

Refurbishing Early XJ-S Kent Wheels

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Background

The early Jaguar XJ-S had the so called Kent wheels, Figure 1. These are cast aluminum alloy with five “spokes” created by depressed areas around the lugs.



Figure 1 Kent wheels

Other than the depressed areas the wheel is bright aluminum. When I got my car, in its fifth year, the bright part was clear-coated and the depressed areas were painted in dark metallic gray. I have never been able to establish what Jaguar called the color, but I have seen it referred to as anthracite. As nearly as I could tell, the gray was clear-coated too.

As you can see in Figure 1 the sun and car washes eventually faded the gray painted portions. The clear coat on the bright portions, already removed in the photo, was also badly yellowed and peeling. I finally resolved to make them look a little better. The first thing I did was to remove the clear coat from the bright parts, making them look much better. Sometime later I repainted the gray parts and now they look close to new. The project cost about \$25 for paint remover and paint in spray cans. If I had taken them to a shop specializing in wheel restoration it would have cost well over \$100 per wheel, plus demounting and remounting the tires.

Removing the Clear Coat from Bright Portions

The best way to get the clear coat off is paint remover. However, you have to be very careful if you leave the tires on the wheel, as you don't want to get the remover on the tire or the valve stem. For this operation I did not even remove the wheels from the car, so there is still a little bit of clear-coat behind the stems.

Following directions on the paint remover can, I used a small paint brush to apply it, wearing rubber gloves. After leaving it the specified amount of time (a few minutes) I was able to scrub the clear coat off with steel wool and a small scrub brush. I had the garden hose handy to wash it down afterwards. On some

wheels there was more of the coating so I had to repeat the process a couple times. I followed this with cleaning using a normal alloy wheel cleaning product.

The shortcoming of this technique is you can't fully remove the coating close to the valve stem without risking damage. If you intend to show the car in Championship class at concours you will have to remove the tires and stems to do it right.

Painting the Gray Portions

Paint Selection

My first thought was to get an automotive paint store to match the color on the spare, as it was not badly faded. I gave that up when I found it would cost about \$70 to get a quart mixed, plus \$6 per can to get it put into spray cans. Then I saw the write-up by Doug Dwyer at Jag Lovers on repainting Kents using DupliColor spray cans (http://jag-lovers.org/newbies/series_III/repainting_kent_wheels.html). The local AutoZone trusted me to take several cans that looked close out to the parking lot so I could do comparisons without rolling the spare into the store. I arrived at Graphite Grey Metallic (928) and Clear Top Coat Auto Spray, Figure 2.



Figure 2 Paints

Preparing the Surface

I decided to just sand rather than removing the old paint. I used 400 grit wet or dry sand paper to remove surface oxidation, and a slightly coarser grit to smooth chipping that had occurred around the edges. This was followed by a good washing with soap and water.

Masking

Following Doug Dyer's suggestion I masked the wheel and used a sharp utility knife to cut away the tape around the edges, Figure 3. As you can see I used the blue masking tape that is designed to leave less adhesive on the surface when removed. I used plastic drop sheeting to mask off the rest of the wheel and tire, although newspaper would do as well. The masked wheel ready for painting is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 3 Masking



Figure 4 Masked wheel

Painting

As with any painting project most of the work is in preparation. Applying the paint is the easy part. If it's been a few years since you've used spray cans you will be amazed at how easy it is to paint with them now, and get professional looking results. With the wheel propped at about 20 degrees off vertical I applied three coats of paint and three coats of clear top coat following directions on the cans. You only have to wait till one coat is tacky before applying the next, so it goes fast. However, I didn't remove the masking until the next day.

Results

The results are seen in Figure 5. They look like what Doug Dwyer calls "four foot wheels".....look damn good from four feet away!



Figure 5 Finished wheel