

The Powder Coat Experience

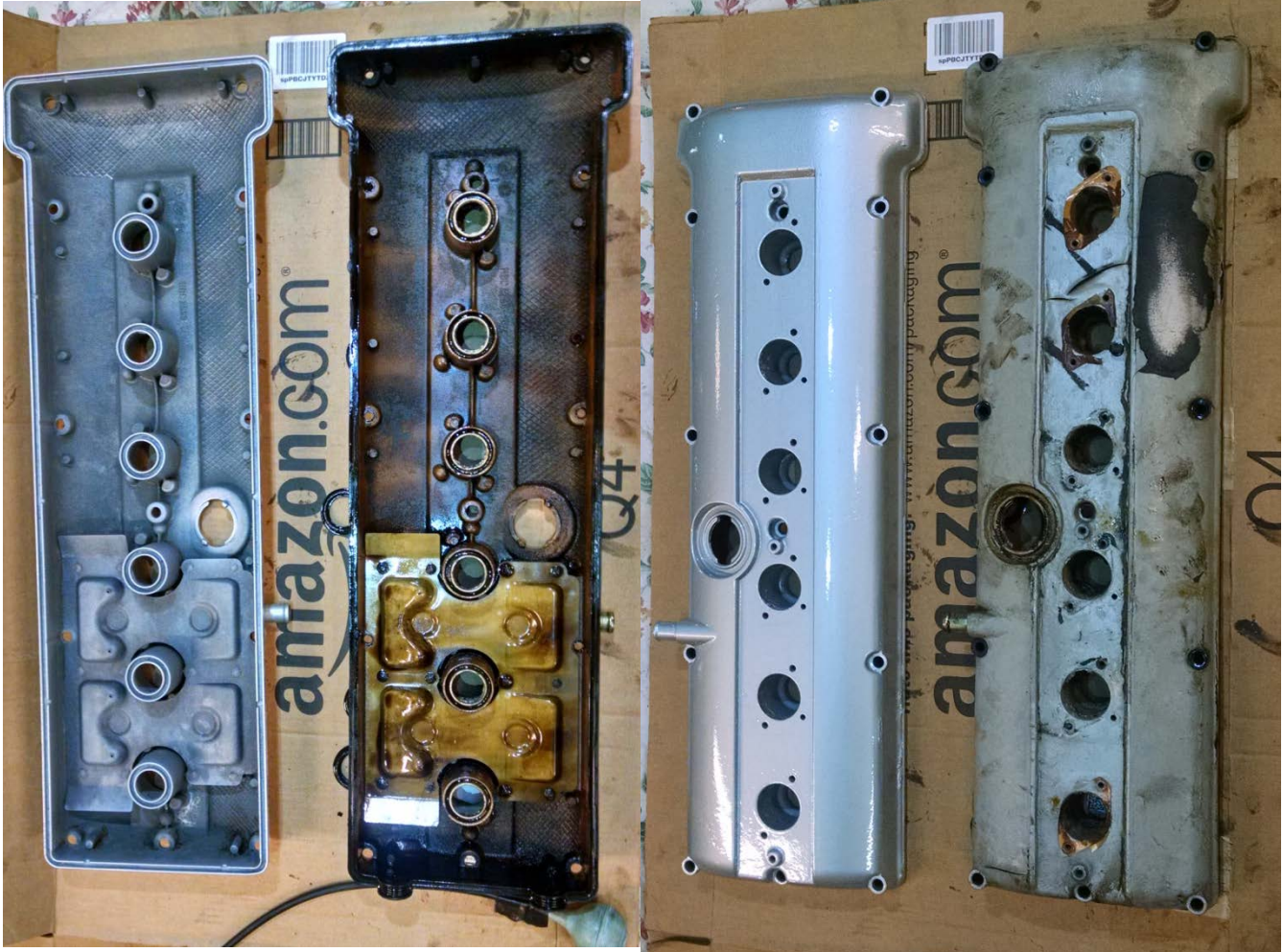
Before I pulled the first one off, I called a powder-coater in Fort Worth and explained I had a Magnesium Alloy cam-cover. They admitted having no experience with magnesium and expressed concern that it may exhibit outgassing in their 400 deg F curing oven. Once I'd removed the cover at Pick-n-Pull and done some basic cleaning on it, I carted both items (the pick-n-pull cover and the busted one) off to Randy at A to Z Soda Blasting in Boyd, TX. I explained the uncertainty expressed by the powder coater while showing him both pieces and suggested I wanted to blast both so as to have an experimental piece for the coater. He suggested calling another powder coater for consultation. We spent about 10 minutes on speakerphone with Richard of DFW Powdercoat. He seemed quite knowledgeable of magnesium and suggested we'd be wasting time and effort to blast it prior to baking it. He explained magnesium alloys are somewhat porous and once it is in the oven, all dirt, grease, oil and other impurities will come to the surface. Randy suggested that I begin the process with a powder coater and if blasting were indicated, he'd be happy to participate as needed. I obtained contact info on the powder coater he had on speakerphone during our consultation and headed over to Justin, TX, to see Richard of DFW Powder. Richard took both pieces, saying he doubted he needed a practice-dummy, but may use it for the initial stripping-dip to make sure all was well. He asked what color I wanted it?

