

Words & photos: Martin Vincent



Wax, face paint, rollbar and extra cooling enhance our MX-5



Our Project Roadster is in pretty good shape right now. The chassis is sorted thanks to its supremely effective Koni/Whiteline/Fat Cat Motorsports suspension package along with the lightweight Rota Grid alloys and sticky Yokohama Spec-2 rubber (though it still needs a four-wheel alignment check to make the most of it).

Our next big task is to upgrade the braking system. Then we'll take a look at gaining more engine performance. But first, we have a few minor but important tasks to carry out.

Rust protection

Having spent a lot of time sourcing a really good rust-free Eunos Roadster R-Limited, we wanted the bodyshell to stay that way. Wax protection is the best form of protection against road salt so we ordered some Dinitrol products from Frost Auto Restoration. We pressure-washed the

wheelarches and floorpan and allowed it to dry off fully in preparation for the wax treatment.

Dinitrol Metallic Wax comes in aerosol cans, of which we used six (£9 a can) on the underside and wheelarches, paying special attention to seams. We also coated the suspension in the same way, having first neutralised surface rust with a wire brush and Dinitrol Converter (£12.50 a can). Spraying on the wax coating is a messy business so you need to wear protective clothing plus a mask and eye protection.

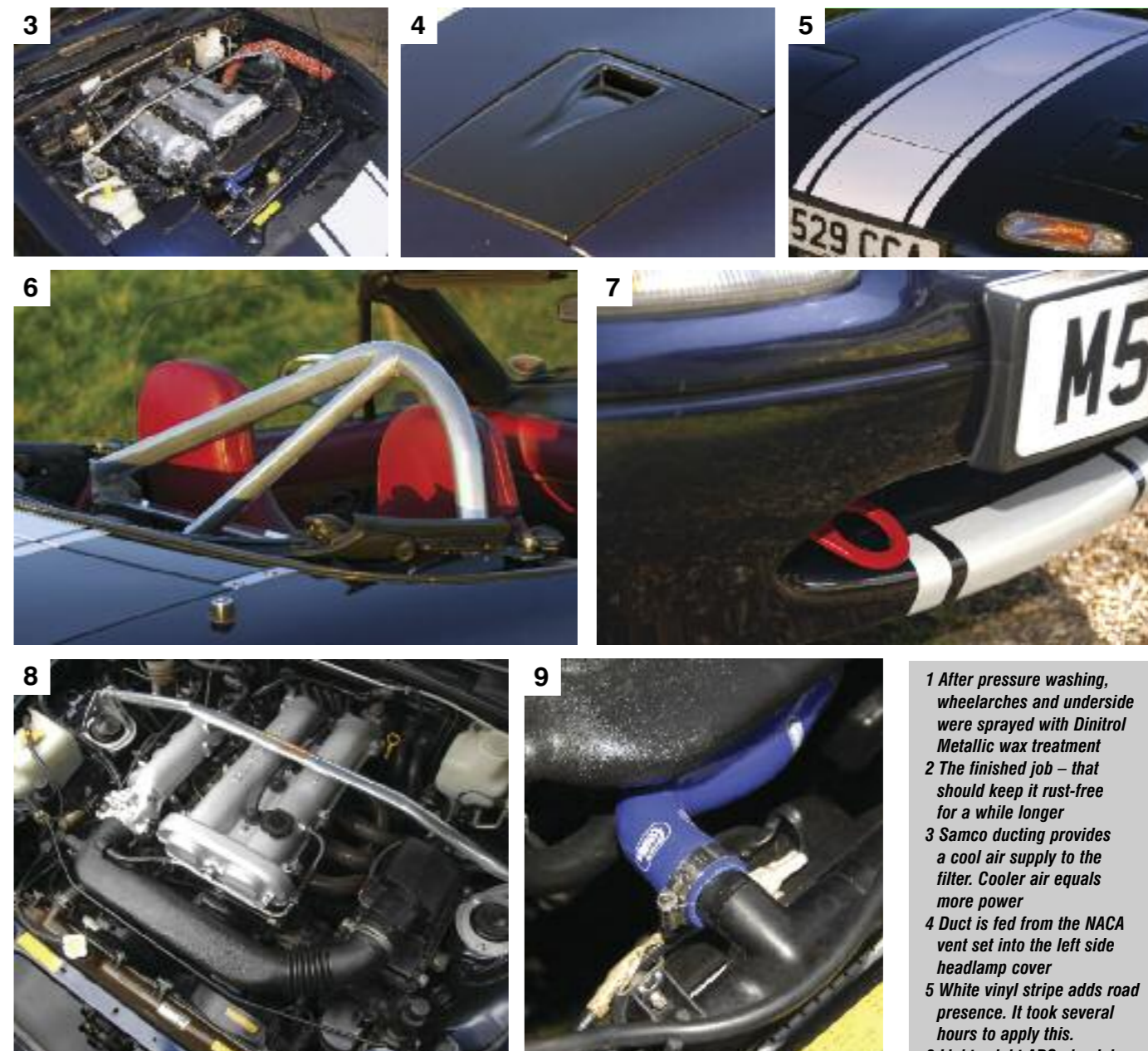
The insides of the doors were treated with Dinitrol ML cavity wax (£9 a can), applied with an extension tube and 360-degree spray head as they're pretty inaccessible. We had to remove the door trim panels, while some of the carpeting had to be rolled back and some plastic interior trim had to come off to gain access to the sills and the floor crossmember box section. We sprayed into existing apertures

