



The CAR Enthusiast

May 2003

The President's Post

By Christian LeHew

A few weeks ago, I was up visiting my mother in New Jersey. One of the things I like to do when I'm up there is to walk through the backyard to the neighbor's house, and check out what kind of interesting cars he has back there. My favorite of which is a red '63 Triumph TR4 that he drives during the summer.

It usually brings a smile to my face when I see it, but I was saddened this last time. It was obvious that Tom hadn't driven the poor little car in several years. The tires were flat. The tonneau cover was ripped. And dust covered every square inch of the bodywork.

I instantly thought of my Miata. Not because of the amount of dirt on it, but because it was this Triumph that made me realize how cool little roadsters really were, and led to the eventual purchase of my Miata.

I still remember riding in that car like it was yesterday. Everything from buckling the 3" wide aircraft-style lap belts, to the way the wind went through my hair, to the way the exhaust burbled during downshifts.

Almost subconsciously, I still think of that TR4 whenever I drive the Miata on a warm summer day. The wind still blows through my hair. The exhaust has a great European burble on the downshifts. Heck, it's even the same colors.

So get out there and enjoy your Miata. Inflate the tires. Let the wind dust it off for you. Invite a friend along. Start a new memory.

Because even if you happen to forget about it for a while, rest assured there's someone out there who Hasn't.

Restoring Faded Paint

By Christian LeHew

Late in the 1990 model year, Mazda introduced a color that's now known as Silverstone Metallic. Unfortunately, much like the white paint on early Miatas, Silverstone had it's share of problems, and

sometimes Mazda even paid for a new repaint.

Unfortunately for Elaine (aka silvermiata), by the time she purchased her beloved 1990 Silverstone, the silver paint was well on it's way to being a dried out, cracking mess in a few areas, most notably the fenders. Granted, silver is a very difficult color to maintain, and she washes and waxes it religiously, but we decided to try some more aggressive measures to see if we could bring back the shine to the car, or at least improve upon it. As you can see, our work was cut out for us.



But before we dive right in, it should be explained exactly what we're doing, and why we're doing it.

What makes a good shine on your paint is the reflectivity and the smoothness of the paint. Imagine looking at a mirror. It reflects light quite well because of it's smooth surface. There's nothing on it to redirect or absorb light. However, if we give that mirror a texture (like sandblasting it), then suddenly the mirror's reflectivity is decreased. The way to restore it, in this case, would be to find a gentle abrasive and sand it back down smooth to regain the smooth surface and thus the reflectivity.

The same principal can be applied to your car's paint. Painting techniques may differ, but in the end, what makes for that great shine is the smoothing of the paint surface for maximum reflectivity.

So when you "wax" your car, what you should really be doing is applying a mild abrasive, like a liquid polish or one of the new clay bars (from Mother's Wax) to smooth out the surface imperfections. Wax is only a protectant, and generally does not have any abrasive qualities. Basically, you can spend all day putting 20 coats of Carnuba wax on the car, and still have the same shine you started with. Typically, what gets removed by the mild abrasives is dirt, oxidized (sunburned) paint, old wax buildup, etc. To get a great shine, this stuff needs to be cleaned off. In the case of Elaine's Miata, there was a lot of oxidized paint that needed to be removed.

Because the Miata's paint is applied pretty thin, we didn't want to attack it with anything too harsh just yet. We tried some high-quality Eagle One Wet wax/polish on a small area. After a bit of work, it looked like the whitened area (oxidized paint) could be removed and a fresh layer of paint could be revealed. Additional work with some polishing compound also supported this notion.

However, since we needed to remove a lot of oxidized paint and make the car look consistent, we went much more aggressively. We used Comet and lots of water, and stripped everything off of the front fenders, the hood, and the bumper. In some cases, we even tried a very gentle bit of wet-sanding with 2,000-

grit paper. **NOTE:** I recommend this ONLY if you've seen it done before, or if your paint is severely discolored. It's very easy to strip off the paint down the primer.

We then followed up the Comet and sandpaper with some polishing compound to build back the paint surface. If you're shopping for polishing compound, there are two kinds – red and white. They are both made from clay, however the red is much more abrasive than the white, and can actually leave deep scratches in the paint, so I recommend buying the white compound every time. I've also seen some detailers apply the polishing compound using cheesecloth rags, and while this does a nice job, it will rub raw the skin on your fingers. Just make sure to work in small sections, and don't let it dry out, as it will bake into the paint. If it's drying too fast, keep a spray bottle of water nearby and give it a good spray to rehydrate the polish.

After every step, I also recommend washing the car with dish soap. Now I know that the first thing everyone says is, "NEVER wash a car with dish soap." And they're right. Regular use will dry out the paint and strip off every last bit of wax on the car. However, in this case, that's exactly what I want it to do. When you're using things like Comet or polishing compound, you want to make sure it's completely cleaned off the car before you go to the next step. Dish soap works great for this, and also helps get off any road grime you may have missed.

