



Notice

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Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics
1/6 Stanton Road
Seven Hills NSW 2147, Australia
E-mail: info.aus@solargard.com
www.solargard.com.au

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Being Cool

Bekaert Specialty Films can not only make you and your car feel... and look... cool, but do it with or without artful nature of dark windows

When you have finished your house-money restoration of that fabulous classic, and lined it in the skins of animals from some unpronounceable country that is 37 steps from the Artic Circle, wouldn't it be prudent to keep the sun from making it appear as though it was lined in beach towels? Ultraviolet rays cause more damage to valuable interiors than whatever your grandkids may spill in the back seat. We know that it is uncool to have dark tints on the windows of cars on the Pebble Beach lawn but what you may not know is that there is an absolutely transparent film that blocks 99% of ultraviolet light and is undetectable without disassembling the window frames. Here is an idea whose time has come.

Bekaert Specialty Films, LLC makes a series of transparent window films they call Solar Gard Ultra Performance that filter out 99% of ultraviolet light, resists scratching, and comes with a lifetime warranty. Thus it is an acceptable method of protecting the interiors of concours cars as well as those of our daily drivers.

Christophe Fremont, president of the Bekaert, LLC, suggests, "In the car world, window film is currently considered a trim item. The real benefits are either ignored or simply not known. The same UV-filter science used in our Ultra Performance film is also available in a broad range of tints with our Solar Gard Supreme Series which also blocks up to 42% of solar energy." Whether the intended result is to hide or protect the interior, or simply to create a pure exterior form with the window-set shape as an artful graphic, there are many window film options available. Two factors are critical to a layer of film that is virtually undetectable; the flawless quality of the film itself, and an equally flawless application of it by the installer.

Leo Leander Bekaert founded his company, in Zulte, Belgium in 1880, to make steel wire. The industrial revolution and Bekaert's emphasis on high quality manufacturing were keys to his success. Today's 16,000 employees include 250 scientists. Bekaert International's laboratories currently devote most of the research to the fine-metal films and polymer laminates that represent 75% of the product line.

The company's investment in creating and maintaining a clean manufacturing environment contributed to it achieving ISO 9001 certification in 2004. Quality control is critical to the production of vast, flawless sheets of laminated films. Samples of each batch are cut during the production process and tested for everything from the film's true visible-light-transmittance measurements, to its strength and weathering capabilities. Once the manufacturing process is complete, the film is cut to pre-determined length and width for specific models before being wrapped, rolled and packaged for shipping. The final window shape is cut by the installer in as clean an environment as he can create.

Mike Harris, Bekaert LLC's marketing vice president, sees his challenge. "We're in a demand generation. Window film is a complex product. It continues to take too long to explain to new customers why it is more important to buy based upon effectiveness rather than price. We need to have that explanation already in their minds before that are approached."

The second phase of our education on window film came with a visit to the small, clean shop of Greg Heffelfinger in Ventura, California. Greg started doing car detailing when he was in high school during that time he had tints put on his own car's windows. Before long he had sent enough of his detailing customers to that same film installer for them to become good friends and this friend subsequently showed Greg how it was done.

Heffelfinger opened Show Quality Motoring Accessories in 1988 when he was 19. Assuming it was important to do more, he included accessory and car guy stuff in the mix. Nineteen years later, still in the same location, he's wiser, and without the challenges of inventory, spends his time doing some of the very best window-film application in the area, and surfing over the Pacific when time permits. He has customers who have been local through multiple cares and now the kids of his customers are bringing their cars to Greg, and introducing their friends, too. In what is perhaps an ultimate compliment, Heffelfinger told us he has some customers who have relocated, moved away from the area, who still bring their new cars to Ventura for him to accomplish the installation of window film.

All film or tint installations are not equal. Greg has hired and trained a few young men and says the best of them have also attended Bekaert's Window Tint Academy. He, and the Academy, teach that the first, and most critical, step in the installation process is cleaning the windows inside and out. Next, the outside of the window is dusted with talcum powder so that the film doesn't suffer static cling which would make it difficult to handle while the final shape is being cut, for that is when the film is most likely to be damaged. The convex forms, like those of rear windows in modern coupes and sedan, require heat to help form the film to the required shape. Pre-forming helps ensure the best fit of the film to the inside rear glass when working in that tight, cramped area. The cut, but still powdered, film is then moved to a clean, glass-wall panel (a critical part of any tint shop) here it is cleaned and rinsed before installing.

When the application is done well, the only clue to the presence of the film is the evenly dark color of the windows. And if it is clear film, installed on your show or concours car, no one should be able to detect that it's there at all.