

DIY Weekend Project Road Rash Repairs

An innovative automotive chip repair system promises to heal your paint's wounds

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Whether it's your beloved classic or your daily driver, every vehicle that is driven on the road is susceptible to stone chips, scratches and other unsightly paint damage. Slip-on vinyl nose masks (remember the LeBra?) have been around since the 1960s, and clear vinyl paint protection film is today's (expensive!) solution. Most of us simply put up with the occasional nick, and deal with the hassle of effecting a repair with traditional touch-up paint.

But there's another way. The Dr. ColorChip paint repair system has been around for almost 10 years, and it sells very well for good reasons: It's simple to use, and quite effective. The Nautic Blue Metallic paint on the hood of my 14-year-old, 72,000-mile Volvo C70 showed hundreds of chips, some down to white primer—so I ordered a Road Rash Paint Chip Repair Kit from California Car Cover Co. (\$59.99; www.calcarcover.com). A second type—the Squirt 'n Squeegee Paint Chip Repair Kit—can be bought directly from Dr. ColorChip for \$64.95.

Dr. ColorChip asks for the year, make and model of your car, and they have a database that can match more than 10,000 OEM colors dating back 50-plus years; they can also match custom colors. Their proprietary paint formula is designed to work with acrylic enamel paint, but the company is happy to consult with people seeking a method to repair older lacquer or enamel paints. The supplied paint was a dead match for my Volvo's code 417.

The process is simple. You start with a clean paint surface free of bugs, tar and wax, then apply the color-matched paint using the method recommended with your kit, working in small sections. Allow the paint time to dry, anywhere from five minutes to an hour, then use the blending solution to gently remove the excess paint, and buff to a shine.

The product did not make the deep chips and scratches completely disappear—this isn't promised, nor is it possible, short of a proper respray. But it did minimize their appearance to a notable degree and protect the underlying metal, giving years back to my Coupe. *Information: Dr. ColorChip, 561-845-6122, www.drcolorchip.com*



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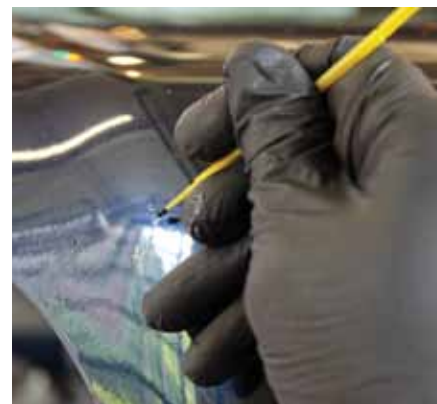
The paint surface to be treated has to be free of tar and bug remains, so I went over the hood, front bumper, front fender edges and exterior mirror housings with a dedicated cleaning solution.



The car was washed—work in the shade, and on paint that's cool to the touch—and dried. Using a cotton swab, I applied rubbing alcohol to the largest paint chips to ensure no wax could lessen paint adhesion.



Evaluate the areas to be treated: Dr. ColorChip kits are available with different-sized bottles of paint, so you can get the size appropriate to your number of repairs. The 1-oz. bottle proved generous here.



I ordered the Road Rash Kit, which came with three brushes of varying (small) sizes. The recommended technique is to daub a small amount of paint next to the chip, although you can paint in the chip, too.



A nitrile glove is included in the kit: use a gloved finger—the side of your thumb is best—to gently wipe the paint blob across the chip's surface, smearing it flat. It will look scary as it dries.



I also ordered a flexible squeegee, and I used this to apply and smear the paint on flat, notably road-rashed areas around the grille and on horizontal areas of the hood.



I gave the paint about 25 minutes to dry before hitting it with SealAct blending solution. Dampen the supplied cloth with this and gently rub the surface with light, even pressure; go too far and the new paint disappears.



Use the supplied microfiber cloth to hand-buff the hazy area that you've just worked in. If you find that a deep chip needs more paint filling, you can repeat the process as many times as needed.



This wasn't a miracle cure for the C70's speckled hood, but it was a definite improvement, and the deepest chips are now only noticeable at the right angle. It also hid chips on the mirrors, door edges and trunk lid.



70
DIY
Tech Workshop



72
Restoration
Profile
1971 Mercedes



78
Fix It Again,
Tony



80
Garage Gear