

Covering the Ugly

Transforming our garage floor with epoxy coating



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Last month, we showed you the new lift we had installed in the Hemmings garage, the first step in our quest to convert a storage/display area to a functional shop. Having the lift completely transforms the process of working on project cars—we know because we started wrenching months before we had it. During that time, we became intimately familiar with the concrete floor in the shop as we slid around on it, dodging jack-stands and dripping fluids. The aged bare floor wasn't pretty, and only got uglier when fluids starting making their mark. Prior to our MG project outlined here several months ago, this shop had only seen the occasional errant drip, usually caught by a pan or absorbent pad, but now it was getting stained for real. That was a problem for two reasons: one, because the boss was not going to like us besmirching the entrance to the company's museum of classic cars, and two, because we knew we wanted to coat the floor with something—something that likely would not adhere to soaked-in petroleum products.

That motivated us to move forward on step two of our shop transformation: the floor. We considered epoxy paints, but after viewing some other professional shops and display garages, we decided

that an actual epoxy coating would look better and probably last longer. Most such coatings are of a commercial nature, and not easily accessible to regular-guy shops



Our concrete floor turned out to have a sealer coating on top, which had to come off. The UCoat It crew rented a typical floor polisher and used it with dedicated Scotch-Brite wheels to scrub down to bare concrete.

like ours. Then we remembered UCoat It America, an outfit that sells D-I-Y kits to treat home garage floors with industrial-grade coatings. When we inquired, UCoat It offered to apply the coating since our space was considerably larger than a typical residential garage.

The experience provided the opportunity to observe the pros applying the same coating we'd have received in a kit—valuable insight as a number of us are considering the process for our own, relatively tiny shops. UCoat It promises a chemical and abrasion resistant, waterproof coating that is easy to clean and comes with a lifetime warranty. It's offered in light gray, medium gray, blue, or beige, with the option to add a "terrazzo" flecked finish and/or a non-slip texture, both with a high-gloss topcoat. We opted for medium gray with no fleck but said yes to the non-slip with high-gloss on top. The UCoat epoxy is water-based, and will adhere to sound concrete, though significant oil staining must be cleaned with degreaser first. The product goes down over a wet floor and has very little odor: Two coats of UCoat colored epoxy—a bond coat and a finish coat—and you could call it done, or



The colored epoxy is water-based, and goes right on the bare concrete. This is the bond coat, and is followed by another application of the same stuff to make the finish coat. You could leave it at that for a nice sheen, or continue on as we did with a clear gloss topcoat. Tip: The pros wear golf shoes (with cleats) to walk on the coating when it's wet.



After the gloss topcoat is applied, the shine stays looking almost wet. We passed on the optional terrazzo speckle finish, but added the non-slip textured material—this stuff can get real slick when water hits it. The finished floor dazzled all those who'd observed it in its previous state and makes us look like heroes to visitors.



UCoat It can even place logos in the floor if the client so chooses. This is usually done with vinyl graphics that are prepared ahead of time and sealed beneath the clear topcoat. When finished, it appears as if the logo were done in colored epoxy.

add the clear topcoat, which for automotive applications is solvent-based and does require some ventilation. Curing time between coats is a minimum of 4-6 hours.

The process took several days for us, in part because it was discovered that our

floor had a prior sealer coating that had to be stripped; we also experienced longer drying times, thanks to summer humidity. In the end, the result was well worth the effort. Our moody concrete is now smooth, shiny gray, which classes up the

joint and makes fluid spills a non-issue. We even had our logo laid down under the clear—another UCoat It option. In fact, it turned out so nice that squirming around between the jack-stands doesn't even seem so bad any more.