that are conveniently filled with plastic plugs. The whole cost was under £70 and we've achieved really effective protection.

White stripe

While the Satellite Blue coachwork does look good, we wanted more road presence. After a bit of thought, we decided on a broad white centre stripe and white door mirrors. The vinyl stripe kit was supplied by www.uk-car-graphics.co.uk for £20.

Fitting the vinyl is a bit fiddly. The trick is to apply the sticky vinyl on to a thoroughly wetted surface and then, once the vinyl is in position, you can squeeze the water and air bubbles out using a credit card, working towards the edges. If it's not quite right, it can be lifted and repositioned. Any remaining air bubbles can be removed by piercing with a sharp scalpel and smoothing flat. The compound curved areas around the bumper and bootlid were trickier. Give yourself plenty of time – it took me about half a day to do the whole thing.



- 1 After pressure washing, wheelarches and underside were sprayed with Dinitrol Metallic wax treatment
- 2 The finished job – that should keep it rust-free for a while longer
- 3 Samco ducting provides a cool air supply to the filter. Cooler air equals more power
- 4 Duct is fed from the NACA vent set into the left side headlamp cover
- 5 White vinyl stripe adds road presence. It took several hours to apply this.
- 6 Lightweight ARC aluminium bar also provides mounts for race harnesses
- 7 Sturdy tow hooks are a requirement for track work
- 8 Engine bay main castings painted silver and all lubricants changed for Millers Motorsport synthetics
- 9 For reliability, the old rad was replaced with a new one and the hoses changed for Samco Sport silicon

To finish the look, the door mirrors were removed, masked up, then painted white and lacquered using rattle-cans. The vinyl stripe should be easy to remove without paint damage using a hair-dryer to warm up the area first.

Rollbar

Our racy look went one stage further with an ARC alloy rollbar, bought second-hand from an MX5Nutz forum member. This isn't a true rollbar because the centre bracing strut leads to an unsupported area of the bodywork. We do have plans to add reinforcement in that area but the main reason for fitting the rollbar was to replace the heavy steel cockpit brace. Not only is the ARC bar much lighter, it also provides mountings for race harnesses.

We rejected using one of the usual JDM-type four-point or six-point rollcages because we felt that these can actually do more harm than good in a front or rear collision (much more likely than a roll) due to the placement of the strut tube bolt so close behind the driver's (and passenger's) head. So we'll stick with the ARC bar for now even if it isn't a 'proper' rollbar.

Tow hooks

Having removed the four original tow hooks from the car to save weight, we still needed hooks for our planned trackdays. A web search unearthed a pair of race-spec red powder-coated hooks from Rennenmetal in the USA. At £25 delivered, they're a bargain and bolt on to the original tie-down mounts.

Cooling system

We've replaced the hoses with a set of Samco silicon rad hoses (well proven in competition and unaffected by oils or other fluids that can harm conventional hoses). As a precaution, the original 14-year-old rad was changed for a new pattern one from MX5 Parts.

We also changed the original intake (fed from a tube that's close to the exhaust manifold). Flexible hose from Samco was used to feed air from a vented headlamp lid obtained from an MX5Nutz forum member. Engine efficiency should be improved with this cooler intake charge. Finally we added a coat of silver paint for the alloy inlet manifold and cam cover and changed our lubricants, using Millers Motorsports fully synthetic oils for added peace of mind on trackdays. ●

Contacts

- Dinitrol wax protection**
www.frost.co.uk
- Vinyl stripe kit**
www.uk-car-graphics.co.uk
- Tow hooks**
www.rennenmetal.com
- Samco Sport silicon hose**
www.samcosport.com
- Millers Oils**
www.millersoils.net