

## The Trim Test

**Posted on Saturday 29 April 2006 at 11:50 pm**

I have a [long list of car cleaning products](#) to keep my MINI detailed in the summer, but there is one thing that I can't seem to keep looking good: the plastic fender trim. After about a year, the trim starts looking worse and worse, holding dirt and wax residue in its texture. I have tried a number of products to keep it looking good but they never seem to last more than a few days. The forums have even had long discussions such as [this one on NAM](#) on products to use but don't really come to a great conclusion.



So I decided to take things into my own hands and rounded up all my trim cleaning products, including some new ones I picked up over the winter, and applied them next to each other. The goal of this test is not to see how they look immediately after applying, but how long they last, and their resistance to rain. So after a wash, I taped off eight sections of a fender, and applied each product. (click photos for larger)



The products applied, in order, are:

[Sonus Trim & Motor Kote](#)

[Vinylex](#)

[Aerospace 303 Protectant](#)

[Sonus Tire & Bumper Dressing Gel](#)

AutoGlym Bumper Care

Planters Peanut Oil

Armor-All Protectant

[Zaino Z16 Perfect Tire Gloss](#)

Then after a few days (mostly sunny, with one short drizzle), I took this photo:



The Motor Kote and Armor-All were nonexistent. The AutoGlym did not look so good, some areas seemed even whiter than normal. The peanut oil was covered in dust and dirt that stuck to its oily surface. Vinylex ran a little in the drizzle but looked pretty good. The 303 looked almost as good as the best two, the Sonus and Zaino.

But then the true test: We had two days with plenty of rain. Though it never rained hard, nor did I drive in much more than a drizzle, clearly it was enough:



Except for the vertical edge, all products were almost completely washed off, except for the peanut oil. Clearly, everything else is water based.

But I don't want to say the peanut oil is the winner. It is a mess to apply. The plastic looks way too oily. And it attracts dirt. So, sadly I'm going to have to try even more products. If you know of others, especially any that can survive the rain, please mention them and I may try them in the future.

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**12 Comments for 'The Trim Test'**

1.

giacomo  
April 30, 2006 | [9:01 am](#)

I didn't notice any Back to Black made I think by Meguires. I found it the best but I live in SoCal and out weather is less harsh.

2.

Steve OH  
April 30, 2006 | [9:10 pm](#)

Looking forward to further tests and hopefully better results. Thanks for sparing me time wasted messing with peanut oil!

3.

Theo  
May 1, 2006 | [10:32 am](#)

So, Josh ...

Now that the test is over, what did you end up using to cover the test area? Zaino, 303 or Sonus?

Theo

4.

[mdsbrain](#)  
May 1, 2006 | [1:46 pm](#)

I like your test as I have the exact same problem. I find that Meguiars plastic and vinyl protectant works pretty well for a few days. But I wonder if like tire shine needs to be reapplied about once a week to keep up the shine.

5.

[db](#)  
May 1, 2006 | [5:38 pm](#)

I have also tried the Meguiars and it works better than Armorall here in SoCal.

Something that I have found to help is when applying products to either the tires or the trim, is to not wipe it off. I just pull the MINI out into the street (which is covered with oil anyway) and go to town. I let it sit for a minute or two then pull back into the driveway and don't drive for at least an hour.

Even in rain, Armor-all lasts about 3 days like this. Without rain almost a week.

6.

giacomo  
May 1, 2006 | [7:22 pm](#)

BACK TO BLACK is still the best... not the vinyl dressing stuff. You put it on leave it alone for a while then buff it. It will last quite a while.

7.

[Josh Wardell](#)

May 1, 2006 | [11:04 pm](#)

giacomo...I will be testing back to black and similar dyes in the next test.

theo...not sure what you are asking.

db,,the armor-all didn't last more than a few minutes. As soon as it dried, it looked like nothing was there.

Maybe you were using a different product. I wouldn't use it anyway as their protectant can dry out certain vinyls.

8.

giacomo

May 2, 2006 | [8:42 am](#)

I stopped using almost all Armor All products years ago. Slimy stuff. I think MINI manufactures better dressings than that stuff.

9.

Theo

May 2, 2006 | [9:40 pm](#)

Just wondering which product you picked to retreat the area you used for the test. This assumes that you are ending the test. Put another way. which product do YOU feel is the best?

