't need a huge range of tools but I would go against LaSalle's recommendations and suggest using a power jigsaw for making cut-outs in the fibreglass, where necessary. LaSalle don't recommend using the jigsaw for a very important reason: fibreglass (GRP) dust can be extremely harmful if breathed in.

PICTURE 3 Whenever drilling or cutting GRP, and especially whenever using power tools, you must ALWAYS wear an efficient particle mask such as this one from Würth. The reason is because GRP contains strands of glass which, when powdered by machining, turn into microscopic flakes of silica which

could cause terminal lung damage.

PICTURE 4 Another tool you can't do without is a purpose-made trim removal tool.

PICTURE 5 The B-post trim is also held in place by the upper seat belt mounting.

PICTURE 6 You can't remove this long, horizontal piece of Station Wagon trim without first at least slackening the B-post trim while, to remove the grab handle, you first have to flip up the covers...

PICTURE 7 ...before removing the two screws from each end.

PICTURE 8 This allows the horizontal trim to be lifted away.

PICTURE 9 Above the rear door, the trim removal tool is again pressed into service...

PICTURE 10 ...to release the trim clips holding the flat trim panel in place. Note that the interior light (arrowed) and the mounting plate behind it also have to be removed.

PICTURE 11 In order to remove the old headlining, lots more trim clips have to be popped out. You have to jiggle the tool carefully behind the trim clip if you need to preserve the headlining fabric.

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→ **PICTURE 12** You'll find that the centre section needs to be removed first on this model of Defender because it overlaps both the front and rear sections.

PICTURE 13 Mechanic Dave lowered it down onto the back seats and we then manoeuvred it out through the rear door. It's light but awkward.

PICTURE 14 If you need to, in order to clear internal fixtures and fittings, standard headlining can be bent quite a long way without causing any damage. This section was partially folded so that it could be...

PICTURE 15 ...lowered into position for passing out through the rear door. Note that

the interior light has been left connected to the wiring. If you intend refitting the interior light in its original position, you will need to cut a suitable hole in the LaSalle GRP headlining – but that all comes later.

PICTURE 16 At the front end, the interior light was, once again, removed as was its metal backing plate. Be sure to disconnect the battery before getting this far, or to insulate electrical terminals as you disconnect them so that you can't cause an electrical short.

PICTURE 17 The Defender rear view mirror is removed by twisting anti-clockwise. The mounting plate from behind it also has to be unscrewed...



PICTURE 18 ...as do the sun visors, each one fixed to the top of the windscreen surround with two screws.

PICTURE 19 After popping out a few trim clips down each side of the headlining...

PICTURE 20 ...Dave lowered the front section down, out and away.

PICTURE 21 And so, in no time at all, the old headlining was removed. At this stage, you may need to look at the positioning of the fixed wiring that goes behind the headliner because, whereas the original one is largely made of fabric and has a greater flexibility built into it, the LaSalle headliner is rigid and, in places, push is tight against the ribs on



TOP TIP

If you think you might be adding lots of accessories in future, why not run a length of seven core trailer cable from one end of the roof to the other, routing it behind the new headlining, just above the top, horizontal right at one of the outer edges? It'll save a huge amount of time in future should you need to add front-to-back wiring runs.





the inside of the roof. You need to make sure that the wiring can pass unimpeded. There is plenty of space between the curved corners of the headliner and those of the roof and so we made sure that any original and extra wiring was run in that area.

PICTURE 22 Preparation time is seldom wasted but we spent longer than anticipated in getting everything ready before fitting the new headliner. In fact, I reckon it took a couple of days' work to get everything prepared. Which leads to the only criticism that I have of the LaSalle headliner: there are too few instructions and getting the Alpine light trim in the correct position is too hit-and-miss for comfort.



PICTURE 23 I decided that the only way of establishing where the Alpine light cut out should be made was to remove the glass from the vehicle and use the aperture to mark out the headliner.

PICTURE 24 However, that came later but it did mean that, while the glass was out, we could get on with the next stage which was to fit the optional insulation pads into position. These have to be measured and marked out, the superimposed grid on the surface of the reflective material making it easier to cut from one side in a straight line...

PICTURE 25 ...after which the insulation was folded back on itself and another cut made from the other side, through the white backing paper.

PICTURE 26 Fortunately, the insulation is fairly flexible and can be encouraged to



follow the shape of the roof. But first, here are some important points:

- Be sure to thoroughly clean off the surface of the roof with a suitable degreaser such as methylated spirit or panel wipe. White spirit and even cellulose thinners can leave an oily residue on the latter and could damage paintwork or trim inside your vehicle.
- When sticking down the curved section, start by only pulling off the backing paper from the section to go on the curved part of the roof and stick that bit down first, tucking the insulation right down into the bottom corner and pushing it into the curve as you go. Then, when all of the curve has been stuck down, reach behind, peel off the rest of the backing paper and stick down the rest of the insulation.





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→ **PICTURE 27** LaSalle provide plenty of insulation material and it's simple to use offcuts to fill-in where necessary.

PICTURE 28 The insulation is made from non-closed cell foam that is capable of absorbing moisture. That's because LaSalle have discovered that there will always be a small amount of condensation taking place and it's better to have it temporarily absorbed into the insulation, ready to be evaporated off later than to have it running down the inside of the headliner.

PICTURE 29 After a test fit, I discovered that there was a small gap between the top of the headliner and the insulation, that the headliner itself sounded slightly rattly when tapped and that wiring draped across the top of the headliner most certainly would make a rattling sound when the vehicle was driven. For all of those reasons, I decided to use some of the leftover insulation to soundproof and further insulate the tops of the GRP panels – and this seems to have worked perfectly.

PICTURE 30 Another aspect of preparation is the alteration I made to the sun visor fixings. Supplied with the kit is a screw and nut which



has the huge disadvantage that you won't be able to remove and refit the sun visor in future with the headliner in place. I drilled out the fixing holes and fitted rivet nuts so now, sun visor screws can be removed and refitted whenever required.

PICTURE 31 The radio aerial on my Defender has always been poor so I had a Eureka moment! Why not fit a roof-mounted aerial – and why not make it a shark's fin aerial at the same time? With no headlining in place, the job was a piece of cake.



PICTURE 32 After carefully measuring and drilling a pilot hole, a tank cutter was used to drill a larger hole in the ribbed beneath so that the fixing nut could be fitted – and the shark's fin aerial swam into view.

I know I made a criticism of the lack of instructions but that really is the only criticism I have of these headliners. The fit is extremely good for what is after all an aftermarket product and the quality of the finish is excellent, as well. Next month, we'll show how the headliner panels are actually fitted into place.

LRM



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