

# SHIP, SHAPE AND SHINE

**With just a handful of materials and a few hours graft, US firm Dakota Shine claims that its new treatment for fading paintwork soon to be released in the UK will add significant value to an ageing machine. C&A took a closer look.**

**ANYONE** who has ever owned equipment, such as an older car, will be well aware of the problem. The paint job, while still providing a good covering for the base metal, has gone flat and lifeless and no longer looks anything like that of the original.

A particular problem with red and yellow colours, some types of finish are more prone to this fading, and a loss of gloss, than others, but when subjected to regular pressure washing or steam cleaning, the problem will affect most paints.

The options, until now, have either been to apply a cutting polish, with plenty of elbow grease, or perform a complete repaint. The problem with the first option, however, is that it will rarely last, even when done properly considering the amount of effort required. On the other hand, the problem with repainting is that unless you carry out a complete respray, a skimpy touch-up job will look dreadful.

A company based in Yeovil in the UK thinks it has an all-round better solution. FPG has begun importing a product from the US, which it claims, after being applied in a few hours with very little effort, rejuvenates original paint to last as long as the original paint job.

"Not only does it have a remarkable effect on the paint, it also refreshes the rubber, vinyl, and decals," explains FPG's Dave Chaffey. "On top of that, as it affects the molecular structure of the paint surface it will also blend in any nasty touch-up areas before sealing and protecting the paint from the atmosphere."

Sounds too good to be true! C&A thought it came across as being bit of 'wonder product' like the old 'cure-all' snake oil peddled by itinerant hucksters in the old West. And with a name like Dakota Shine...well! On further

investigation, however, and talking to our contacts in the US, we heard nothing but positive comments and discovered that Caterpillar endorses it and markets it under its own label.

Given the potential benefits to owners of lifting and access equipment then, C&A decided to probe deeper and attend a demonstration organised for Finning Tractor in the UK at its Cannock HQ.

## THE TEST

Sadly, the machine selected for the demonstration was not a telehandler, but a larger front-end loader (chosen by Finning). However, while in reasonable condition, it was certainly going to be a big test for the two-man team, and a decent representation for our size requirements, fitting nicely between an access platform and a crane.

The first step of the process is a good pressure wash or steam clean in order to remove as much grease and dirt from the machine as possible, after which it is cleaned with a special preparation liquid using fine grade steel wool. While this might seem much the same as using cutting polish, the effort required is much less - just a gentle rub over with the liquid, and then a quick rinse.

The machine is then left to dry. At this stage, and if any touching-up of the paintwork is required, then this is the time to do it. One of the benefits of the Dakota Shine treatment is that it will blend-in any 'spot' touch-up paint before sealing it, making any touch-up work needed well worth while.

Finally, once any touch-up paint applied has become tacky the Dakota Shine treatment is

**Dave Chaffey of FPG applies the Dakota Shine treatment using a regular spray gun onto a Caterpillar front-end loader at a recent demonstration at Finning Tractor's Cannock HQ in the UK.**



The main body of the Cat loader before being treated with Dakota Shine.



The main body of the Cat loader after the Dakota Shine treatment.

sprayed on using a regular spray gun. Unlike paint, the formula can be sprayed over the entire machine, including the engine bay, rubber vinyl, lighting lenses and even on mirrors. The one consideration that has to be taken into account is that if the formula comes into contact with the glass of the machine's cab, it should be cleaned off before it sticks.

On completion, the application of the Dakota shine took just 15 to 20 minutes, even on a machine the size of the one used throughout the trial. The skills required are low and the process is much easier than applying paint. The only key requirement is to make sure that the entire machine, excluding the cab's glass of course, is completely covered with the formula.

The unit needs to be kept under cover away from dust and rain overnight to allow the formula to set and harden. During a hot, dry period the treatment will dry sufficiently in just a few hours outdoors, as long as the wind is not whipping up dust clouds.



Before the Dakota Shine formula is applied, the machine is given a sound pressure wash and a clean with a special preparation liquid.



The wheel-guard panel of the Cat loader before (left) and after the Dakota Shine treatment.



## THE CRUNCH

It has to be said that the end result was excellent. The large paneled areas of the machine looked brand-new with a deep shine and fresh looking decals. Even the faded brake and indicator lenses came back to life and looked like new. In less than six hours, and with very little equipment, our two-man team had given a nearly new look to a large and complex front-end loader. If the treatment had been applied to one of Finning's faded telehandlers, it is arguable that in excess of €2,000 (£1,300) would have been added to its value.

The producers of Dakota Shine claim that the treatment will last as long as the machine's original paint. When you consider that a decent mid-size crane repaint can cost between £2,800 and £4,000, plus a week or two's lost income, three weeks if you are an end user, then using this treatment to restore and extend the original paint's life seems to be an excellent option. The major bonus is that no special equipment is required to carry out the work.

Mr Chaffey of FPG says that the company is currently considering the various distribution options for the UK and Ireland before moving on to continental Europe. One option, in addition to direct sales to rental companies, is to set up a network of trained application companies who can offer end users, and rental companies alike, a turnkey valet-style, van-based service.