Theo

10.

Adam

May 6, 2006 | [2:18 am](#)

Josh:

Couple of suggestions for you.

First - for exterior trim, this is a product that lasts and lasts - not greasy or too shiny. It's the only thing that I've found that works when the pebble-grain trim has gotten wax on it, or is chalked-out from age — [POR GLO](#)

For window cleaner, I've been using One Grand's window cleaner and their blue window towels for maybe 25 years. This stuff is alcohol based - doesn't streak. I've not found anything better. [One Grand glass cleaner](#). I still use a number of One Grand's other products on my antique cars and have since high school in L.A. - a loooooong time ago. I've switched to Zaino for the modern cars, including the MCS, though.

=Adam=

Hollis, NH

11.

iriemanhq  
August 9, 2006 | [12:54 pm](#)

*late reader here...* nice comprehensive write-up- saves us all a lot of trouble. i've recently read that the "best" product of all, is the MINI branded "trim cleaner". Any experience with this product?

12.

paul  
August 27, 2006 | [11:30 am](#)

Have you tried poorboys trim restorer or black again?  
I have had good results with both.  
Our 06 astro mcs is in production week 34 and waiting for a boat!

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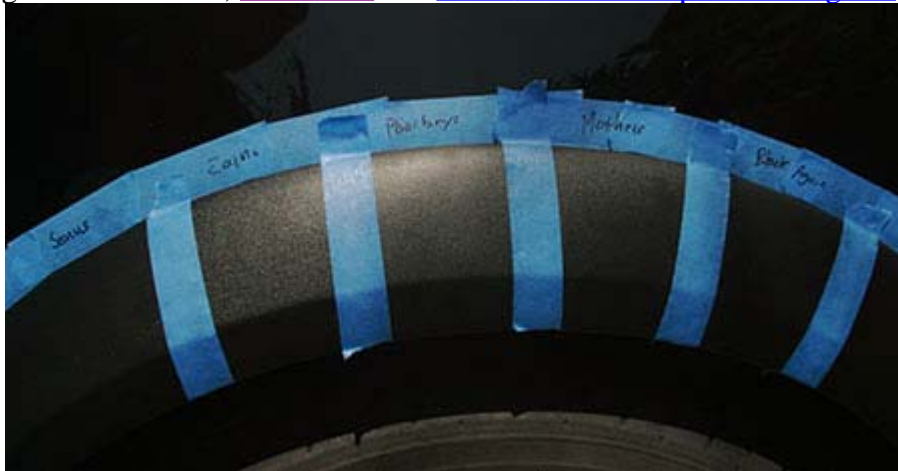
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**Posted on Wednesday 23 August 2006 at 10:29 pm**

I fully intended to find the best wheel arch trim reconditioning product this spring. After I ran [my first trim test](#), I found that all products were washed away with just a day or two of rain. I don't think you should have to detail your trim every week so I've been looking for a product that lasts, even through a few days of rain or a car wash.

After the first test did not find any qualifying products, I researched in many forums and found a few more recommendations. The second round added [Poorboy's Trim Restorer](#), [Mothers Back to Blackk](#), and [Black Again](#) to the products with a slight edge in the first test, [Zaino Z16](#) and [Sonus Tire & Bumper Dressing Gel](#).



But again, all the products were almost completely gone after a week and a day of rain. In fact, the Poorboys turned even whiter:



We haven't had much rain lately, and combined with my lack of time with moving to my new house I haven't been able to start a third comparison test until finally yesterday. This time, I waited till I found a product that did seem to work on its own, and am now testing it along with others in a proper comparison.



Stay tuned for the results in a few weeks—if we get some rain!

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## 2 Comments for 'More Trim Testing'

1.

[murmini](#)

August 23, 2006 | [10:38 pm](#)

This is very interesting! I just had a phone conversation with Sal Zaino yesterday expressing the issue of the 'whitening' on the MINI black trim. He is convinced that the issue is the depth of texture to the material and suggested I clean it with peanut butter (I used unsalted organic for the record!) then wash it and go over it with Z-16. I tried it (much to the confusion of my next door neighbor) and so far it looks great and it rained today..

