

## Tip from Dick Wiberg, and the *MichiganFiero Club*

(With a few of my own comments)

### A WINTER PROJECT FOR YOUR FIERO... CLEAN & POLISH YOUR WHEELS

Why should the aluminum wheels be cleaned? Whether they are the 13" Turbine cast alloy, the 14" High-Tech Alloy or the 15" Diamond Spoke Alloy wheels, they should be cleaned for TWO REASONS... First, clean wheels look better and everyone likes a good looking Fiero! Secondly, corroded wheels, if left untouched, will intime, weaken and fail. (Here is a "before and after" picture for a set of GTrims, using this process)

The first step in cleaning your wheels is to remove the wheel weights. - Either mark the tires from where the weights were removed or plan on having the tire and wheels re-balanced when you are done. We will go into this, later in the article.

The next step is to remove the CLEARCOAT (A clear paint which chips and allows corrosion to begin ) from each wheel. The clearcoat can be removed several ways, the easiest being with paint remover. The best type of paint remover is the SEMI - PASTE, which will stay where it is put on, and not flow on to painted areas of the wheels. Work with a 1/4 to 1/2" throw away paint brush. Or buy a can of "Aircraft Paint Stripper" which comes in a nice spray can and is the Semi-Paste type stripper. The clearcoat can also be sanded off the wheel which is time consuming or it can be sand blasted. However, sand blasting should be left to someone who knows how to handle the correct air pressure or the wheel may be damaged. A cleaner called MEN can also be used, but is watery thin, and may flow on to painted areas of the wheel. The SEMI-PASTE paint remover is the easiest and probably the best way to go. If you only want to strip off the paint on the rim part of the wheel, then buy some 3M masking tape and mask off the area you don't want the stripper to contact. Don't use standard masking tape. Buy the Automotive painting type, which one manufacturer is 3M. Follow the instructions on the stripper and use a plastic, disposable putty knife to scrape the stripper/old paint. (PS buy a pair of rubber gloves designed to protect you from chemicals. Paint stripper is irritating to the skin, and can burn.)

Now, you can see the Alloy of the wheel, so check the wheel very carefully. If you see any cracks, STOP.. junk the wheel and buy a replacement! (Or have it refurbished by a professional shop). Next, inspect the lip on the edge of the wheel and look for scratches or gouges from curbs, as this is the time to smooth them out, using a fine file. To make the result look good, taper your work (file/remove an inch or so of material on each side of the rough spot). Do not remove too much material, only enough to smooth, shape and taper.

Now, get out your Wet/Dry sandpaper, which is a sandpaper that you can use water with. Use the #220 grit to start with, paying special attention to areas that have some corrosion and where you have used the file and sand the entire wheel, except for the painted areas. If you want only a satin finish, you may stop now. Make sure that you use plenty of water or the sandpaper will fill with bits of metal and produce more scratches. You will notice that the wheel has cutter marks on the surface. These cutter marks look like fine threads, as those seen on a bolt, and these should be sanded out for a better looking job. ( These marks are part of the manufacturing process.)

*(This is were I stopped and followed up with painting the interior portion of the 15" Honeycomb rim black, and then clear coating the entire rim, to seal it.) – Jason*

If you want to polish the wheel, you have more work to do. A polished wheel will appear to be chrome plated and is very attractive, and if this is your desire, keep sanding! Remember that those cutter marks must go, so sand them all out. Now, change to #400 Wet/Dry sandpaper to sand out sanding marks made by the #220 sandpaper and to further smooth out the wheel. SMOOTH is the key element to make them SHINE! Sand the wheel with the #400 sandpaper, looking for scratches to avoid making your polishing job harder. Once again, change sandpaper to #600 and sand the wheel. The #600 will further enhance the smoothness of the wheel.

Now inspect the wheel for any further scratches, etc. If none are found, you are ready for the buffing procedure, if you want the "Chrome Look". However, if you want a very smooth satin finish, you may stop now, but if you want the very high gloss finish, you MUST BUFF the wheel. To buff the wheel, you will need an electric drill motor and a

mandrel to hold a buffing wheel A high R.P.M. wheel drillmotor works best, as the faster the buffing wheel turns, the faster your job will go! I have used THREE different buffing wheels and THREE different buffing compounds and find that each wheel and each compound make the wheel progressively smoother.

First, use a compound called STAINLESS and go over the wheel, removing the last of any marks that you may have missed during the sanding process. With the compound, use a buffing wheel called a SPIRAL SEWN buffing wheel. Next, change buffing wheels to a fresh clean SPIRAL SEWN buffing wheel and a compound called TRIPOLI and do it again, buff the wheel. You should go around the wheel two or three times. At this time you should be seeing a lot of gloss on your alloy wheels, as well as some buffing compound remaining. Use a paint thinner to clean up the excess buffing compound.

Do not use the same buffing wheel for different compounds, as each compound has a different cutting or smoothing action. After cleaning your alloy wheel with paint thinner, your wheel should shine, but if you should notice any dull areas, go back and buff again with TRIPOLI to bring up the shine and clean again with paint thinner.

Now, for the brilliant mirror-like gloss finish, change buffing wheels again. This time, use a wheel called LOOSE SECTION and a compound called WHITE ROUGE. Go around the wheel two or three more times and you will see a lot of gloss!

Now is the time to paint your wheels if you desire. Be sure you mask off your buffed wheels, using a good grade of Automotive masking tape. Paint the wheels any way you wish, but be sure that the paint will dry to a very hard, chip-resistant finish. You now have great looking wheels on your Fiero! To keep them looking good, coat them with a good wax or auto paint polish, and apply several times a year. As a touch-up or maintenance routine, polish your wheels a couple times a year with SEMI CHROME polish or another product such as MOTHER'S MEG POLISH and re-coat with wax. (If you choose not to paint the clearcoat on the polished aluminum)

Now is the time to re-install your wheel weights or better still, have your tires/wheels re-balanced, making sure that TEFLON COATED wheel weights are used. You may consider having stick-on Mag Wheel weights used, which are placed on the inside of the wheel, making them unseen on the mounted wheel.

Remember that this buffing job will be dirty work, so wear a pair of sturdy gloves to keep your hands from burning black. Always protect yourself with safety glasses and the proper equipment to insure your safety and well being!

Finally, where do you find all of the products needed to have sharp looking wheels? All of the items in this article can be found in your well stocked hardware store, but if you cannot locate the buffing wheels and compounds used, contact:

THE EASTWOOD COMPANY at 1-800-345-1178 and ask for their catalog, or order the parts as listed below by phone.

( 2 ) - BUFFING WHEELS Part # 2026 \$ 5.99 each

( 1 ) - BUFFING WHEEL Part # 2046 \$ 5.99 each

( 1 ) - TUBE OF STAINLESS COMPOUND Part # 3017 \$ 6.99 each

( 1 ) - TUBE OF TRIPOLI COMPOUND Part # 3018 \$ 4.99 each

( 1 ) - TUBE OF WHITE ROUGE Part # 3005 \$ 5.99 each

To polish a high tech 14" wheel will take approximately four hours times four wheels totaling around sixteen hours of your time, but much less for polishing a set of 15" diamond spoke wheels.

Remember... the time spent on polishing a set of Fiero wheels - will make your fiero look better and last longer...and make your fiero worth more! happy polishing!