Replacing Glass From Scratch

Correct replacement windows are available with all the proper date codes and stamps and won't affect the value of your car

by Colin Comer

If it catches your thumb, it's done

Q I have a well-worn but mostly original 1963 Split-Window with a 250-hp 327 and a 4-speed that I've finally decided to make into a winter project. I've had it for about five years now, and it's been a good driver, but I'd like to clean it up a bit.

All the glass in the car is original, but it's turned foggy in a few places, and the driver's rear piece has a few heavy scratches in it. Is there a way to fix this type of damage to glass, or am I stuck replacing it? If I replace a few pieces, what will that do to the value of the car once it's done?—***J.W., Jacksonville, FL***

A *By "foggy," I trust you mean some delamination is occurring around the edges, and unfortunately there is no way to correct that without replacement. With scratches, the rule of thumb is if the scratch is deep enough to catch a fingernail, it cannot be polished out. If they are not that deep, you can attempt to polish them on your own with one of the many kits offered through companies like Eastwood (www.eastwood.com) or have a professional glass company do it for you.*

If all else fails, replacement glass is available with the proper date codes and stamps through Zip Products (www.zip-corvette.com) and others. For example, the driver's half of the rear window is around $350 with the proper stamps and codes. As far as value, if done properly, none of this will have a material affect on the value of your Split-Window.

1963 Split-Window—find replacement glass with correct date codes

First, find a good shop you trust

Q My weekend driver is a '77 Corvette coupe with a stock 180-hp engine and an automatic transmission. I love driving the car, but I'd like to get some more power out of it while still complying with Oregon's emissions regulations. I know there are lots of aftermarket parts available, but where should I start?—***C.M., Wilsonville, OR***

A *The simple answer is to start with your checkbook and a cab ride to the local Chevrolet dealer. Pick out the new 500-hp Corvette of your choice and fear not emissions tests. Kidding aside, as you noted there are a multitude of options to give a little more jet to your Corvette.*

First I'd recommend consulting with a competent mechanic who can give your car a full physical, including a leak-down test. If the engine and drivetrain check out as healthy, look for CARB-approved parts and be sensible. A good aftermarket carb, intake, ignition system, and exhaust will make a world of difference—if installed by somebody who is methodical and has a "big picture" approach.

And if simple bolt-ons aren't enough for you, there is always the crate motor route, with any number of "strokers" with more cubic inches and/or fuel injection, forced induction, etc.

Another angle is to consider some drivetrain modifications that further help to wake up performance with zero impact on emissions. For example, a steeper rear axle ratio will really help if your car has anything under around 3.50:1. You can also swap in a modern 4-speed automatic transmission with overdrive, which combined with a steep rear axle ratio will give you great acceleration in gears 1–3, with relaxed cruise rpm in the overdrive 4th gear. Just remember, don't go it alone; find a good shop you trust and come up with a game plan together that takes your goals (and budget) into consideration. Good luck!

Nothing too difficult about a C3 brake job

Q I have 1969 427/400 convertible that I bought recently at auction. It looks good and it runs well but it's got 79k miles on it and it needs brakes—especially as it's an automatic. I've heard that bleeding back brakes on C3s can be very difficult. Is there a foolproof way to make it easy—a special bleeder kit perhaps?—***D.C., Caldwell, ID***

A *There is nothing particularly difficult about bleeding brakes on a C3, assuming the system is clean and operating properly. The best way to start with a new brake system—after the master cylinder has been properly bench bled and the proportioning valve is working correctly—is simply to gravity bleed it first. Keep the car level and crack open all four brake caliper bleeder screws and wait until a steady stream of clear fluid runs from each one, with no bubbles.*

In our shop, once we either gravity bleed or bleed using a vacuum-bleeding tool at the calipers, we always finish the job off with a good old-fashioned pressure bleed. You know, the one where one poor soul operates the brake pedal and another circles the car cracking the bleeder screws one at a time. Always start at the caliper that is furthest from the master cylinder, and work your way to the closest one. At this point you should be rewarded with a nice, firm brake pedal.

Check for leaks, clean up any errant fluid from the bleeding procedure, and be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions on bedding-in your new pads and rotors. Lastly, although I know many swear by it, I am not a fan of DOT 5 silicone brake fluid. Invariably, at some point, cars with DOT 5 always seem to have somebody top off the fluid with DOT 3 or 4 fluid, which contaminates the whole system. Plus, silicone fluid is known for a slightly spongy pedal, as it compresses more than conventional fluid.

I far prefer to use the best DOT 4 fluid I can find and I flush the system every one to two years. If you do that, I guarantee brake problems will be a thing of the past for you, especially if your C3 gets fitted with stainless steel sleeved calipers. I'm sure you'll enjoy your 'Vette twice as much when it stops as well as it goes.

Show car fan belts good only for shows

Q My 1967 427/435 coupe just came back from three years at the restoration shop, assuring my children that they will need scholarships to attend college.

I've owned the car since 1986 and driven it over 50,000 miles prior to taking the plunge and having it restored to concours standards. Here's the rub: I've driven it five times since it has been back, and every time I get it over 4,000 rpm I hear a "pop" noise, the amp gauge shows a discharge, and I open the hood to find the fan belt dangling around the water pump pulley. What gives? In all my years of driving it prior to restoration it never did this, and it lived at over 4,000 rpm in my younger days. Is the alternator locking up? Too much resistance from the water pump? Help.—***D.M., Tucson, AZ***

A *I bet it is none of the above. Doing my best impersonation of "Click and Clack," I'm going to guess the "pop" is your fan belt slapping the hood. I'm also betting the restorer used the OE-replica cloth-covered fan belts that are required for NCRS and Bloomington Gold judging. If your belts have a cloth backing and molded GM part numbers, they are the culprits.*

I don't know who engineered these glorified shoelaces, but the only place they should be used is on a car that will be idled on and off a show field. They do not have a deep enough "V" to keep them from twisting around in the pulley grooves like a piece of licorice. At high rpm, they actually flip inside out and then flop right out of the pulley—in this case your alternator pulley.

Go to your local NAPA store and buy the best replacement V belts they sell. Take a little lacquer thinner and remove the modern silk-screened part numbers from the back of the belt so they don't stick out as being modern. Install them with the proper tension (which is roughly when you can rotate the belt 90 degrees in your fingers mid-point between the alternator and water pump pulleys, if you don't have a belt tension gauge handy), and go for a drive.

As far as those reproduction belts, use them only for shows—or to hold a screen door open on a nice day. Oh, and good luck with that college tuition thing... ■