

SO, YOU WANT TO PAINT YOUR CAR!

By Kim Pierce

Just go down to America's quick-paint body shop, drop your car off in the morning, plunk \$300 dollars down and pick it up in the evening, or maybe even after lunch. Oh and it comes with a guarantee...up to 60 mph the paint is guaranteed to stay on: after that you are on your own. It looks great at 100 feet (hundred-footer). Get close and you will find that everything was masked-off instead of being removed to duplicate factory procedure. Chip removal and ding removal is optional as is choice of color. Sanding could be optional also (not sure).

Sorry for the introduction, just couldn't pass up the opportunity. After being involved in the auto body industry for more than 40 years one tends to be a little cynical about shops like that. I will attempt to share the complexities of the paint process as it relates to restoration and show quality refinish jobs. This is written assuming the car is disassembled and all moldings and trim are off the car. This process also applies to any door jambs, underside surfaces, engine hoods and trunk lids. The degree of perfection will need to be decided by you on those hidden items. These items would significantly impact the amount of time and material utilized. If you read the summer 2015 *Bumper Guardian* article on Bondo, I will start at the point I left-off. You may want to re-read it first. So, we left off at the application of a high-build primer. After that step you should apply a guide coat. There are several products for that, either powder form or contrasting color to the primer from a spray can. Then comes the sanding, a lot of sanding! Always an enjoyable experience! Get ready to lose all of your fingerprints as they will be removed by the sandpaper. I start with 220-grit on a sanding board or block. Never use just sandpaper by hand, except for in hard-to-reach areas, as it will leave waves from your fingers that will be seen after the paint is applied. Make sure any body lines are protected, by taping, as not to flatten them and ruin any contour. The entire sanding process is to remove imperfections, refine body lines and gaps, and make the panel as flat as possible as you proceed. At times you may have to step down to a more coarse paper to achieve the desired



shape in a certain area. Make sure you finish that area with the same grit as the other areas as not to have rough spots. The next step, after many hours of block sanding and shaping is to apply the next layer(s) of high build primer, again applying a guide coat after priming. The next choice of sandpaper will depend on preference and panel condition. I typically use 400-grit wet on a sanding block or board. Water isn't dusty and any grit is washed away preventing particles from getting trapped between the sandpaper and body that may cause deeper scratches. Utilize the same process for block sanding, as above. After the entire surface has been sanded I then go back over the 400-grit sanded area with 600-grit wet to knock down the 400-edges. Some painters will prefer different grits depending on the paint they will be using or if it is a metallic color. At this point, after many hours of tedious sanding and shaping, the car is ready for paint. I apply a sealer coat first, usually DP. Then apply the color coats. If you are using single-stage paint (non-clearcoat) make sure there is enough material applied to be able to color sand and polish. If using two-stage paint (base paint with a clearcoat), just apply enough color to get coverage then apply the clearcoat, applying enough to be able to sand and polish. The car is now painted and the work is done...WRONG. More sanding coming your way. Depending on the how the paint laid down i.e. orange peel, dry spots, sags, drips, runs, dust particles in topcoats that will look like rocks, those will dictate the choice of sandpaper. I know "good painters" don't get any of those happening in their paint jobs...yea right! It happens to the best.

Continued in the next issue.

