

# Paint color restoration: Then and now

How today's clear coatings can restore a paint's original color and gloss.



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I was wrong...

When I wrote "Why Paints Fade" in the April 2008 issue of this magazine, (which I urge you to digest before reading this article), I believed it was simply impossible to create a clear coating that would look as great, by wipe-on hand application, as an automotive spray gun finish would. I was wrong, things change and six years later hand application is a real, highly profitable reality.

## Old school technique

A brief detour back to the original article shows us that any paint color can be restored to the original shade and gloss by simply re-wetting the pigment with anything ... from a second or two with water, to a few days with olive oil or years with a properly formulated clear coating. But, on a vehicle, that coating needed to be applied with a spray gun by an experienced auto sprayer.

Of course, most of you do not have the equipment or personnel with competence in spray technique to turn out a fine finished product, so participation in clear coat restoration was limited.

Now, there is a simpler application method that can be done by wiping on the clear coating by hand without the need for any spray equipment or experienced paint sprayers.

## New school technique

Hand applied wipe-on clear coatings can not only restore the color to its original appearance with a high gloss shine; but, also create a finish that will visually eliminate any swirl marks in the paint, light scratches and even scuff marks that otherwise would take several hours to cut and polish out.

Also, the new layer of clear coat will aid in protecting the underlying paint from the ravages of the sun, harsh acids and alkalis, bird droppings, insect splatters, salt spray on the coast, industrial pollution and other airborne contamination. Also, the coating provides a great looking shine that is very dirt repellent so it is easy to keep clean. This gives you the opportunity to charge a higher price than you typically would for a cut and polish detail because you have years of extra protection from the new layer of clear coat. This may sound almost too good to be true; but, depending on the

supplier you choose, it is definitely possible to achieve.

## Preparing the surface

Like all paint or coating products, proper preparation of the surface to be coated is essential. After pressure washing the vehicle, clean with a wet white 3M Doodlebug scrubbing pad combined with a scuffing paste like Presta Scuff Stuff or Sherwin-Williams USP 90. Apply with light pressure in a circular motion remembering if you have to use a straight up and down stroke to clean an especially dirty spot, that you always finish with a circular motion. Rinse well with water and dry. As a final prep, use a tack rag to go over the surface. Now, the vehicle is ready to have the clear coat application.

The application process will vary depending on supplier instructions but the one essential that all agree on is you must have a wet enough coating to allow for proper flow out. If you don't, anyone's finished application will have streaks. It is a learning process and may take four or five attempts before you become proficient. Always practice on a scrap surface and make sure it looks great before attempting a quar-



ter panel, door, trunk, hood or especially a whole vehicle.

### Proof and results

Examples of what can be done are shown in the two sets of before and after photos below. The first set shows a car about to be crushed into a block that had its clearcoat completely whited out with a scratch

through it. The applicator cleaned the surface and hand applied a clearcoat. As you can see, the whited out paint was fixed, scratch marks were no more and color/gloss were restored so you can see his reflection in the paint. In the next set, you see the scratches around the door handle before being restored to perfection with the procedure described above.

In summary, clear coatings now exist that can restore a paint's original color and gloss, make light scratches and scuff marks disappear and easily eliminate swirls in the paint. Application is simple and easy by hand requiring no extra equipment. The hours of tedious buffing and polishing commonly used are completely eliminated.

Obviously, like any other decision you should investigate the supplier before investing. But, isn't it worth taking the time to seriously explore this opportunity to serve your customers better and make substantially more profit on the same job by giving your customer a vehicle that will be protected for years with a new layer of clear coating instead of just a wax lasting for maybe a few months?

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