

Through The Plastic Clearly...

by Dr. Detail

If you have one of the earlier Miatas like I do, you have no doubt noticed that one of the prices we pay for having such a fun car is the furschligginner back plastic window. The owner's manual tells us to not use an ammonia-based cleaner on it, but most of the standard window cleaners have ammonia in them. The net result is that, after a while, we end up with a back window that is translucent at best and opaque at worst. I've always used Windex on my back window and it keeps it pretty clean, but the soft plastic eventually gets scratches in it just from normal daily use. Chuck Wills turned me on to a set of products that does a really good job of getting most of the scratches out and helps prevent new ones. These are the Novus Plastic Clean and Shine and the Novus Fine Scratch Remover. These are available at most larger car parts stores and at a lot of motorcycle shops. I've used these products on three cars so far and have been very happy with the results. This month, we're going to go through the procedure for using these products and give you some tips on keeping your plastic window looking great, or at least as it's likely to look.

The first step in any cleaning process, whether it's your car paint or the back window, is to get it as clean as possible. Clean both the inside and outside of the window with a good window cleaner, making sure to get it dry. Use a soft cotton towel or T-shirt for this step. Next, using a different small towel, apply the Fine Scratch Remover to the window. Be sure to rub it in thoroughly and evenly over the entire surface. Rub it in until it's dry and then remove the haze that forms with a different cotton towel. If your window is heavily scratched, it may take a couple of applications to get the results you want (they also make a Heavy Scratch Remover if things are completely out of hand). Repeat this process for the inside of the window. Regardless of how careful you are zipping the window in and out, it's going to accumulate some scratches. Plus, you've all ready got the tools out, so you might as well finish the job.

After you have used the scratch remover on both sides of the window, it's time to apply the polish. Spritz a small amount over the entire surface and then buff it in using another small cotton towel. The polish not only buffs up the surface of the plastic, it will also make it a lot slicker, so fine dust and other contaminants aren't as likely to stick to it. It's the same principle as putting wax on your car body. Be sure to do both sides of the window. I usually re-apply the polish every other time I wash the car to keep it looking good. It only takes a couple of minutes.

Now that the window looks great, here are a few tips to keep it looking that way. If you fastidiously unzip the window before putting your top down, it would be a good idea to invest in a window protector. This is an accessory that snaps on to the back deck using the same snaps that the boot does. It's a two-layer cloth device that has a soft inner layer. When you unzip the window, it lays inside the protector and stays cleaner and doesn't get nearly as many scratches as it would otherwise. You can get them from the usual on-line places for about \$30.

If you have a roll bar and can't unzip your window, you can still give the window some protection by investing in a pool noodle. These are things you can get at any discount store for about \$2.00. It is stiff enough to help keep the window from getting a crease in it when folded down. Sara and I wrapped ours in a pair of long tube socks to give some more protection against scratching. It helps a lot.

And remember, if your car is your daily driver, the colder it gets, the more fragile the back window becomes. Let's be extra careful with that scraper when removing snow and ice!

Keeping your rear window clean is like everything else. The hardest part is getting started.

Miata Owners Club Disbands

It was recently announced that the Mazda Team and the MOC Advisory Council have unanimously agreed to discontinue operations of the national Miata Owners Club. The club will continue to fulfill on existing memberships, but the renewal process has been stopped as of October 18, 2002. The Miata Owners Club will be phased out over the next year so that there is a smooth transition and will officially cease operations when the last membership expires.

Members will continue to receive some benefits such as the Miata Magazine subscription, the Mazda Genuine Accessories rebate, and the Preferred Dealer Network at participating dealerships until their membership expires. A prorated refund of your Miata Owner's Club membership is available. Call customer support at 1-800-968-4980.

Miata Magazine will now be offered by subscription with an annual subscription rate of \$19.95. You may subscribe by calling Miata Magazine at 1-877-227-6249.

Mazda plans to continue working closely with the Advisory Council, as the Council will be communicating with the local club base and playing a role in defining event sponsorship opportunities. They will also help with the phase-out of the national club to ensure Mazda fulfills on all existing obligations.

When Mazda made this announcement, they stated that they are still committed to continued support of the Miata community including event sponsorship and promotion of local clubs in various Mazda communications.

Miata Owner Club members can call Mazda at 1-800-968-4980 with any questions.