PRODUCT CHECK

CLEANING BAKELITE

There are several items made of bakelite on older Citroens (ash-trays, junction boxes for wiring, voltage regulator cover, control knobs, steering wheel etc). The surface of these items become very dull and grotty after 30 or so years of exposure.

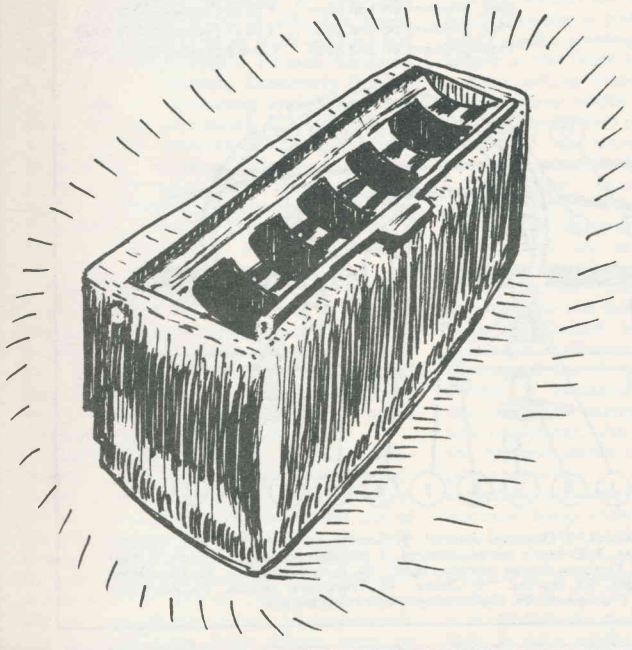
I have found that the common household liquid cleaner called "Handy Andy" (Lever and Kitchen P/L, Sydney) works magically in rapidly cleaning and restoring the colour to such surfaces. I apply the Handy Andy undiluted to the surface with a scrap of cloth, leave for about 10 minutes, and wash off with water. Sometimes, rubbing with the cloth may help, especially where there are bright but grotty metal components involved. Repeat application of Handy Andy if necessary to complete the job (rare).

Handy Andy contains ammonia and I suspect this is the basis for the dramatic action on the bakelite. When treating bits that have electrical functions (e.g. the base of a regulator etc), try to avoid getting the cleaner into the corrosion-sensitive "works" (contacts, coils etc) if possible, and dry off any wash-water quickly (hair dryer etc). If you have any doubts, spray a water repellant (Selley's RP7, WD 40 etc) into the corrosion-sensitive areas.

The bakelite comes up with a clean but dull finish. To retard the formation of further grot (not in your car surely!) and to give a beaut shiny finish to the object, you may consider applying a coat of clear non-yellowing lacquer. I am most impressed with GUD Three Bond 6505 clear lacquer for this purpose, once the surface is clean and dry (see Product Check in this issue of F.D.).

Bill Graham.

P.S. An old tooth-brush is useful for cleaning into intricate shapes, nooks and crannies. It is not recommended that the brush be re-used for its original purpose - better to put up with bad breath!



CLEAR PROTECTIVE LACQUER - THREE BOND 6505.

Many years ago, one of the service station chains (Mobil?) had a system where one could have the engine and engine compartment steam cleaned and then sprayed over with a resistent clear lacquer. The lacquer made the under bonnet area look sparkling and fresh like a million bucks. In addition, it sealed the surfaces against uptake of grime and water so that subsequent cleaning was easier and less likely to cause damage in itself. Just the system, I thought, to protect and enhance the under bonnet of the Traction, especially that new and grime-sensitive cotton-braided wiring loom.

Now, I think I've discovered the modern equivalent. It is called "Three Bond 6505 gloss-retaining clear spray lacquer with anti-corrosion agent". It comes in a spray pack(250 g nett) from Japan and is distributed by :
Goss Gasket Manufacturing Company P/L (GUD), 30 Gilbert Rd, Preston, Vic.

"6505 is a clear lacquer with anti-corrosion agent which dries quickly and keeps surfaces glossy. It forms a clear protective film on steel, brass, copper, aluminium and rubber.

6505 can be used to lacquer your car, truck or boat engine, rubber bumpers, aluminium wheels, agricultural machines, bicycles, fishing rods, tools and general household applications. The dried film resists weather, salt water, oil and heat with no change in colour and stays firmly on plated surfaces"

Treated surfaces should be clean, polished if appropriate, and dry.

I did a quick check of the product over enamelled and paper surfaces, and on a restored Traction ash-tray (bakelite and chrome-plate). I also tried it on scraps of printed cotton cloth and velvet, and on upholstery vinyl and leather. The effect was good - a shiny, quick-drying surface which enhanced the basic underlying colours. The film seemed tough and adherent. A second coat is probably advisable (after 10 mins.) to ensure complete coverage, especially on porous surfaces.

My can cost $3.65 from a local auto supply shop - perhaps a discount price. I thought it a real steal, and I have high hopes for it.

Bill Graham.