

SEMA 2013

A couple of weeks ago I was able to attend SEMA (Specialty Equipment Market Association) in Las Vegas. SEMA occupies all of the Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC), while its companion show AAPEX (Automotive Aftermarket Products Expo) occupies the Sands Convention Center. Probably the highlight of the event was being a passenger in a C7 Stingray for a Ron Fellows hot lap at the GM pavilion. If you wait long enough, good things will come.

Now, normally what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, but I wanted to share some information on products I thought Corvette owners might be interested in. Between SEMA and AAPEX, you can find just about anything automotive that goes in, on, and around your vehicle (cars, trucks, off-road – you name it). You also get to see some unique products to help you maintain and repair your vehicle.

You couldn't get out of the North Hall without seeing lots of companies that have products to wrap your car. From clear paint protectors to full body graphics, wrapping is now becoming a big industry. Of interest was the do-it-yourself Paint Defender System from 3M. It's a spray-on clear film that although thinner than common clear-bra products, still has the ability to protect whatever you spray it on (normally paint) – an you can remove it easily. It also makes it easier to cover places that might not otherwise work with a clear wrap. You can find this product (usually in kit form) at most automotive part stores and online at Amazon. On the clear-bra front, products are getting thicker and have "self-healing" properties (which usually means scratches fade away, versus a rock chip filling in). The film is also getting clearer (no more streaks or orange peel) and easier to apply for the do-it-yourselfer (including buying pre-cut kits online).

When it comes to bleeding brakes, a company called Phoenix Systems has come out with a reverse brake bleeder system. You pump the fluid (using a simply hand pump) from the caliper back into the master cylinder. The design of the pump ensures no air enters the system, and you can use the pump to empty the master cylinder. You can find out all about their product at www.brakebleeder.com. Phoenix Systems has also developed a test strip that will identify the Copper Corrosion Level within the brake fluid, and can provide you a general indication as to the health of your fluid. They also have a test strip to help you detect the Type of fluid in your system.

Another booming business is headlight restoration, but this is not the simple wax-on, wax-off application you typically have found in automotive stores. This is a much more aggressive system that requires that you rough up your headlight lens with a 600-grit sandpaper and then followed up with the application (typically sprayed on) of a filler/restorer/protectant that is UV hardened (with a UV light preferred, or with sunlight). The results are quite impressive, especially if you have a vehicle where the lens is particularly scratched up and cloudy. I plan on purchasing a kit from a company called

LightRite to test it out on both my '98 Isuzu Hombre (can't see through the headlight) and an a pair of lenses that came off a set of headlights I purchased on Craigslist for my '08.

Finally, if you happen to be looking for that unique automotive fastener, check out Auveco at www.auveco.com. They have a down-loadable catalog that will definitely keep you busy looking through it. But they have some cool stuff (maybe something you need to help solve that problem you've run in to). I was able to pick up a catalog while at SEMA.

Obviously there is much more to talk about, but space is limited. If you have been to SEMA, you know firsthand just how large and varied this show is. I hope to come back with more info in the future as I try to get samples of some of the other interesting products I ran across.

Cheers!

Garry