

Dr.. Detail is here to help

It's A Fine Day to Play With Clay

by Rick Morris

Using a clay bar on your car is one of those things that seems really mysterious until you actually do it for the first time. I hesitated doing a clay bar treatment for a long time for that very reason. After I had done it once, I wondered why I had waited so long. At any rate, this month I'll give you step by step instructions on how to properly use a clay bar on your car. It isn't complicated and it really isn't all that much work. It just takes a little time and the results are more than worth it. When you do get around to doing the clay bar treatment, you need to plan to wax your car the same day or the very next day at the latest. The clay bar will remove most or all of whatever you have on the car when you start. That having been said, let's get started.

The first step is to get a clay bar kit. I'm not sure that there's any real difference between clay bars. You can get a kit for anywhere between ten and eighty dollars. I always use the Clay Magic kit that you should be able to pick up anywhere for under twenty dollars. Whatever kit you buy, when you open it up, you will see a small, unimpressive bar of clay and a bottle of lubricant. They are both equally important as the clay will not work without the lubricant.

The first step is to wash your car thoroughly. Use a good car wash and scrub the car clean and dry it thoroughly.

Next cut a strip off the narrow end of the clay bar. I usually cut a piece a little over half an inch in length. Hold the clay in your hand to let it warm up and then knead it out until it's wider and pretty thin.

Pick an area of the car to start. If this is your first time using a clay bar, start on the side instead of the hood or trunk. Using a clay bar properly is all "touch" and you may want to start in an inconspicuous place. **VERY IMPORTANT:** put a towel on the ground underneath when you will be working. If you ever drop the clay bar on the ground or your driveway, throw it away! If you drop the bar it will pick up zillions of little abrasive particles that are lying there waiting for their chance to trash your finish. You can't get them out no matter how you try. Having a towel to catch the clay bar will save it from all those bad things on the ground.

Wet the area that you are going to work on with the lubricant. Work on an area about two square feet at a time. Wet it thoroughly with the lubricant and immediately start using the clay bar on the wet place. Place the bar on the underside of your fingers. It will curve to fit the curve of your hand. Using gentle side-to-side strokes, you will clean the surface of the car. When you start on an area, you will feel a little resistance even with the lubricant. As you stroke more and more, the resistance will disappear. That means that the area is clean. Wipe it off thoroughly with a clean towel. If you look at the surface of the clay bar, you will notice that it has picked all kinds of crud off your car's finish, regardless of how clean it looked before you started. It also means that you need to knead the clay bar again until the surface looks pretty clean. Move on to another area and repeat the process. Keep doing this until you've done the whole car. Doing a Miata shouldn't take much more than an hour.

As you progress around the car, the piece of clay bar you are using will get to the point where kneading the bar doesn't produce a clean surface. Discard that piece and cut another piece the same size off the original bar. You should be able to do the whole car and not use the whole clay bar.

Lubricant is another story. I almost always use the whole bottle that comes in the kit. Not to worry. You can easily make up a satisfactory lubricant by put-

ting two or three drops of car wash in the bottle and then filling it up with water. The lubricant isn't a magic potion, it just provides lubrication. It's a whole lot better to use too much than too little. The bar should slide almost effortlessly across the surface. If it doesn't, either you aren't using enough lubricant or your finish is beyond the clay bar's help, probably the latter.

After you've done the whole car, give it another quick wash and dry. You should notice that the car's finish is a whole lot smoother than it was before you used the clay bar. It should feel slick to the touch even when dry. Wait until you get some wax on it, it's going to look great!

As I said at the start, using a clay bar is all about touch. Remember that when you start on an area you will feel a little resistance and when you don't feel any resistance, it's done. When you are done with an area, it won't have much shine, but it should still feel really smooth. This smooth surface is excellent for applying wax. When you do apply wax, you will notice that it's real easy to put on and it doesn't take as much wax to get the job done.

Nothing to it!

Factory Turbo Miata Is Available

Always wanted a Miata with more "giddy up and go", but didn't want to tackle an after-market turbo or supercharger installation? The new MazdaSpeed MX-5 is the answer.

MazdaSpeed offers a 6-speed turbocharged Miata with 178 hp and 166 lb-ft of torque.

You can get more information at Hubler Mazda (the only local dealer for MazdaSpeed) or at <http://www.mazdausa.com>.

Things In Common

What do Jack Nicklaus, Eddie Van Halen and IMC club member Jim Nutt have in common? We don't know if Jack and Eddie drive Miatas, but we do know that they're all members of the "Artificial Joint Club" and have had hip replacements.

Jim joined the "AJ Club" last month and is recovering nicely. Look for Jim to be "zoom-zooming" with us soon.