



# Great wax job

*Polymer coating stands up to environment*

By **STEPHEN E. PLUMB**

With environmental concerns getting front-page coverage in major newspapers on an almost daily basis, every company from General Motors Corp. down to its smallest supplier is jumping at the chance to promote itself as environmentally concerned.

The automakers do it because new laws and regulations force them to — and, to a lesser extent, to create consumer goodwill. Suppliers, meanwhile, do it to appeal to OEM and end-user customers.

Even aftermarket manufacturers are getting into the act. For example, one car-care coating company boasts that its product — Kiss-Cote — makes vehicles “go faster and farther on less fuel,” as well as easier to clean.

**Kiss-Cote's** developer, Dr. Keith Kent, concedes that most people don't buy a car wax or coating because of fuel economy benefits. He, in fact, downplays fuel savings as a whole in favor of weather resistance, restorative and other protective-oriented attributes.

And compared to the coating's origin, improved fuel economy claims aren't all that peculiar. Dr. Kent, a dentist and research chemist in Tampa, FL, initially sought to develop a plaque-fighting coating to protect teeth.

But after six years of experiments and a wide range of field tests, he discovered new applications that provided “remarkable” benefits to other surfaces.

“The first breakthrough came when

we coated a fiberglass boat hull and left it in the Gulf of Mexico for two years,” Dr. Kent explains. Because of Kiss-Cote, he adds, even barnacles an inch (2.5 cm) thick were easily removed.

In the auto industry, Kiss-Cote can be used on both the exterior and interior of a vehicle. It costs about \$100 per package, which is enough for one or two applications.

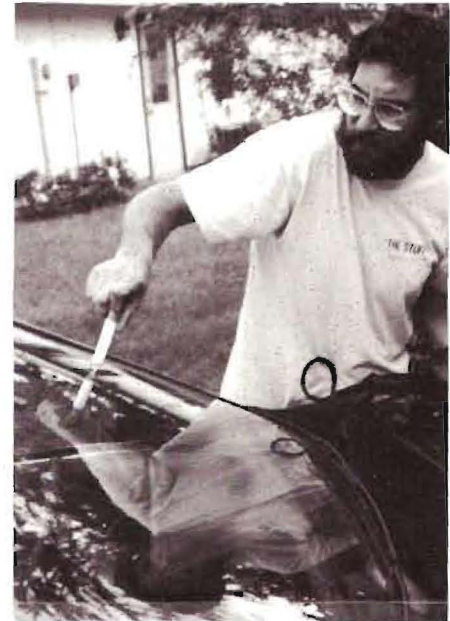
**Although this** may seem expensive for a wax job, Dr. Kent says Kiss-Cote provides “numerous” benefits to auto users.

A silicone-based polymer, Kiss-Cote is very inert — meaning it doesn't react to the environment around it. Unlike acrylic-based coatings, Dr. Kent says Kiss-Cote is permanently bonded to the paint surface, making it less prone to chipping and cracking.

But the real benefit, he says, is in harsh climates or environments. In southern Florida, for example, motorists are exposed to “acid rain-like” conditions twice a year when “love bugs” swarm the area and wreak havoc on paint finishes.

Because Kiss-Cote has such a high “bead,” it repels moisture and is not affected by the bugs' acidity, Dr. Kent says. While car applications have been slow, Kiss-Cote has attracted a few heavy-duty truck fleets concerned about the high cost of repainting.

**Plus Transportation Inc.** (PTI) says it used to repaint its 50-cab fleet every two years at a cost of \$1,200 per paint job. Instead, it now uses Kiss-Cote once a year to



Dr. Kent applies Kiss-Cote to windshield.

retain a “high-gloss” look. Over a typical 5-year lifespan of a truck cab, PTI saves about \$1,000 per vehicle by not having to repaint it, adds PTI President Vincent D. Barry.

By the end of the year, Dr. Kent hopes to have Kiss-Cote distributors in every major metropolitan area in the U.S. and establish overseas licensing agreements. He also is contacting automakers in an attempt to include Kiss-Cote as part of the OEM treatment program.

**Aside from the** transportation industry, Kiss-Cote also is being used in such “crazy” extremes as protecting the Navy's radar equipment and as a coating in some nuclear reactors.

But don't expect it to solve the world's energy and environmental problems. As PTI's Mr. Barry says, “It's a good product (for other reasons),” but “we haven't seen any fuel improvements yet.” □