

# Keeping Your Model A Looking Good

*The following article appeared in the April 2009 issue of the Sparton, the Hangtown A's newsletter.*

*Written by Glenn Johnson, who has a long history serving MAFCA.*

*Glenn presented this subject matter at the 2002 MAFCA National Convention.*

At the Hangtown A's March meeting, I gave a short tech talk about how I detail my Model A. I brought along many of the cleaning and polishing products that have used over the years with good results. I went over all of these products rather quickly so was asked to write them into an article for the Sparton news letter.

## **WARNING! THE MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT IN ALL OF THE FOLLOWING IS ELBOW GREASE. THE YOUNGER, THE BETTER.**

### ENGINE – PAINTING & CLEANING

When I'm having a new engine built first I have the block and the head chemically stripped to remove all rust and other gunk inside and out. I have all of the other external parts sandblasted.

### ENGINE PAINTING ON BARE STEEL OR CAST IRON

Prime everything except the exhaust manifold with one coat of red Rust-oleum primer #7769, either brush or spray.

Mix Ford Engine Green out of Rust-oleum paint with this formula:

2 parts hunter green #7738, 1 part royal blue #7727, and 1 part black #7779

I use Rust-oleum paint because it is very durable, heat resistant and, once dry, will not come off if you clean it with a solvent based cleaner

If some of your cad plated nuts and bolts have become tarnished or stained, touch them up with Rust-oleum aluminum #7715

Paint the sandblasted exhaust manifold and muffler with VHT #SP104 flat gray VHT exhaust paint is heat resistant up to 1500 degrees.

### CLEANING AND MAINTAINING YOUR ENGINE

After a week or longer tour, especially if some of the tour has been in the rain, I cover my distributor and carburetor with plastic bags and spray the whole engine with Simple Green. Mush it around with a paint brush and into all the tight spots to loosen the dirt and grease. Then rinse with a hose.

Blow off the excess water with your air hose and then spray everything with WD40.

Wipe everything dry with paper or terry cloth towels. Your engine will be beautiful again.

### RADIATOR

Your radiator is the most visible part of the front of your car. If it looks stained and dingy mask your radiator shell and headlight bar. Throw some old blankets or drop cloths over your hood and front fenders and spray can the front of your radiator with a light coat of semi flat or semi-gloss black enamel. A light coat will not affect the efficiency of your cooling system and a clean, black radiator will make your whole car look better.

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## CLEANING AND MAINTAINING YOUR CHASSIS

This is pretty much the same process as with the engine. Wash it, blow it off, spray it with WD40, wipe it dry, and touch up the cad plating.

## WHEELS AND TIRES

I use Bleach White, water and a scrub brush to clean my tires. While the wheels are still wet and soapy I use an old paint brush to clean the spokes where they're welded to the rims. I usually jack up the wheels to make it easier to also clean the backs of the tires and wheels. I then spray on some tire dressing and work it into the sidewall design with a scrub brush. Wipe off the excess and let dry. Use tire dressing that will actually dry. Some tire dressings stay sticky and collect dust and dirt the first time you have to pull off on the shoulder or a dirt road. Black Magic Tire Wet works well and seems to dry pretty much overnight. Next time you take your wheels off clean and maybe wire brush your lug Nuts. Set them all on a board and spray them with a spray can of silver paint. While they're drying is a good time to wash the backs of your wheels and tires. When you're ready to reinstall the wheels and lugs tighten the lugs as much as possible with your hands. Then cover each lug with a plastic baggy and tighten them with a SIX POINT socket. The baggy will keep the socket from scratching the silver paint much and your lug nuts will look new again.

## BLACK TOPS, RUNNING BOARDS & RUBBER FLOOR MATS

This is pretty much the same process as the tires. Wash, spray with tire dressing and wipe dry.

## TAN TOPS, SIDE CURTAINS AND TOP BOOTS

Usually a periodic good vacuuming works well but if they are really dirty, use water, laundry soap and a soft brush. Rinse thoroughly to avoid water stains.

On my side curtain plastic I use Meguiar's Mirror Glaze Clear Plastic Polish to clean and remove any scuffs.

## PAINT CHIPS

If you are lucky enough to have some paint left over from your restoration, use a small brush to fill just the chip to a level just above the surrounding paint. This may take a few coats. Let dry for several days. The longer, the better. Then use a small wood block, a piece of #800 wet/dry sandpaper lubricated with mineral spirits, (regular paint thinner) and color sand the filled chip down almost to the level of the original finish. Do the same thing with #1000 or #1500 wet/dry sandpaper until your filled chip is the same level as the original finish. Wipe dry often to check your progress. Use fine rubbing compound on a damp paper towel and polish the touch up area to match the surrounding area. Chip gone.

If you don't have any left over paint take a piece of your hood or whatever you want to match to Home Depot and have them computer match the color in gloss enamel. They will make a quart of your color for about \$10.

With a small brush touch up just the chips. This paint doesn't color sand like auto paint but it's cheap and chips that are the same color as your car will look a lot better than primer or bare metal spots.

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## RUBBING COMPOUND, POLISHES AND WAXES

I buy rubbing compound at the auto paint store. The stuff they sell at the chain auto parts stores just doesn't work very well.

When I use polish I use Meguiar's Mirror Glaze Professional Show Car Glaze #7. It will take out minor scuffs and remove oxidation.

I wax the top surfaces of my cars fairly often. I usually use Meguiar's PURE WAX carnauba blend, (blue bottle) or any brand of pure carnauba wax with no cleaners or other abrasives. Pure carnauba wax will not remove any of your paint and it dries clear so it will not leave any white residue around your fender welt or other details.

If you already have white residue in hard to get to places, use a soft tooth brush with some grease and wax remover to eliminate it.

## GLASS

Clean any overspray off your glass with a single edge razor blade. I clean my glass with Stoner Invisible Glass. It doesn't streak or haze and leaves no residue.

## CHROME & NICKEL

Most any chrome polish will do the job but if your chrome is really bad, try some rubbing compound.

Don't forget to paint the indentations in your bumper clamps Ford Blue.

I polish my nickel plating with Semichrome or Meguiar's all metal polish. Up here in the clear air, nickel doesn't tarnish like it did in Orange County.

## UPHOLSTERY

If you have leather upholstery you can't beat Lexol cleaner and preservative.

For removing spots from cloth upholstery or clothes, I use K2R spotlifter.  
I have not seen K2R in local stores but you can order it direct at [www.K2rbrands.com](http://www.K2rbrands.com)

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