"Whatever you've got that is close to the silver-gray that it was, is fine."

"Give me about a week."

Approximately one-week later, Richard called to say it was ready. Cost was \$160, exactly as pre-briefed. At my request, he snapped some pics after he'd stripped it and before he powdered it, but unfortunately, said they didn't come out very well. He did caution against subjecting them to media blasting as he reckons you'd never get the media cleaned out of the filter mesh tucked beneath the splash panel. He said he'd seen similar bubbling/corrosion on BMW Mag Cam covers and that they had also painted the inside, consequently, a few ruined engines to go with their cam-cover corrosion problem. To be honest, at about the same time, I had asked about a couple of fully-restored, circa 1989 Kawasaki KX-125 dirt bikes I saw in his shop, and he transitioned between bike-talk and car-talk so smoothly I can't really say if the engine-damage issue accrued to BMW autos or bikes. While looking over my two cam-covers, he was reminded that his dad once owned an XJR-6!

Richard said after stripping and priming, it had small black dots bleeding through the primer, so they put it back in the oven, then shot it with another coat of primer while hot, that sealed everything in. I enquired what “stripping” entailed and he said it is dipped in a “standard powder-coater’s stripper solution.” Anyway, here it is as-received, laid-out alongside the one it is replacing:



While awaiting its return, I did a bit of cleanup and painting on the coil and fuel rail covers. Not stock, of course, but I added just a bit of personalization to the car, while hoping to keep it fittingly classy. My original 95 coil cover did not have the “4.0 LITRE” notation. I’ve always been a fan of proud engines that proclaim their displacement prominently when you pop the bonnet, not leaving the uninformed to wonder. I had enlisted my oldest son, who is rather artistic, to help with the leaper, and armed with the knowledge that the overall cam-cover refurbishment plan extended eventually to his youngest brother’s VPD, he decided a personalized coil cover would make a nice birthday present. As he probed his bro’ for his vision of how it would ultimately look, it became obvious to me that the 4.0L would be covered up. So I surrendered my 95 plain coil cover for the elder lad to take back to LA as he was only home briefly on a school break. I masked the “4.0 LITRE” with a single strip of masking tape window-style as I couldn’t find the exact font/size combination to reproduce it, and my experience cutting out the leaper led me to conclude it would be too difficult to mask only the letters. With some cleaning, and light sanding, the faint green that was still on the “JAGUAR” lettering came right off, leaving the base silver before I got

down to the raw black plastic. This was essentially the genesis of the fuel-rail cover work as I originally only planned to re-spray it in the existing silver. However, since it was not an exact match in color, I decided that would be less evident if there were less silver showing on it, and decided on the “Z” for personalization and “Vanden Plas” on both sides in as near a match to the font on the bootlid as I could manage. Once I had the powder coated cam cover in-hand, and all my plastic painting had cured, I fit the whole mess to my daily driver one fine weekend:

