

Car Show Preparation: (by Greg Bowron)

I have been asked many times what wax I think is the best on the market and for me this is an easy response... Zaino. I have tried many, many car waxes and in an earlier life I was the Production Control Manager in charge of making all the Simoniz and Prestone car care products for Union Carbide Corporation. I had monthly production/marketing/R&D meetings so I claim to know a little bit on the subject.

Waxes and polishes have advanced a great deal and some of what I think are the best products out there don't even contain any wax. However there are many that do and most of the products are really good.

If you are a purist and want your wax to actually contain waxes then go out and buy a car wax that contains a high percentage of carnauba wax, roll up your sleeves and go to it! You might even be able to still find a can of Simoniz Original wax which was around when our dads were waxing their cars. I've used plenty of it and I can tell you it is a blend of waxes, with carnauba and a mineral spirits solvent to mix it all in. It is a hard cake wax that goes on hard and comes off even harder and you get a respectable result for a whole lot of sweat! I think I threw my last several cans of it away a few years ago! There are a lot of variations of this, most of which are softer paste waxes or even liquid waxes that all go on easier and come off easier too. There are many other manufacturers; Turtle Wax, DuPont, Meguiars, Blue Coral, and Mothers just to mention a few. All are good respectable waxes that will yield good results and can be purchased at any auto parts store or discount chain.

There are many other products out there that are best described as polishes instead of waxes and they yield great results too, usually with less effort. I have tried many and have settled on a small number that I prefer to use. If I decide I want to use an actual wax product I prefer Zymol. I got started on this many years ago when I had my 1968 Vette repainted and the folks that did it gave me a jar of Zymol paste wax when I picked the car up. I used it exclusively for many years on my '68. It is a high quality carnauba based wax product that is a soft paste, relatively easy to use and is available in a liquid version that is a little easier to use. You can find it easily around town in auto stores and discount stores for about \$15 a bottle. What I like about this product is it gives a good shine, is relatively easy to use for a wax product and has a terrific coconut smell. Sorry, I like the smell of coconuts! What I dislike about it is that all wax products can leave a smeared or streaky finish. This is somewhat reduced by following your removal process with a cold water mist and final buff. Still these products can be difficult and the streaks can be quite visible in direct sunlight.

Beyond any doubt in my mind the best products for my Vette come from Zaino. Properly prepared and applied Zaino gives the deepest shine of any products I have used and is relatively easy to apply, much easier than most. I think they are starting to expand their sales base but I have always purchased it directly from them via their website. You can check their products out with the following link.

http://www.zainostore.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Category_Code=Zaino

If that is more than you want to do then I'll tell you what I use for my metal cars. It's called Liquid Glass. I used to use it on my old '84 Vette and still do on my "new" '84 Vette, my Custom Van, Donna's Solstice and our Cavalier. It comes in a rectangular metal can with a picture of a Vette on the front and has been around for many years, You can pick a can up at many places for about \$20. It does a respectable job, doesn't streak like wax products and what I like about it the

most is it is easier to apply and remove than any products I have ever used. For everyday appearance and protection on non show cars you can't beat it. My opinion of course.

One more thing I will mention is that we are blessed to have a Griot's Garage distribution center in Plainfield. They have many terrific products, systems and tools available to help the serious and casual car cleaners like you and me. Check them out on line to see their products. I have used many of them such as their power buffers, their buffing/polishing agents, etc. They have one of the best Interior Cleaner products I have found.

Okay, enough about the products. I called this column car show preparation so I'll quickly tell you what I go through to prepare one of my Vettes for a serious car show like the one Classical Glass puts on every year.

First I prep the engine. For this I make sure the engine is cold as I will apply water and don't want to stress crack anything when cold water hit's a hot engine! Next I remove all the easily removed parts such as the plastic fuel rail covers. Next step is to protect certain components that water could harm so use plastic to wrap any electronic parts or connections, cover your carburetor, etc. to keep water out of areas that it might harm. I caution you here because cleaning your engine has its risks that you could damage some components and need to replace them. I haven't had a problem yet but I'm always aware that this could happen and I am reluctant to volunteer to do this task for someone's car because I don't want to risk damaging someone's car. After I have considered what I must keep dry then I spray full strength Simple Green over the entire engine compartment and engine. This is a strong degreaser. I let it set for several minutes and then I carefully pressure wash the engine compartment and engine. This step is where the most significant risks are. First be careful not to get the nozzle too close to painted components as the high pressure could remove some of your paint not just the grease and grime and secondly be careful you don't force the high pressure water into any electrical or ignition components that could be damaged by the water. Properly done you will have removed virtually all of the built up grease, grime and road dust from your engine compartment. Now dry it so you don't leave water spots in your clean engine bay. I have found a leaf blower can be used to blow dry most of the water off and then some careful final work with some old towels will finish the job. The day of the show you can give the compartment some final work to properly detail it with any final detail spray and rags. Clean and replace your removed fuel rail covers, etc. and your engine looks as good as it can look. Finally, start it up and let it run a while so the engine heat dries up any residual water that could cause trouble later.

