

An American Idol Shadowbox

By Jim Miller, MCPF, GCF

Framing memorabilia from an *American Idol* tour combined common shadowbox techniques with some unique touches

During the American Idols Live Tour of 2007, a customer of ours had an opportunity to have each of the singers autograph his microphone using a silver-metallic marker. He then brought his memorabilia from the event to us for framing. His preference was for an uncluttered, compact design featuring the microphone. Because the autographs of the contestants cover most of its surface area, he wanted to be able to take it out and handle it in order to see all the writing on it. All of the peripheral items were suitable for permanent mounting. However, since everything in the frame is collectible, preservation in the original condition was an important consideration. So all of the mounts are non-invasive and easily reversible. No adhesives touch any of the items, and all were mounted without changing their condition.

Frame Design

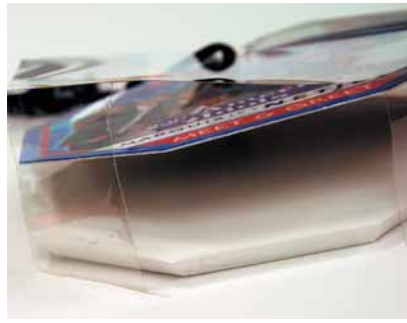
It would have been easier to create an open display without glazing, but that would have exposed these collectible items to harmful environmental conditions. The tickets and pin-backed badges were all event-specific items, not made for long-term durability. The metallic ink on the microphone would have been especially vulnerable to damage from light. I emphasized the importance of 99 percent UV-filtering, with optically coated glass selected for the project for the best visual presenta-



The American Idols Live Tour memorabilia was framed in a Slider shadowbox and included a microphone signed by all the performers, a ticket, buttons showing each performer, and a Meet & Greet pass and neck strap.



The holder is made for a microphone stand and has no provision for mounting to a board. Two clear film straps hold its base securely to the board, providing plenty of support for the heavy microphone.



This hexagonal piece was covered with clear film, including strips that pass through slots in the mounting board. A slightly undersized spacer of Art-Care foamboard elevates it above the mounting surface.



The 10 pin-backed badges were placed with equal spacing around the rectangular ticket. This required careful measuring and cutting of the slots for mounting.

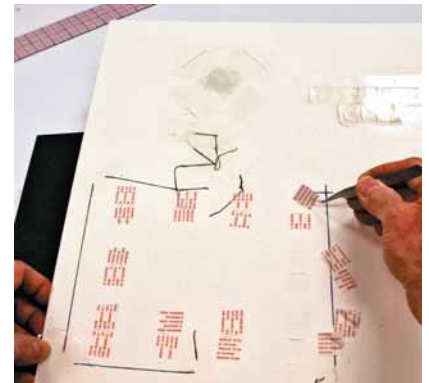
tion. The trim mat, which provides a pad for the glass in the outer frame, matches the blue on the ticket and gives this relatively simple frame design a spark of accent color.

The Slider frame construction uses two frames. The removable outer frame, a black wood shadow-box moulding, contains the glass. It slides over the perimeter of the aluminum inner frame, which is secured to the wall and contains all of the mounted items. Essentially, the black frame rests on the top rail of the inner frame and is held in place only by gravity. No tools are required to open the frame.

To secure the inner frame to the wall, FrameTek's four-part FrameSecure hardware was provided. These plastic "wings" are fastened to the wall by screw anchors and clip into the channel on the back of the aluminum moulding. After hanging, the hardware is out of sight, holding the frame securely to the wall. Using this hardware, no special tools are needed to install or remove the inner frame from the wall.



The necklace ribbon's attachment was bulky and visually distracting. To save space in the frame and make a cleaner appearance, it was doubled over and sewn down.



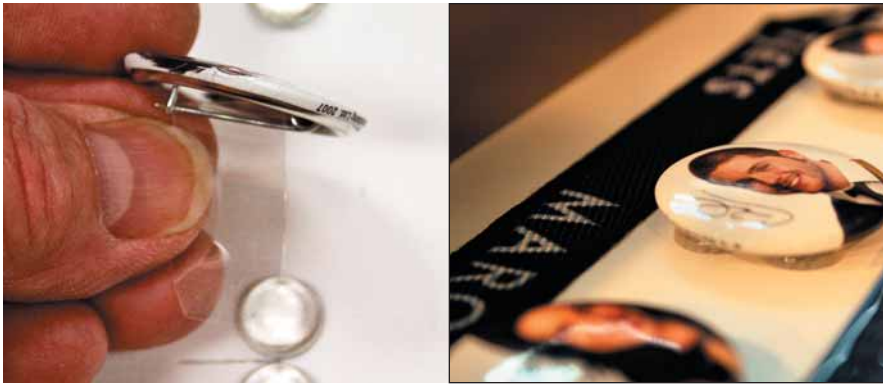
Mounting

The microphone is rather heavy. It came in its original box, including the cord and a holder designed for use with a microphone stand. The customer wanted the cord attached, so it would be removable with the microphone. The other end of it simply lies on the bottom of the frame. Because of its design for normal use, the microphone would have to rest in its holder deep enough within the shadow-box so that a significant number of the autographs would be covered. Aside from visibility, the rubbing action of taking the microphone out and replacing it would soon erase parts of the autographs.

