

CHEAP SPEED! LS2 INTAKE PORTING = 10 RWHP

MAY 2008
Volume 32 No. 5



Wette

LSX-RATED!
454-CUBE
DAILY DRIVER
MAKES
620 HP



PLUS!

▶ **HOT**
NEW C3
IGNITION
UPGRADE

▶ **LATE-MODEL**
DRAG SHOOTOUT

MAY 2008
USA \$4.99 CAN \$5.99

05
0 70989 30275 4

A SOURCE INTERLINK MEDIA PUBLICATION

INSIDE THE
LS3



SPRING
DETAILING
GUIDE



Invest in a high-quality wash mitt made from cotton, synthetic material, or microfiber. Meguiar's Microfiber Wash Mitt is scratch-free and has a thick nap that will pick up dirt and keep it away from the paint.



After rinsing the wash off of the car with high pressure, use a low-pressure stream like this as a final rinse. Water will sheet off the car's surface, making it much easier to dry.



Today's microfiber towels, such as Meguiar's Water Magnet, are far more absorbent than old-fashioned cotton or terry cloth towels, which shortens drying time considerably.

The Shining

Pro detailing tips
for the ultimate show-car shine

BY DREW HARDIN

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY THE AUTHOR

How concerned are you about your Corvette's looks? Is a trip to the drive-through car wash every few months good enough? Or do you obsess over things such as

tiny swirl marks in your paint, or getting just the right amount of gloss on your trim? If you fall into the latter group, then you've come to the right place. Over the next few pages, we're going to show you some professional-level cleaning and detailing tips that will make your Vette gleam. Better still, these techniques can be performed in your driveway with just a few simple

tools and a handful of car-care products.

The first step in properly caring for painted automotive surfaces is to make sure they're clean. But did you know there's a difference between washing and cleaning your car? According to Mike Pennington, who heads training and consumer relations for the car-care specialists at Meguiar's, washing—that job done

The first step in caring for your car's paint is to remove any loose dirt with a thorough wash. Always use a soap that's been formulated for automotive finishes, such as the Meguiar's Gold Class Car Wash shown here.

with a hose, buckets, and soap—removes dirt and other loose contaminants from on top of the paint. Cleaning, on the other hand, addresses contaminants that are bonded to the paint—such as tree sap, hard-water deposits, or other environmental fallout—as well as swirls, scratches, oxidation, and stains.

Pennington offered these tips for getting the best result from your wash: Always wash your car in the shade when the metal—er, fiberglass—is cool to the touch. Hose off the car first to loosen the dirt, then use a high-quality wash mitt to apply soapy water. A premium mitt—whether it's cotton, synthetic, or microfiber—has plenty of nap that will protect the paint from being scratched by dirt the mitt picks up. And always use a soap

that's designed for automotive paint; household soaps and detergents are too harsh for your car's finish.

Meguiar's recommends washing your car using the two-bucket method. Fill one bucket with water and soap, the other with plain water. After soaking the mitt in the soapy water and

wiping the car, rinse it in the plain-water bucket. That way, dirt picked up by the mitt is left in the rinse bucket and won't contaminate the soap bucket, reducing the risk of that very same dirt being wiped back on the car.

When it's time to rinse, hose off the car using high-pressure water, then do a final rinse with a

The Shining

low-pressure stream. You'll be amazed at how the water sheets off the car and how much quicker and easier it is to dry.

As with the wash mitt, use a high-quality towel to dry the car, preferably a microfiber drying towel. Today's microfiber technology has advanced to the point where these towels are far more absorbent than yesterday's cotton or

terry cloth, which speeds up the drying process considerably.

Once your car is clean and dry, it's time to evaluate the paint to determine your next step. Move the car inside to a bright, well-lit area and check the paint for trouble spots. During the evaluation process, "you're looking for above-the-surface contaminants like overspray or tree sap, and below-the-surface problems like swirls, scratches, etching, and oxidation," Pennington says. Look closely at the paint, and also run



Don't forget areas such as the doorjamb, inside the trunk lid, and under the hood when drying off your car. Otherwise, the water trapped in these areas will eventually dribble out and leave water spots.



Once the car is clean, it's time to move it into a well-lit area to evaluate its surface. Don't use just your eyes; run your hands over the paint to feel for imperfections. If the surface is not glass-smooth, there's environmental fallout that needs to be removed.

your hand over the car to feel how smooth it is. A rough feel is a telltale sign that there are bonded contaminants on the finish that need to be taken off.

These contaminants can be removed using a clay bar. Pennington offers these claying tips: Always lubricate the surface prior to rubbing it with the clay. This will make the bar glide across the surface and prevent scratches. It's also a good idea to tear the bar into small pieces before using it. That way, should you drop the piece, you can throw it away without wasting the entire bar. Knead the bar every so often to keep its surface fresh. If the bar gets dark, or you can see particles in the clay, it's time to use a new piece.