2.

ltzmtor

August 24, 2006 | [9:43 am](#)

I just used some of the Back to Black last week before I went to the Monterey Historics... still looks great today, 8-24! Of course no rain but I have washed it since and it's still spot on black.

I find leaving it set for at least an hour then buffing and adding another coat and rebuffering when it was dry worked wonders.

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[« Finally a Wash and Wax](#)

[The Final Trim Test: We Have a Winner!](#)

### Posted on Sunday 10 September 2006 at 10:03 pm

This year I set out to find a wheel fender trim treatment product that would restore my horrible-looking trim to its original look while standing up to rain and washings. If you've read the [first](#) and [second](#) tests, you would know that the many, many products out there for the purpose wash away with a day or two of rain. Like many of [my preferred detailing products](#) like Zaino and Aquapel, I want something that will last through our New England weather and doesn't require application every week or two. After many tries, I finally found it.

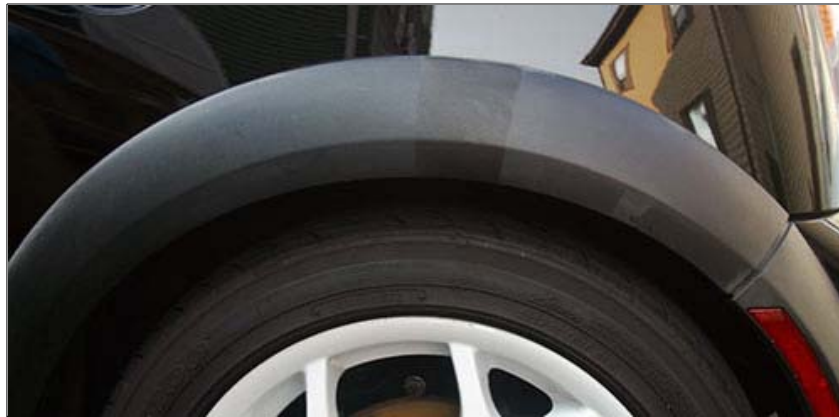


The final test mixes some old products with some new: Zaino Z16 and 303 Protectant were previous favorites. Mothers Back to Black I wanted to give a second chance as I continued to read recommendations. Forever Black, which thinks differently and is actually a black dye treatment. I added extra virgin olive oil next to the usual Peanut oil as some said it would be less dusty and oily.

Soon after I started the test, I was "blessed" with two days of medium to light rain, and as before, the vinyl treatments were gone:



Though I don't have a photo, the Z16 took two days to wash off while the other two were gone in the first day. The forever black was undaunted and the oils were dusty and dirty but going strong. Another week passed with a little more rain, and I washed the car. And then there was one:



[Forever Black](#). It comes as a kit with a cleaning solution, and the dye has an applicator built into the bottle. Easy to apply, however you will want to use painter's tape to prevent any from getting on your paint (it can be wiped off with water before it dries, but why chance it), as I have done with all these tests. Actually, I had basically given up after failing so many products, and forever black was my last chance. I tested it on another spot well over a month before I started this test, and that spot is still black to this day. I'm so happy to have good-looking trim again!

Below is a list of all the products reviewed in my trim tests and my findings:



#### [Forever Black](#)

Extra Virgin Olive Oil - very slightly less dusty than peanut oil

Peanut Oil - household oils last a few days of rain but are messy and attract dirt

[Zaino Z16 Perfect Tire Gloss](#) - Lasted through a day of rain but not two

The remaining products washed away in a day of rain or less:

[Mothers Back to Black](#)

[Black Again](#)

[Sonus Tire & Bumper Dressing Gel](#)

[Sonus Trim & Motor Kote](#)

[Vinylex](#)

[Aerospace 303 Protectant](#)

Armor-All Protectant

AutoGlym Bumper Care

[Poorboy's Trim Restorer](#)

Before application, I suggest taping off with [3M Scotch-Blue Painter's Tape](#), and scrubbing the trim clean with a [Mr. Clean Magic Eraser](#).

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## 12 Comments for 'The Final Trim Test: We Have a Winner!'

1.

Shinka

September 10, 2006 | [10:17 pm](#)

Awesome. Thanks for doing the hard work for us. It's very much appreciated.

