

How to Paint Your Mopar Engine, and Which Color Is Correct?



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How To Paint Your Engine The Right Way, And Which Color Is Correct?

Painting an engine presents a unique challenge. Unlike the rest of the car that gets painted, engines get hot and some parts get really hot. Now that's not news to anyone, but heat must be taken into account when painting an engine.

The factory-painted engines were practically the definition of down-and-dirty work. They looked OK when new, but it didn't take many years for them to ugly out. For the most part, that was all right. It was just how it was, and mostly nobody really cared.

But when these original muscle cars began being restored, suddenly they were expected to look nice not just on the outside but also under the hood. Even more, they were expected to stay looking nice under the hood. Given the abovementioned really hot parts . . . well, there's the challenge. One way to accomplish this is not to drive the car after it's done or at least not drive it much, but that's not going to be an acceptable option for most of us.

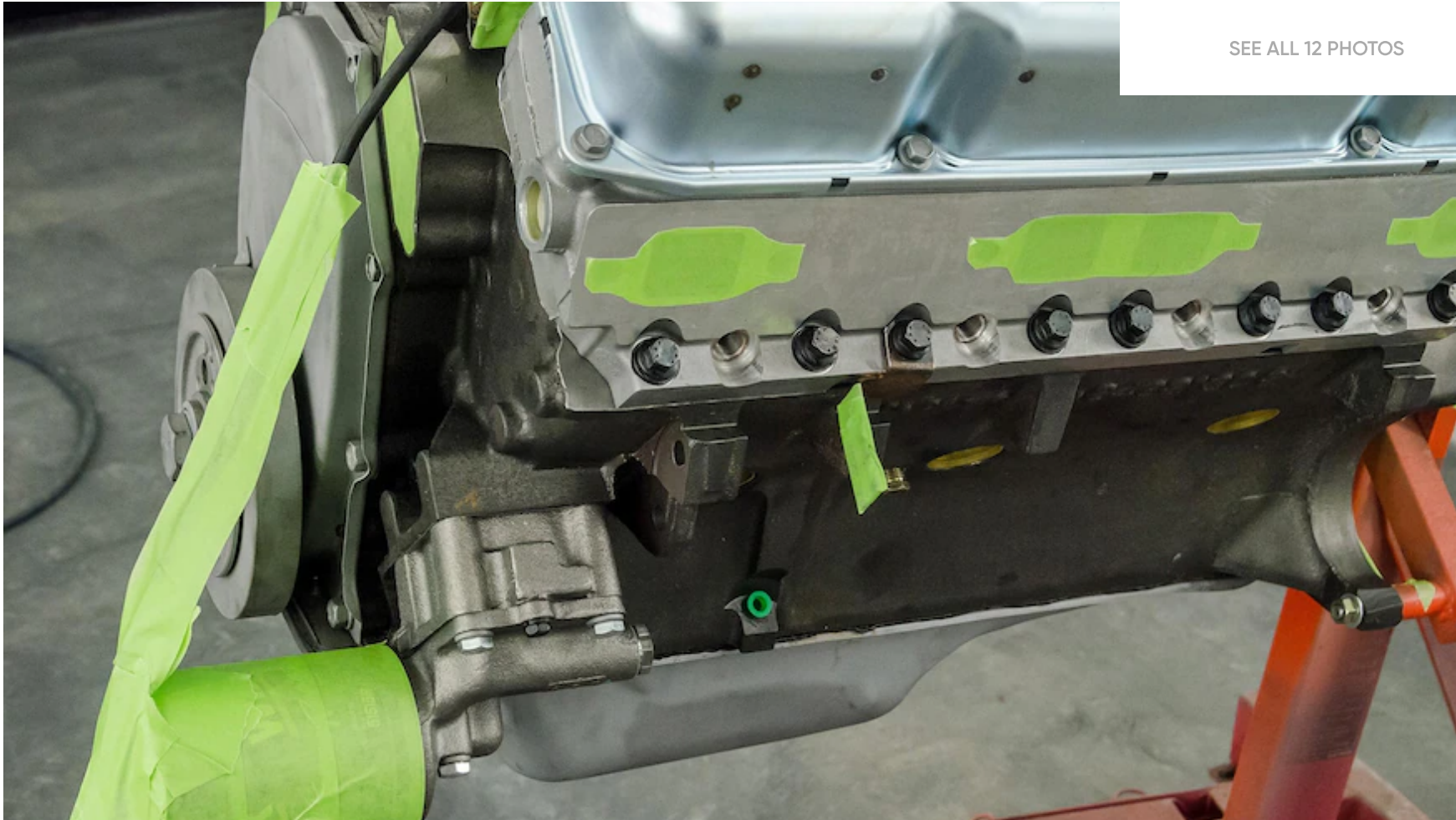
Muscle Car Restoration in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, has been restoring muscle cars pretty much since restoring these cars became a thing to do. MCR has had a lot of time to figure out how to make an engine look good for as long as possible. Note that engine heat will always have an effect on paint over time and that the really hot parts like exhaust manifolds will discolor paint almost right away no matter what.

