

Dr. Detail is here to help

Time For Spring Cleaning!

by Rick Morris

It's time for that of year again, when we might get lucky enough to have a couple of top down days! I, for one, have had more than enough of winter (which, for me, is about two days). At any rate, it's time to start planning for the first good cleaning that we will give our cars to get ready for the summer driving season. If you get your car prepped right, keeping it looking great for the rest of the summer will be easy, so you can spend your time driving your car instead of waxing it.

Before you go out and buy a lot of stuff, you may want to reread an article I wrote last year about how the process is more important than the product. What I mean by that is how you get your clean and shiny is at least as important as what products you use. Fortunately, we have past issues of the Open Road online, so you can read the article again by going to archive site for the Open Road: <http://www.wcat.com/openroad/2004/may/page5.pdf>.

The "Rule of Five P's" (Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance) applies to getting your car looking great as well as most other things. The first step is to get your clean as possible as you can with a very good wash job. For the first wash job of the season, I recommend a solution made with Dawn dish washing detergent and water. Dawn is a very good grease cutter and fairly strong cleaner and it will do a good job getting the surface dirt and grime off your car. Do not use it for everyday car washing!

After you have the car as clean as you can get it by washing, it's time to invoke the magic known as the clay bar. A clay bar will get things off your car's surface that almost won't come off any other way. Last year I wrote a pretty complete article about using a clay bar. You can read it online here: <http://www.2cat.com/openroad/2004/apr/page6.pdf>. It doesn't take all that long and the results you get are pretty amazing.

The next step should be to use a good pre-wax cleaner. I am currently using Klasse All-In-One, which you can get from most online stores, especially the ones that are referenced in my "Process" article. In any event, a good pre-wax cleaner will get the surface prepped so that whatever wax you choose will look great and bond to the car's surface much better.

You are now ready to apply whatever wax you have decided to use. Use a good quality wax. Don't start skimping now. If I'm using a polymer wax, I use Meguiar's Tech Wax, which gives excellent results and isn't terribly expensive. If I'm using a carnuba wax, I use Pinnacle Souveran, which gives incredible results and is real expensive. Which ever wax you use, be sure to follow the strong hints in the "Process" article.

You're in the home stretch now! After you have the wax applied and the car is looking great, top off the wax with a detailing spray made by the people who make your wax. The detail spray will give the last little "pop" to the finish.

After you have all this done, keep your car looking great by washing it regularly with a high quality was (NOT the Dawn we used in the first step) and follow every washing with a quick application of the detail spray. Your car will look great all summer with just a little effort.

If all of this sounds like a lot of work and you'd like to have someone else do it, you can take it to Jim Schliebner's shop on Michigan Road (514-2659). He can take care of any major defects and show you how to keep your car looking great. You can visit Jim's website at <http://www.jimmybuffit.com>. AIM Tuning also offers detailing services. Call AIM at 381-0898 or visit them online at <http://www.aimtuning.com>.

Tires And Wheels... *Continued*

tire for you. Available in 15" and 17" sizes, from \$78 to \$83. If you like going fast, go buy this tire today.

The thing about all of these tires is if it starts to snow, you're not going anywhere. They are made for warm weather so when the mercury falls, you need an all season tire or better yet, a winter tire. I'll just hit a few high points for non-performance applications:

Toyo FZ4 is a fine all-season tire for the Miata in 16" and 17" sizes. If you need 4 season drivability, you should also look at the Bridgestone RE950. The 950 is available in 14", 16" and 17" sizes and has good year-round road performance. If you need a 15" size, check out the Dunlop SP Sport 5000. None of these tires will win an autocross, but for year-round street driving, they are all good choices.

If you want winter tires, it's hard to go wrong with Bridgestone Blizzak, Pirelli Winter or Dunlop Graspic. For those on a budget, the Winterforce M+S is a good choice, especially if you encounter more snow than ice.

The final word I'll leave you with is about looking for aftermarket wheels. Size-wise, 15" is the sweet spot for cost vs. performance vs. ride quality. My favorite wheel is the Kosei K1, which is inexpensive and has shown to be very durable in Spec Miata racing. Kazera also makes a great wheel, available from Tire Rack along with the Kosei. Another very popular option are Rota wheels, available from several on-line suppliers. Rota is known for very light weight, yet affordable wheels, most in the \$99 to \$140 range. What ever wheel you choose, make sure it's light weight! As a rule of thumb, if your wheels weigh more than 1 pound per inch of diameter, they are way too heavy for the Miata (15" and 15 pounds). If you look around, you can find plenty of good 13 pound wheels that look good and are budget friendly.

Tires and wheels are such a huge subject, it's impossible to discuss every option in one article. As always, you can shoot us an e-mail or call us over at AIM Tuning to discuss your particular application. To browse online, you should check out www.tirerack.com, www.onlinetires.com and www.good-win-racing.com.