

Dr. Detail Buys A Bar And Works On Swirlies

by Dr. Detail

It's been an interesting couple of weeks for Dr. Detail. I have broadened my car care horizon by quite a bit and I thought that I would share what I have learned with you in case you find yourself in a similar situation. I had two cars to bring back to life and both of them turned out very well, thanks to the people at the Miata forum as well as Sal Zaino at Zaino Brothers. It's nice to have a community of helpful people when you find yourself in a bind.

The first car that I worked on was a white Miata that hadn't been abused, but it certainly hadn't received the right amount of TLC during its life. The finish of the car was in pretty good shape, but there were a lot of water spots and the paint had a pretty dull appearance. I had read about using a clay bar before, but I had never had any real occasion to use one. This car seemed like a prime candidate. I posted a note to the Miata forum and got several helpful responses and ended up buying a Clay Magic clay bar kit from Auto Zone for \$9.95. The kit comes with a small clay bar and a bottle of lubricant. Everybody kept saying that actual process of using the bar wasn't particularly hard work, it just took some time. This turned out to be right on target. It took me about three hours to clay the entire car, and it made a world of difference. It isn't hard work, since the bar does the work for you. I applied the lubricant liberally on about a two or three square foot area and then gently rubbed the bar over the area and then wiped it off with a clean towel. The results were absolutely amazing! After I was done claying the entire car, I rinsed it off again and applied two coats of Zaino polish and followed that up with a coat of the Zaino gloss enhancer. The car looked really great and it only took about nine hours total including the prep wash, clay bar process, two coats of polish and restoring the top with Mother's Back to Black. In short, if you have just acquired a previously owned Miata and it needs to have the surface cleaned thoroughly to remove water spots or other surface crud, go with the clay bar. It really is easy and the results are great.

I am tremendously embarrassed to admit that the second car I had to revive was Sara's black 1995. We still aren't sure what happened to the finish, but we are pretty sure the cats are behind it somehow. Whatever happened, the finish of the car looked like she had followed the April Fool's instructions from last year. The whole car looked like it had been smeared with something that was mildly abrasive and then had that compound rubbed in. The whole car had fine scratches all over it and it just looked terrible. I tried the clay bar on a small area and it had absolutely no effect. Then I remembered that Sal Zaino had told me that 3M made a good product for removing swirl marks, so I headed over the car parts store and got a bottle of 3M Swirl Mark Remover (Part No. 39009) and headed back to the house. Being more than a little paranoid about hosing Sara's car, I tried the compound on a small inconspicuous area. It was amazing! All the scratches, etc.. were gone in a flash! I ended up doing the entire car with the product and then following that up with two coats of Zaino and a coat of the Zaino gloss enhancer. Her car has never looked as good as it does now, so I told her she couldn't drive it any more. :)

There are some things to remember if you try the 3M product. First, it will remove some paint. Try it in a small inconspicuous area first. Be gentle. It's a whole lot easier to apply it twice and get a little off each time rather than rubbing hard and potentially making things worse than they were when you started. Second, try varying amounts. I found out that the amount you use can make a difference in how hard the job is to do. This is a touch thing.

Experiment and you will find the right amount for your situation. Third, I haven't used it on metallic paint, but metallic paint is inherently fragile. Be extra careful if you have metallic paint. Finally, save the hood for last. By the time you get to the hood, you should be in the groove with the product. The hood is what you and everybody else sees first, so make sure it's done right.

You will need tons of towels. I applied the compound with a wash cloth and ended up going through three or four of them. Removing the product also goes through towels quickly, but you need to make sure you are using clean towels and turn them frequently. I think I ended up using about eight or ten bath towels to remove and polish the car. Unless you are pro, don't even think about using an electric buffer.

Good luck and please drop me a note if you have any questions.

Editors note: Two things. One, Dr. Detail received a Mother's Day present of a new outside faucet with soft water to wash the cars. He's happy about that. Two, Sara drove the car. He's not happy about that. See page seven.

Letter to the Editor

We received an email from Brett Bennet earlier this month about placing an ad to sell his Miata. We contacted him for more details to place the ad in this month's OR and received this note back from him:

Thanks anyway, but I've already sold it. Could you put something in the newsletter thanking everyone we know in the club for all the great times we all shared with our "babies" and we'll miss that very much! Good luck and always go "topless" when you can! Someday we hope to own a Miata again.

Thanks,

Brett and Doris Bennett

Indy Named #1 In Poll

In a recent miata.net forum posting, Miata Magazine publisher Barbara Beach was asked why Las Vegas was chosen as the site for the National meet. She responded that in a miata.net poll, Indy was #1 and Vegas was #2 of places where people would like to have an event.

Something to think about, perhaps?