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METHOD FOR MANUFACTURING ELECTRICAL CONNECTORS FOR ENHANCING COPLANARITY

Background of the Invention

5 **1. Field of the Invention:** The present invention is related to electrical connectors and more particularly to methods for making electrical connectors.

10 **2. Brief Description of Earlier Developments:** In the manufacture of many types of electrical connectors, contacts are positioned in a mold after which the mold is filled with a suitable molding compound which is allowed to harden to form an insulative housing surrounding the contact. Referring, for example, to Fig. 1a and 1b, the mold is shown generally at numeral 10 and has an upper die 12 and an opposed lower die 14. The mold also has an interior section 16 and an exterior section 18 with a
15 connecting molding compound injection port 20. There is also a contact receiving aperture 22 in the base of the lower die 14. A conductive contact 24 is positioned in the contact and receiving aperture 22. The contact 24 has a vertical leg 26 with a contact terminal 28. It also has a horizontal leg 30 with an oblique section 32 and a terminal horizontal
20 section 34.

Referring particularly to Fig. 1a, a molding compound is introduced to the interior 16 of the mold 10 through the injection port 20. At the beginning of the injection process, the molding compound begins to fill the interior 16 of the mold 10 around the lead contact 24. Referring
25 particularly to Fig. 1b, however, as the interior 16 of the mold 10 begins to approach its capacity the pressure of the molding compound may cause the contact to be flexed and displace it from its original position. For example, in Fig. 1b, the front of the horizontal leg 30 as the contact

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24 is flexed downwardly and molded compound enters the space 36 between the contact 24 and the upper die 12. Referring to Fig. 1c, the filling of the interior 16 of the mold 10 in the way shown in Fig. 1b may result in hardened molding compound 38 in position above the horizontal leg 30 in the completed connector. Referring to Fig. 1d, it may also be possible that hardened molding compound 40 may be superimposed over the inner side of the horizontal leg 30 so that the leg extends obliquely upwardly as is shown in Fig. 1d. Consequently there may be an undesirable defect in coplanarity between the upper horizontal leg 30 of the contacts and the upper surface of the housing.

A need therefore exists for a way to improve molding procedures to reduce the incidents of lack of coplanarity between the upper horizontal leg of the contact and the upper surface of the housing.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention is a method for manufacturing an electrical connector comprising an insulative housing with a base side and an opposed side and lateral sides interposed between said base side and said opposed side and at least one conductive contact extending from the base side of the insulation in a first leg and then laterally adjacent the top side of the housing in a second leg. In this method there is provided a mold comprising a first die and an opposed second die all defining an interior cavity and an exterior area. A molding compound input port extends between the exterior area and the interior cavity and a contact receiving aperture extending through the first die from the exterior area to the interior cavity. The conductive contact is then positioned so that the first leg extends upwardly from the exterior area through the contact receiving aperture into the interior cavity. The first leg extends through said



interior cavity, and the second leg extends laterally adjacent the opposed die. The interior cavity of the mold is then filled with a polymeric molding compound, and force is applied on the second leg to cause the second leg of the contact to bear against the second die.

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Brief Description of the Drawings

The present invention is further described with reference to the accompanying in which:

- 10 Figs. 1a and 1b are cross sectional schematic views showing two stages in the injection of molding compound during the prior art method of manufacturing electrical connectors;
- Figs. 1c and 1d are cross sectional schematic views of prior art electrical connectors which may result from the use of the method illustrated in Fig. 1a and 1b;
- 15 Fig. 2 is a top plan view of the preferred embodiment of an electrical connector manufactured according to the method of the present invention;
- Fig. 3 is a side elevational view of the electrical connector shown in Fig. 2;
- Fig. 4 is an end view of the electrical connector shown in Fig. 2;
- 20 Fig. 5 is a perspective view of the electrical connector shown in Fig. 2; and
- Fig. 6 is a schematic partial cross sectional view of the connector through 6 - 6 in Fig. 5 illustrating the method of the present invention.

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Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

Referring to Figs. 2 - 5, a connector made according to the method of the present invention includes an insulative housing 40 which has a



base side 42, a top side 44, a front lateral side 46 and a rear lateral side 48. This housing 40 also has opposed end lateral sides 50 and 52. On the top surface 44 there are opposed lateral raised areas 54 and 56 and a central recessed area 58. In the central recessed area 58 and extending 5 vertically through the housing 40, mounting apertures 60, 62 and 64. Along the edge of the top surface 44 there is a peripheral recess 66. Extending vertically through the housing and then positioned on the lateral raised areas 54 and 56 of the top surface 44, there are a plurality of contacts as at contact 68. This contact 68 includes, as does the other 10 contacts, an upper solder tab 70 and a lower contact terminal 72.