Once the polishing compound was removed, and the shine was acceptable, we washed the car again, only this time with safer car wash soap. We then used the Eagle One Wet polish/wax to help smooth out the surface. While a lot of people like to apply it with a towel or sponge, I actually prefer to apply it by hand. That way, you can feel when it's drying out on you. Remember, when wax dries, it crumbles, and can lead to swirl marks in the paint as you remove it. Quite often, I'll even work it in a small area until I am happy with the finish, then I wipe it off before it dries. After the car's finished, you can go back with a soft towel and buff the paint to remove any additional wax residue that might remain.

So how'd it turn out? Well, for what we had to work with, it's not too bad. I think with another session, we could further enhance the color on the car, however matching this car 100% may be tricky. As it turns out, the detailing revealed that part of the car has been repainted a slightly different color. But we'll have to work on that!



It's what all the cool CAR members are wearing!

You may have seen a few members wearing club shirts at a recent event. And while we're trying to get them sold through Sak's Fifth Avenue, and are convinced they'll be the newest fashion trend since Tommy Hilfiger and DKNY, you can get in on the ground floor and make your own fashion statement with a cool new CAR t-shirt, clock, or BBQ apron (hey, our BBQ's are nearly as famous as our tech days). They're affordable, make great gifts and all proceeds go towards the CAR club and future activities. Check out the online site at <http://www.cafeshops.com/chesroadsters>.

We want to hear from you!

Have you just completed a cool project on your Miata that you want to share with other club members? Find a new road that seems like it was engineered *just for* Miatas? Got an idea for a future event or article? Then drop us a line and we'll put it in next month's issue. Deadline for submissions is May 21st. All submissions can be sent to Christian LeHew at hotroddesigner@hotmail.com.

Check your mailbox...

If you have been to a recent event, you may have already received a window decal. If you haven't, don't worry, we're having more printed up as we speak. We'll also be issuing official CAR club membership cards for discounts at area vendors or for making cool motorcycle sounds in the spokes of your bicycle. Due to some production issues, we got a little behind schedule on them, but rest assured, it's all on the way. If you have questions regarding your membership packages, please drop a line to the club Secretary and membership coordinator, Elaine Farrell, at silvermiata@msn.com.

Past Events

Hershey Autocross – April 6th

Even with a dark and chilly morning, 8 of us headed up to the Giant Center near HersheyPark for the first autocross of the 2003 season sponsored by the Appalachian Sports Car Club. The course was HUGE, the surface was pretty good, and I think the only cars more plentiful than Miatas were MINIs. Unfortunately, it was a new venue for ASCC, and late in the afternoon, everyone was informed that we needed to be off the course by 5:00pm. After some griping, things were worked out, and the CAR group went out for a post-game feast at a nearby restaurant. *Please note, if you raced that day, you should have received your entry money returned to you. If not, contact John Rudy at mail@johnrudy.com.*

Tech Day – April 12th

I think we set two new records that day. First was the 19 Miatas that showed up at Brad's for the tech day! WOW! The second, was setting up what I believe is currently the lowest street-driven Miata in the world, belonging to Special K. Kirk's Miata now sits somewhere around 3.5" off the ground, thanks to the beautiful Tein Flex coilover setup and the super-sexy EDFC controller that goes with them. Imagine being able to adjust the damper on the shocks while sitting in the driver's seat, and that's what the EDFC does via little servo motors on top of the shocks. Amazing stuff. Also amazing was Brad's wife's Spanish Chicken, which she grilled for us earlier that day. I don't know how to say "delicious" in Spanish, but it was so good that I don't think words in any language can express it!

Trip to PBC and Mazda Car Show – April 19th

No doubt you've probably already purchased something from Performance Buyers Club (PBC). Why? Because they have a great selection, good prices, and excellent customer service. So of course, when the

invitation went out to come visit the shop, how could we refuse? Along with the PACE Miata club, 16 Miatas and a scary RX7 met at PBC for a tour of the shop, some ogling of cars, and some breakfast. Afterwards, we headed up some great roads (led by Ben – djarum69) to the All-Mazda show that was put on by Mazda Tuning Magazine. Except it wasn't there. Due to some miscommunications (and misrepresentations) by the show promoters, it in fact had disbanded by the time we arrived. So with 16 Miatas on hand, we posed for a group shot and declared it the largest All-Miata show in Maryland history!

Upcoming Events

Please RSVP if indicated. For full details, check out the Events section of the CAR forum. If you have an idea for a future event, please drop a line to our Events Coordinator Christian LeHew (hotroddesigner@hotmail.com).

- May 10th – Tech day and meet & greet at Kevin J's
- May 11th – Autocross at Penn National Raceway, sponsored by the Susquehanna Sports Car Club
- May 17th – Carlisle Import/Kit/Replicar show with PACE
- June 21st – Tech Day, Pool Party, BBQ, and car show at ZoomZoomBrad's
- June 28th – Annual Eldersburg BBQ/SnoBall run and scenic drive
- July 25-27th – Mazda Rev It Up competition/expo at FedEx Field