Next I clean the wheels and under car area. To do this I jack the car up one side at a time. I remove both wheels from the car and clean them. A product like Bleach White does a great job on the rubber tires. Clean and polish the wheels too. Since they are off the car you can do both sides of each wheel. While the wheels are off, scrub and dry the wheel well areas. I also clean the underside of the car. I first spray full strength Simple Green and let it set. Then I remove it with a pressure washer. Finally I dry it with old towels. Be extra careful to make sure you use both jacks and jack stands as one person was killed in Indy this year when his car fell off the jack while he was under it. This is the most dangerous operation you will perform. If you are blessed to have a car lift it will save you hours of time and much crawling around on the floor or in my case a gravel drive.

Next comes the paint. I did an article in more detail on this earlier this year but essentially follow the following steps for a complete job:

1. Wash the car a couple of times with a strong solution of Dawn liquid dish detergent. This contains degreasers and will essentially remove any previous waxes or polishes and leave your

car really clean. Note: Unless you are doing a complete re-wax always use car soaps only as they will NOT remove your waxes! Dry the car. I use a squeegee and then some clean soft bath towels. Don't let it air dry as it will water spot.

2. Next clay bar your car. An article earlier this year told how to do this and there are several "how to" videos available on line. Properly done, clay barring will remove all embedded impurities like tar, tree sap, etc. and leave a smooth glass like surface. Two simple hints; always use a lubricant and let the clay glide over the paint instead of using heavy pressure. Take your time and be careful as if not done properly you can add scratches to your finish.

3. If your finish is scratched or contains many swirl marks you may want to buff your finish at this point. I use Griot's Garage products for this as they have a buffer and 4 different buffing compounds designed to be as aggressive as your paint requires and give you professional results without damaging your finish. Do your homework here as improperly done you can damage your finish. Griot's has a video that you can watch and there are several "how to" sessions on line you can look at. Occasionally Griot's offers a 1 on 1 clinic at their Plainfield site that will give you great insight on how to use their products.

4. Next wax your car. You can use several products, all of which are good. Griot's Garage offers a paint sealant, polish and show wax series of products which are very good. There are many great waxes and polishes available. I use several applications of Zaino's Z2 product with the ZX added so I can do multiple coats on the same day.

5. The day of the show you will need to use a detail spray and do a final detail. There are several great products here. Griot's has one. Meguiars has a good one. Recently I have purchased what Mecum uses at their auctions and that product is very good. If you have used Zaino you may want to use their Z6 Gloss Enhancer for this.

Okay, now that your car is looking really spiffy lets tackle the interior! Again there are multiple products on the market. Like other things in life; most are good, some are better! Clean your leather seats, doors and dash with a good leather cleaner and conditioner. Some cleaners contain the conditioner, others use separate bottles for each. Don't forget the conditioner or your upholstery could dry out and prematurely crack. Vacuum your car. Take your floor mats out and scrub and vacuum them. I use two sets of mats; one for show, one for go. Clean any stubborn carpet stains. Clean out your glove box and console as many shows check these areas when judging and you lose points for clutter, dirt or articles that don't belong in a stock vehicle. Clean the trunk out and vacuum. Wash all your windows inside and out. There are many interior products you can use after cleaning to enhance appearance. There is a company in town, Car Brite, that sells some great products. Use these sparingly as they look terrific but some attract dirt and dust so while your car looks stunning the day of the show it quickly deteriorates as these products search the air for more dust to stick to them.

Finally the day of the show start final detailing. This includes checking those forgotten places like gas compartment doors and inside area, the inside of your soft top area, etc.

Getting prepped to show your car at its very best is a lot of work but your car will really pop and you'll feel very proud when you walk up front to retrieve your trophy because you will realize with all the beautiful cars out there the reason you won a trophy and someone else didn't is because of all your hard work and preparation!