The fix for these potential problems was to use a piece of 1" diameter, clear plastic tubing from a home-improvement store to

reduce the diameter of the holder sleeve, making the microphone rest higher in it. A length of the tubing was cut to fit the holder. It was slit vertically and the edges shaped carefully by carving with an X-Acto knife. This turned out to be the most tedious part of the job, but it worked nicely. The prepared holder was secured to the mounting board by two clear film straps, providing plenty of support for the microphone.

The rectangular ticket and the hexagonal Meet & Greet pass on a neck ribbon were mounted with clear polyester film. The ticket was wrapped and then attached by double-sided tape. The Meet & Greet pass was covered by clear film and mounted as though it were a medallion. Its ribbon necklace was sewn to the background



A clear film strap was trimmed to the length of the pin, looped over it, and passed through a slot in the mounting board. The two Bump-Ons were used as spacers to make the mounted badge lay flat and level on the board.



The rectangular ticket was wrapped in clear film using double sided tape and thoroughly burnished to activate the adhesive bond. Note that the tape does not contact the ticket, only the clear film flaps. After wrapping, a slightly undersized spacer of ArtCare foamboard was used to elevate it off the mounting surface.



board in a rectangular shape to provide trim around the pin-backed badges.

The pin-backed badges were also mounted using clear film. For each badge, a strap was cut to the width of the pin, looped over it, and then passed through a slot in the mounting board. Because the pin-back protruded farther on one end of the pin, two clear Bump-Ons were stuck to the board under each badge as spacers to make them lay flat and level.

After the mounting was completed, a reinforcing board of 4mm Coroplast was added. This extra rigidity was needed to support the heavy microphone in its holder, especially considering that it would be handled occasionally.

Pricing

This project involved two frames in a special construction, and one-of-a-kind mounting requirements. Earning a profit on such an usual job might seem challenging, but it is best to keep it simple. To make sure the pricing will cover everything involved, including special parts and labor items, the project had to be planned carefully, thinking through each step of the framing process. Using a point-of-sale

software program helps assure accurate pricing and complete documentation.

The standard framing elements for this project, including both frame mouldings, glazing, fitting, hanging hardware, and some of the mounts, were quickly priced right out of our POS program. Beyond that, the only pricing concerns involved special parts and labor. For example, I had to buy a piece of tubing to modify the microphone holder. The tubing cost was less than \$2, but I spent half an hour going out of my way on a routine shopping trip to get it. In addition to the extra time, I estimated that mounting the unique items would take at least an hour more labor than usual. So, the special charges for this project added up. Having experience with similar framing tasks is a great help in estimating accurately, so practice as much as possible with some gallery models made to open and re-close.

In this case I was able to use mostly familiar methods and materials, so I priced the project with confidence, making sure the customer received a good value. When an occasional job comes along that presents new and unfamiliar challenges, I may give a customer a general range of pricing for approval and ordering. This allows extra time to plan the proj-

Slider Frame

Inner frame: Nielsen 100-14, German Silver anodized aluminum

Outer frame: Engelsen 2145, matte black wood

Glazing: Tru-View Museum Glass

Mounting Board: Crescent Select 9501 White Collar

Trim mat used to pad the glass: Crescent Select 9550 Cabana

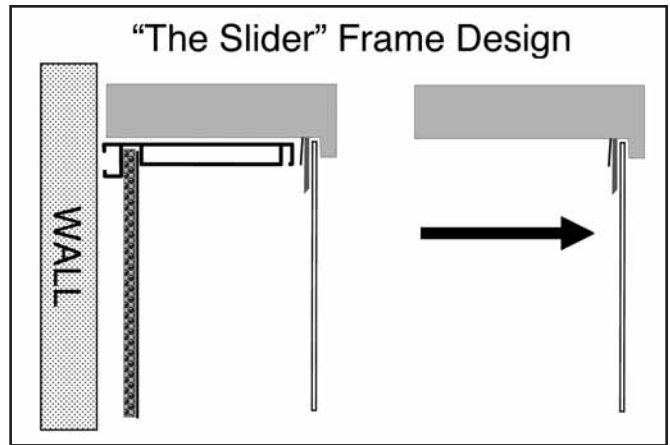
Hanging hardware on inner frame: FrameSecure by FrameTek



The inner frame is secured to the wall, and the outer frame lifts off easily without tools.

ect and then accurate pricing can still be confirmed before the job begins.

Projects like this are unique and fun to build. But regardless of your experience, there is always a need for new and innovative frame constructions and mounting techniques. That's what keeps a framer coming to work. ■



The inner frame, with mount board installed as usual, was securely attached to the wall. The deep outer frame contains the glazing and can be lifted off the inner frame.



James Miller, MCPF, GCF, founded his framing business, ArtFrame, Inc., in suburban Columbus, OH, in 1988, where he specializes in the preservation framing of art, heirlooms, and three-dimensional objects. Miller, who holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, has served as chairman of the PPFA Certification Board, where he helped develop the MCPF exam, and has been chairman of the FACTS Education Committee. He is also the author of *The Complete Guide to Shadowboxes and Framing Objects*, published by PFM Seminars Books.

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