2.

[blalor](#)

September 10, 2006 | [10:42 pm](#)

I noticed in your last post (with the dog) that your trim looked really pretty bad; any ideas why it's gotten that way? I'll look more closely at my 4-05 build MCS tomorrow, but I don't think it's anywhere near as faded. Do I just have to wait a little longer? 😊

By the way, I'm in the midst of relocating to Nashua, NH; I'm looking forward to meeting up with some New England Motorists!

3.

[midsbrain](#)

September 11, 2006 | [7:56 am](#)

Thanks! I'm gonna pick up some of that forever black. I think it will also bring back the black in my Aero Kit grill.

4.

Theo

September 11, 2006 | [8:59 am](#)

I've noticed that my trim has held up well. However, I have garaged my MINI from new and I think that has a lot to do with preserving the trim. Fortunately, you now have shelter for your MINI!!! My guess is that the major cause of the trim fading is UVA/UVB-induced effect of sunlight; perhaps pollution has an effect as well.

I have always used 303 protectant on the trim, but as you point out, Josh, it does wear off. I usually quickly wipe the trim down with 303 after I wash the MINI. But I do have some spots that need constant care (front trim) so I think I'll try the Forever Black product and top it off with an application of 303 now and then.

Thanks for taking the time to perform these tests, Josh!

Theo

5.

[Ian C.](#)

September 11, 2006 | [9:40 am](#)

The other thing that "fades" (discolors) the trim is frequent washing/waxing - I bet Josh does more of that than anyone else



Well done Josh for pursuing this to the end; I'm glad you got a result - though my wheel arch painting on GBMINI#2 might still be a better solution 😊

6.

ScottinBend

September 11, 2006 | [2:51 pm](#)

Great work Josh !

Another vendor for Forever Black is Bavarian Autosport at [www.bavauto.com](http://www.bavauto.com).

I have some on order now, saw the ad in their latest catalogue and decided to give it a try before I saw your write-up on it. Sometimes things do work out for me !! LOL

7.

ltzmtor

September 11, 2006 | [7:27 pm](#)

Gonna have to get some of this stuff and try it as I like the fact that it is black and stains the trim area.

Since I don't live in a rainy climate I can't do the rain test but it does get very very hot here for months and B2B works for me here in SoCal if applied like I do. I have hand washed my MINI twice since returning from Monterey and the B2B coated trim is still spot on. I will say this about B2B it does merely mask the stain.

Thanks for the advice on trim detailer I'll get some.

RB

8.

Paul

September 16, 2006 | [11:04 am](#)

Thanks for the time and effort you put into this. Time to order this product and add to the collection.

Cheers!

9.

[pbraun](#)

September 20, 2006 | [12:53 pm](#)

Josh - thank you for doing such a great job with the testing and reporting of these products! Very interesting and informative!

10.

[Car Radiator Man](#)

October 10, 2006 | [6:36 pm](#)

Looks as if it might be pretty good. Well I need to spruce up mu rims and might try out fovever black.

11.

Larry Bryans  
November 3, 2006 | [12:04 am](#)

**I was wondering if you have a dealer in Canada? Please let me know. I live in Calgary, Alberta and am interested in your product. If not in Canada please let me know how much extra it would cost to ship here. Thanks, Larry Bryans**

12.

Jack  
June 29, 2008 | [12:31 pm](#)

I actually just applied this product to my Jeep Wrangler flares - which had oxidized to a milky, splotchy grey. Like you, I've tried other products, only to see all of my hard work "wash away" in very short time.

I just used plain old masking tape to protect the body - I had a few splotches of ink that bled through, but they came off with water - following about 3 hours of multiple applications. The flares were in BAD shape. They'd make the worst shots of your mini look like new - I mean, I had actually little white spots all over the flares. But they - it's a Jeep, not a show car 😊

At any rate, we'll see how long this lasts. But I've been advised to hit it with the 303 every few weeks to protect the dye.

And I immediately followed up the application (after drying) with 303 - and will do so after every wash.

If it does end up washing off or fading away, I'll be back with an extremely negative follow-up - as it took me about 8 coats to get it back to black.

It's still not show quality - but it's better than the milky splotchy grey - and I'm please so far with the initial application.

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