Building your own infinity curve

The idea behind an infinity curve is to get rid of any lines behind the product you photograph. Sizes differ – you'll find some studios have permanent concrete infinity curves stretching 5 meters across for furniture sets, while you can buy curves small enough to fit onto a table top. It's on the latter I'd like to focus.

If you need to regularly take pictures of, say little engine parts or consumer items, typically for brochures in which the images will be deep-etched (cut out


from the background in Photoshop), you need to give the graphic designer a very clean line along which to cut. A white infinity curve is perfect for the job.

What you would need is a couple of lengths of angled aluminium – not the thickest you can find, but a size that will allow enough sturdyness without being too heavy. You would also need a sheet of polyethylene, a plastic with a slightly oily feel. You can use perspex too, but it is hard to bend and tends to splinter if you don't heat it enough during the bending. Besides, perspex is too shiny – a slightly matt finish is best to stop your lights reflecting off the surface when you take pictures.
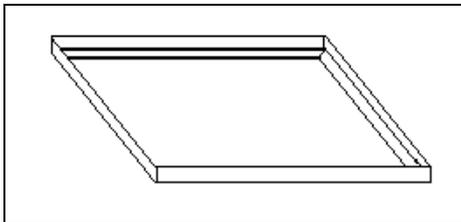

Next you'll have to build your frame – before you buy the sheet of plastic, since you need to determine your final size needed from the completed frame. First cut four lengths of aluminium to form a rectangle with, and screw these together with self-tapping screws.

Now build an upright section a little distance from on side, like in the sketch below. The reason you don't put the upright section right at the end is that when you light your curve from below, the cross section casts an unwanted shadow.

This whole lot will be a bit flimsy, so you have to sturdy it up. Of course, once you fit the plastic sheet, it will be a lot more stable, but you would still need to bolster the upright section with two stabiliser bars.
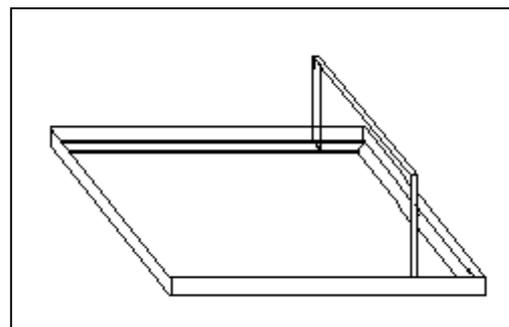
You can do so by fitting two short lengths of aluminium at 45 degrees to the uprights, and anchoring them against the back corners. The stabilisers are marked in red in the sketch below.
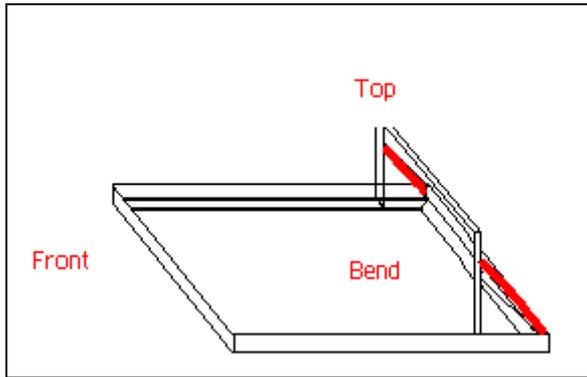
Next, find two long strips of wood that will fit into the long legs of the frame, from the front to the uprights, as wide as the aluminium but just about two millimeters lower than the aluminium's upright, so that when you place your polyethylene sheet on the wood, it will be flush on top. The wood will give you a better surface to secure the sheet onto.
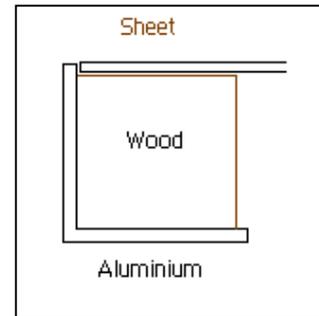
Now you're ready to measure and fit your sheet of polyethylene. Measure the distance from the front of the frame to the bend area, and then up to the top of the stabiliser. Also measure the width of the frame, and ask the supplier (typically a plastics company such as Maizies Plastics, for instance, in Cape Town), to cut this piece to size for you.

Fit the plastic onto the wooden strips, starting from the front, and secure it through the plastic onto the recessed wood strip, using wood screws. Try to countersink the screw heads if you can, to neaten it up.

Bend the sheet into a gently 90 degree curve at the upright, secure it against the upright, and cut off any excess sheeting that might extend above the top.

If your polyethylene sheeting is too shiny, use brass pot scourer (Goldilocks) in small circles to roughen up the surface somewhat. Not too much – don't make huge scratches, just fine enough of a texture to scatter the light falling onto it. You're ready to set up and shoot now.

Until next time, happy DIY-ing!

Regards
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