Referring to Fig. 6, a mold is shown generally at numeral 74. This mold 74 includes a movable upper die 76 which includes a mold top surface 78. The mold 74 also includes stationery lower die 80 which includes a bottom surface 82 and lateral surfaces as at surface 84. The 15 mold has an interior 86 which is connected to an exterior area 88 by means of a molding compound injection port 90. In the bottom surface 82 of the lower die 80 there is a contact receiving aperture 92. A contact shown generally at numeral 94 is engaged with the contact receiving aperture 92. This contact 94 has a vertical leg 96 with a terminal 98 that 20 extends outwardly from the lower die 80. The vertical leg 96 also extends upwardly to adjacent the top surface 78 of the movable upper die 76. At this point the terminal extends laterally in a horizontal leg 100. An oblique section 102 extends in a forward and downward direction to horizontal mid-section 104. There is also a post 106 which forms an 25 aperture in the housing.

A force 108 acts on the upper edge 110 of the horizontal legs 100 of the contact 94. This force results in contacts bends 112 which displaces



the vertical leg through 96'. The oblique section also has a bend 114. such forced results in a generation of an equal and opposite force 116 in a force 118 which serves as a mold shut off. As a result of a generation of this equal and opposite force 118 molding compound is prevented from
5 being positioned between the top edge 110' of the horizontal leg 100' and the interior surface 78' of the upper die 76' of the mold. Consequently, the horizontal leg 100' of the contact 94, which may be a solder pad, will be coplanar or at least parallel with the upper surface 120 of the completed housing 122.

- 10 While the present invention has been described in connection with the preferred embodiments of the various figures, it is to be understood that other similar embodiments may be used or modifications and additions may be made to the described embodiment for performing the same function of the present invention without deviating therefrom.
- 15 Therefore, the present invention should not be limited to any single embodiment, but rather construed in breadth and scope in accordance with the recitation of the appended claims.

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Claims**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method for manufacturing an electrical connector comprising an insulative housing with a base side and an opposed side and lateral sides
5 interposed between said base side and said opposed side and at least one conductive contact extending from the base side of the insulation in a first leg and then laterally adjacent the top side of the housing in a second leg, said method comprising the steps of:
 - 10 (a) providing a mold comprising a first die and an opposed second die all devining an interior cavity and an exterior area, a molding compound input port extending between the exterior area and the interior cavity and a contact receiving aperture extending through the first die from the exterior area and the interior cavity;
 - 15 (b) then positioning the conductive contact such that the first leg extends upwardly from the exterior area through the contact receiving aperture into the interior cavity and then through said interior cavity such that the second leg extends adjacent the opposed die;
 - 20 (c) then filling the interior cavity of the mold with a polymeric molding compound; and
 - (d) substantially simutaneously with setp (c) causing the second leg of the contact to bear against the second die.
- 25 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the first die is a base die and the second die is a top die.

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3. The method of claim 2 wherein the second die is superimposed over the first die.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein molding compound input port
5 extends laterally through the mold.
5. The method of claim 4 wherein force is applied axially and upwardly on the first leg of the contact.
- 10 6. The method of claim 5 wherein force is applied downwardly on the second die.
7. The method of claim 4 wherein force is applied downwardly on the second die.
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8. The method of claim 1 wherein the second leg of the conductive contact has an upper edge and a length and the upper edge is in contact with the second die.
- 20 9. The method of claim 8 wherein the upper edge of the second leg of the conductive contact is in continuous contact with the second die over the entire length of said second leg.
10. The method of claim 1 wherein in the completed connector the
25 insulative housing has an upper side and the upper edge of the second leg is substantially parallel to the upper side of the insulative housing.

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11. An electrical connector comprising an insulative housing with a base side and an opposed side and lateral sides interposed between said base side and said opposed side and at least one conductive contact extending from the base side of the insulation in a first leg and then
5 laterally adjacent the top side of the housing in a second leg, manufactured by a method comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing a mold comprising a first die and an opposed second die all devining an interior cavity and an exterior area, a molding compound input port extending between the
10 exterior area and the interior cavity and a contact receiving aperture extending through the first die from the exterior area and the interior cavity;
- (b) then positioning the conductive contact such that the first leg extends upwardly from the exterior area through the contact
15 receiving aperture into the interior cavity and then through said interior cavity such that the second leg extends adjacent the opposed die;
- (c) then filling the interior cavity of the mold with a polymeric molding compound; and
- 20 (d) substantially simultaneously with setp (c) causing the second leg of the contact to bear against the second die.

12. The electrical connector of claim 11 wherein the first die is a base die and the second die is a top die.

25 13. The electrical connector of claim 12 wherein the second die is superimposed over the first die.

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14. The electrical connector of claim 13 wherein molding compound input port extends laterally through the mold.

5 15. The electrical connector of claim 14 wherein force is applied axially and upwardly on the first leg of the contact.

16. The electrical connector of claim 15 wherein force is applied downwardly on the second die.

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17. The electrical connector of claim 14 wherein force is applied downwardly on the second die.

15 18. The electrical connector of claim 11 wherein the second leg of the conductive contact has an upper edge and a length and the upper edge is in contact with the second die.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the upper edge of the second leg of the conductive contact is in continuous contact with the second die over
20 the entire length of said second leg.

20. The method of claim 11 wherein in the completed connector the insulative housing has an upper side and the upper edge of the second leg is substantially parallel to the upper side of the insulative housing.

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