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A Work of Art

Sonoran Classic Restorations focuses on high-end jobs

By Octavio Serrano

Ed Clark has known one thing throughout his life—paint. He's been in the industry since he was 5 in Central Missouri.

"My dad had restoration shops growing up, so basically it's all I've ever done," Clark says. "I've never done anything else."

Clark turned his hobby into a profession when he opened Sonoran Classic Restorations, a shop that specializes in high-end body paint for any classic or late-model cars. Clark is meticulous on every project he receives, taking his time to make sure his customers get a quality paint job. He strives to be known as one of the best paint restoration shops in the Valley—maybe even the country.

For some people, the thought of spending 12 hours a day, getting their hands dirty working on a car may seem unappealing. But for Clark, the process is enjoyable because it allows him to wind down.

"Some people like to play golf to relax. I like to work on cars to relax," Clark says.

Longtime hobby

As a 5-year-old, Clark was inspired by '50s and '60s artwork. Today, he loves exotic European vehicles.

"Sometimes you just like to experience that different culture and I love those old European classics," Clark says. "They're specialized and

handcrafted. They're handmade."

He's been self-employed since 2006, but opened his own shop just last year. He is best known for full restorations, when he sands down the cars to its bare metal before coating it with paint.

"I'll strip the paint off, massage the metal until it's back where it should be and then start the process of fillers, primers and paints," Clark says. "I work through the whole process and I love to do it. It's not like I'm doing it to make money because it's what I like to do."

The process takes roughly six to eight weeks, depending on the type of car. Some people fail how arduous the process is.

"Every step is very time consuming and it's very labor intensive and the No. 1 thing is patience," Clark says.

Something as basic as getting the correct color match can become a difficult task in Clark's world.

"Any paint system is going to have 70 to 80 toners, which are

different colors that you have to mix to get what you want; like an artist using a palette," Clark says. "It takes three to four hours just to get the color to match but sometimes it takes me all day."

Clark says he is happy to be in the Airpark. He recognizes its potential as an automobile hub.

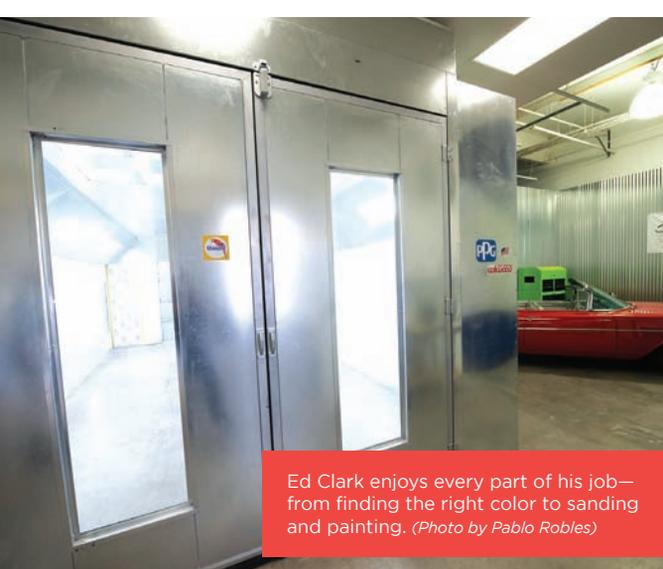
"This is an area of a lot of car enthusiasts, lots of car guys and shops around here," Clark says. "With the paint jobs I'm trying to do, this is where I need to be."



Ed Clark focuses on high-end paint jobs at Sonoran Classic Restorations. He enjoys working on exotic cars, collectors' vehicles, old classics and even luxury late-models. (Photo by Pablo Robles)



Ed Clark has been painting since he was a kid. Now he brings his skillset to the Airpark, where he hopes to work with the Valley's best cars. (Photo by Pablo Robles)



Ed Clark enjoys every part of his job—from finding the right color to sanding and painting. (Photo by Pablo Robles)

“I want people to trust me,” Clark says. “A lot of shops will string clients along, keep taking their money and infuriating the client. I don’t want to do that. I want to work one-on-one with my clients on two or three cars at a time and give them a good experience.”

A bulk of Clark’s customers are those who are restoring their own cars. They turn to Clark for the paint job because it must be done in a sealed, large room.

“A lot of people can put their cars back together in their garage because that’s what they like to do,” Clark says. “Now I can come in and do their paint and they can take a car back and finish putting it together.”

For Clark, there’s nothing better than working with customers who love their car. He enjoys watching their faces light up when they see their cars restored nearly to their original state.

“Almost all of my customers, these cars mean something to them,” Clark says. “It’s like their dad’s car and they’ve had it forever and they want it repainted and make it look new, so it’s so nice to deliver that car and see their reaction.”

There may be an abundance, but that doesn’t mean everyone does quality work. Clark says a shop like his was in demand.

“There’s a void here in the area of good paint shops,” Clark says. “This is a big deal because it (Sonoran Classic Restorations) is permitted by the city. It’s inspected and it’s all legal.”

In addition, Clark says many shops are guilty of taking in too many jobs at once, overloading their work schedule and keeping customers waiting for weeks. He stays away from that business model, as believes customers come first and developing trustworthy relationships with them is important.

Bucket list tasks

Clark would now like to compete in AutoRama and win an award for the country’s best paint shop.

“It’s called the Ridler Award and that’s the top award for paint in the country,” Clark says. “If you get that, you’re like the best. It’s like winning MVP in the Super Bowl. I would only like to get that just as a personal goal.”

Sonoran Classic Restoration is proof that a man’s dream job can become true. Putting customers’ needs first is just as important. From sanding to doing metal work to painting, Clark enjoys every single step of his job. There are never dull moments.

The joy for his work keeps customers returning and he is thankful for that.

“This gives me the chance to do what I really want to do,” Clark says. “This is my dream job, this is everything I ever wanted in Airpark. I really wouldn’t change a thing if I could.” ■

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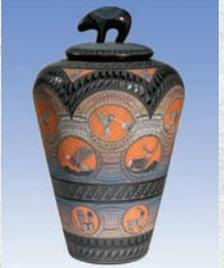
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