

It's The Process, Not The Product

by Rick "Dr. Detail" Morris

Every once in a while, people will ask what kind of wax I use, and they're normally a little surprised that I use a wax whose name sounds like you would have to travel to the top of a mountain in Tibet and pay a lot of grinkles to get it. Some people have bought wax that I have recommended and then pointed out later that it was, to put it mildly, somewhat more than they expected to spend. Some people think that the more expensive the wax is, the better it will look on their car. There is a certain degree of truth to that, but price isn't the whole story by a long shot. One important thing to keep in mind is that detailing is something I really enjoy doing. I like trying new products in an effort to get that last one percent of beauty out of my car. You may be more interested in making your car look great and having good protection from the elements. You also not want to spend as much time on your car as I do on mine. You may actually have a life (something I've heard about).

The truth of the matter is that you can get very good results from almost any decent wax if it is used properly. By decent wax, I don't mean Uncle Don's Discount Water Wax that you put on with a garden hose. I do mean something like Meguiar's, Mother's, Zaino or even NuFinish. The most important part of any wax job is how it's done, not what you use. If you properly prepare the finish before applying the wax and then apply the wax properly, your car will look great and it will stay looking that way for quite a while.

What I'm going to do this month is give you some basic wax guidelines so you can pick out the right product for both you and your car and then give you some basic preparation and application tips. I'm also going to point out some really good web resources you can go to for help and advice. Of course, you're always welcome to contact me with specific questions or problems.

Choosing the Right Wax for You and Your Car

Choosing a wax that's right for you is almost as important as choosing the right wax for the car. If you just want to get the car clean and protected without taking a week to get it done, buying a wax that's hard to apply and requires maintenance will only result in the wax not being used and the car not looking as good as it could.

Basically speaking, there are two broad categories of wax, natural and polymer. The natural waxes are generally carnauba wax, which is made from wax obtained from the leaves of the Brazilian carnauba tree (I'm not making this up). The advantages of a carnauba wax are great shine and "depth". The disadvantages are that carnauba waxes generally don't last as long and do require some maintenance to keep them in tip top shape. Mother's, Meguiar's and Zymol are examples of carnauba waxes. The second type of wax are the polymer waxes. The synthetic waxes generally are a little easier to use and last longer. The disadvantages of some of them are that they don't shine as well. Examples of polymer waxes are Zaino, NuFinish and Meguiar's new NXT wax. I have used all of these products and they all have their strong and weak points. Feel free to ask me about any of them.

Proper Preparation of the Car

If the finish isn't prepared properly, it won't make any difference what kind of wax you use. You need to make sure that the car is as clean as you can get it. This can be as simple as a good washing or as complicated as a complete buffing. The important thing is to do the best you can. I highly recommend using a clay

bar once a year (see last month's newsletter). If the finish is clean and well-prepared, the wax will go on lots easier, look better and last longer. If the finish isn't clean, all you're doing is making the dirt shiny.

Applying the Wax

READ THE INSTRUCTIONS! The people that make the wax probably have a good idea on how to use it. Read the instructions and follow them. After you've waxed your car a few times, you'll probably find ways to make the job easier and get better results. When you're doing it for the first time, do what they tell you. If they say to wax only a small portion of the car at a time, that's what you need to do. After only fifty years, I finally realized that reading the instructions can be a "Good Thing".

The next most important thing is to use as little wax as possible. The amount of wax that makes the car look great and be protected is actually very small. An excess just makes the job harder and probably will make the results not as good as you had hoped. One of the forums I go to says to treat car wax like fine perfume. It doesn't take very much to get good results.

Maintenance

After you have your car looking great, keep it looking that way with very little work. Keep it washed and use a detailing spray to keep the shine and protection up. Whoever makes the wax you end up buying also makes a detailing

continued on page 6



Dr. Detail works his voo-doo detailing magic on a Ferrari