Below-the-surface contaminants require a different approach, one that will actually take a little paint off the car in order to get down to the affected area. Conventional rubbing and polishing compounds are typically too abrasive for today's finishes and may actually "inflict more damage than they fix," according to Pennington. Instead, use a mild swirl remover or clear-coat-safe paint cleaner to treat those areas.

These products usually can be applied by hand or by using an orbital, dual action (DA), or rotary polisher. Hand application is safest, since there's little to no risk of damaging the paint by rubbing through too many layers. This method is the most time consuming, however, and requires more physical effort.



Meguiar's recently reformulated ScratchX so it can be safely applied by hand or with a dual-action (DA) polisher. Use microfiber towels to wipe off the ScratchX after its application.



Tree sap, hard-water deposits, and other above-the-surface contaminants can be removed using a clay bar. Make sure to lubricate the surface before rubbing it with the bar. Though it's typically used as a between-washes cleaner, Meguiar's Quik Detailer offers enough lubricity to be used with the clay.



Below-the-surface imperfections, such as swirl marks, can be eliminated using a cleaner/swirl-remover like Meguiar's ScratchX. Unlike some conventional compounds, ScratchX is safe to use on any automotive paint and clearcoat, thanks to its "diminishing abrasive technology." Developed by Meguiar's, these abrasive particles get smaller and smaller as you work them into the paint.

A machine applicator will do the job quicker, though an inexperienced operator could burn through the paint if he or she doesn't know how to properly operate the machine. (This is especially true when using a high-speed rotary unit.) The secret to using a machine applicator, says Pennington, is to work a fairly small section of the body—about a 2-foot-square area—with overlapping strokes. Then methodically work your way around the car.

When working by hand, or using an orbital or dual-action polisher, how many applications should you plan to use? "Do it until you're happy," Pennington says. "You may need more than one. But if you're not getting the results you want after two or three applications, you may need the help of a professional."

Once the painted surfaces are free of defects, you can choose to polish the paint or move on to a protectant step. Polish will add gloss to the paint, especially when used on dark colors. "We recommend it for dark paint if you want that deep, wet look," Pennington says. "It won't give you the same benefit when applied to white or light-colored paint." Like swirl removers, most polishes can be applied by hand or with a machine applicator.

The final step is to protect the paint by putting a barrier of wax between it and the damaging effects of Mother Nature. These days, waxes tend to fall into two general types: carnauba, the traditional, natural wax that comes from palm trees; and polymer, a synthetic wax that's formulated to tighter tolerances than natural wax but also tends to be a little more expensive. "Either type works on paint of any age," Pennington says, though he feels the high-tech nature of a modern polymer wax will provide a better level of protection.

Pennington won't go so far as to say that a polymer wax will last longer than carnauba. In fact, he warns against using products that make claims of extended longevity. "There are too many variables to establish that type of time frame, from how often you wash your car and what you use to wash it, to where you park, and so on." Instead, he recommends establishing a regular waxing schedule "so you know you're on top of it." A daily driver could be waxed as few as three or four times a year, he says, while a hobby car should be waxed every two to three months to keep up its looks.

With either type of wax, it's best to apply in thin coats, and then give it time to set up and cure. Otherwise, you won't be getting the wax's full protective benefits. Apply wax to the entire

The Shining

car; then, before you wipe it off, test an area by wiping it with your finger. If it smears, it hasn't fully cured yet.

Once you've finished these steps, it's time to step back and admire how great your paint looks. Then get ready to keep it that way.

"Frequent car care is easy car care," Pennington says. Between washes, if your car isn't too dirty, you can maintain its good looks with a wipe-down from an instant-detailer product, which lubricates the surface while encapsulating small dirt particles. If there's any concern that the surface is too dirty to wipe with the detailer, it's time to get out the buckets and soap again.



Microfiber, teamed here with Meguiar's NXT Generation Glass Cleaner, is also ideal for cleaning windows, as it's far more absorbent than paper towels and won't leave lint behind.



If your car is black or some other dark color, Meguiar's Deep Crystal Polish will give the paint a wet, glossy look. The polish also conditions and nourishes the paint.



A coat of wax will put a protective barrier between your car's paint and any contaminants Mother Nature throws at it. Meguiar's waxes, whether the carnauba-based Deep Crystal system or the carnauba/polymer blend found in Gold Class (shown), can be applied by hand or with a machine applicator. As with the swirl remover, a microfiber towel is best to use when it's time to wipe off the wax.



Clear plastic parts, such as headlight covers, can get scratched, too. Meguiar's PlastX Clear Plastic Cleaner & Polish, when applied with a foam applicator pad, will remove stains and scratches.



"Frequent car care is easy car care," goes the mantra at Meguiar's. Between washings, you can keep your car in its gleaming condition with a regular wipe-down using Meguiar's Quik Detailer and a microfiber towel.



Any metal trim pieces should be polished using a product formulated for the type of metal being cleaned. For example, chromed exhaust tips and underhood components can be treated with Meguiar's Hot Rims Mag & Aluminum polish, which was designed specifically for chrome-plated metal and uncoated aluminum. 