So what's recommended? MCR uses PPG epoxy primer and single-stage catalyst cured paint. The colors are accurate, it holds up well under the heat, and it's relatively easy and quick to apply. It's also reasonably resistant to fuel and oil stains so it can be cleaned up after a few miles.



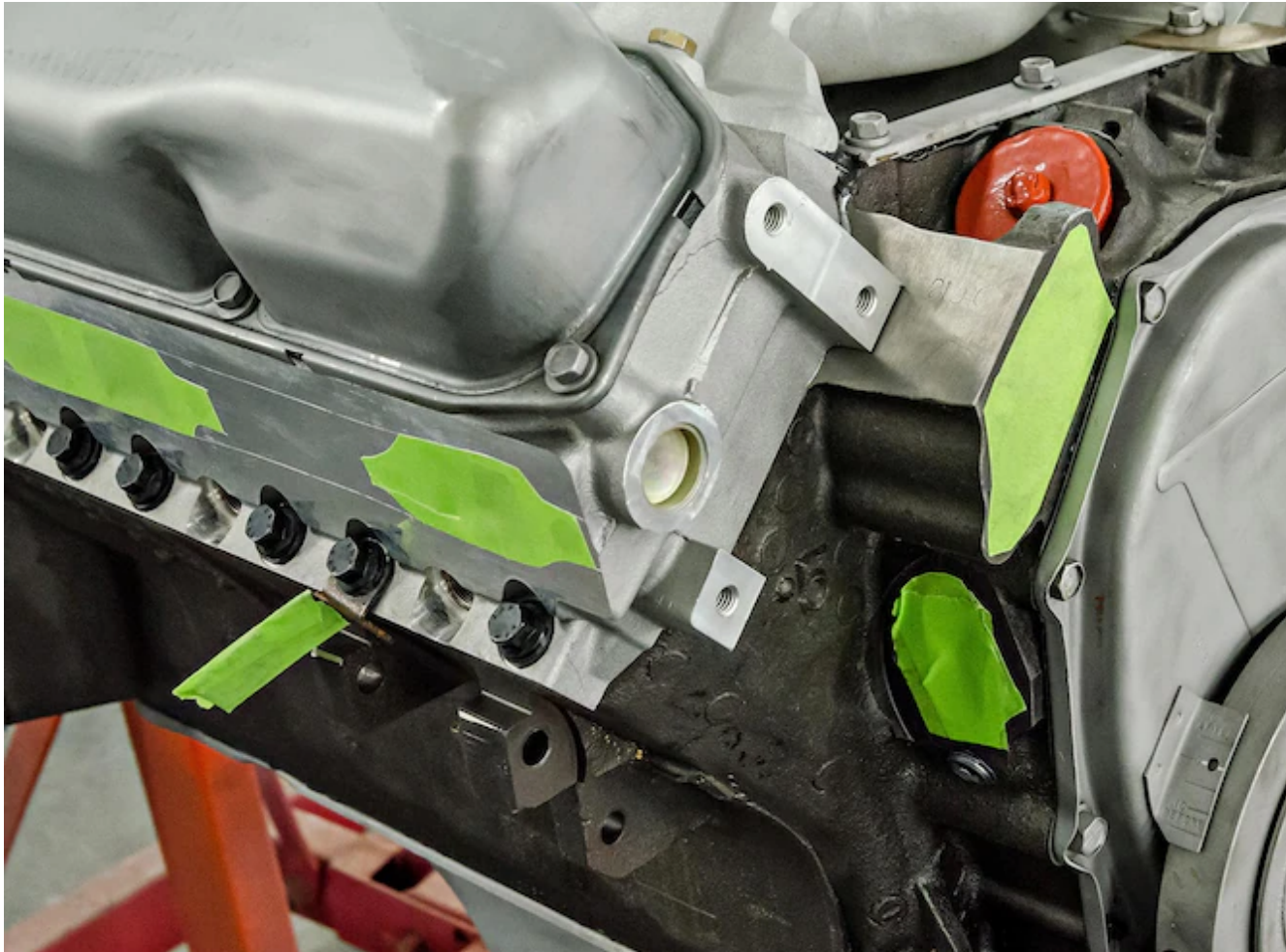
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While this engine has aluminum heads and a new intake, the process is exactly the same for a stock engine.



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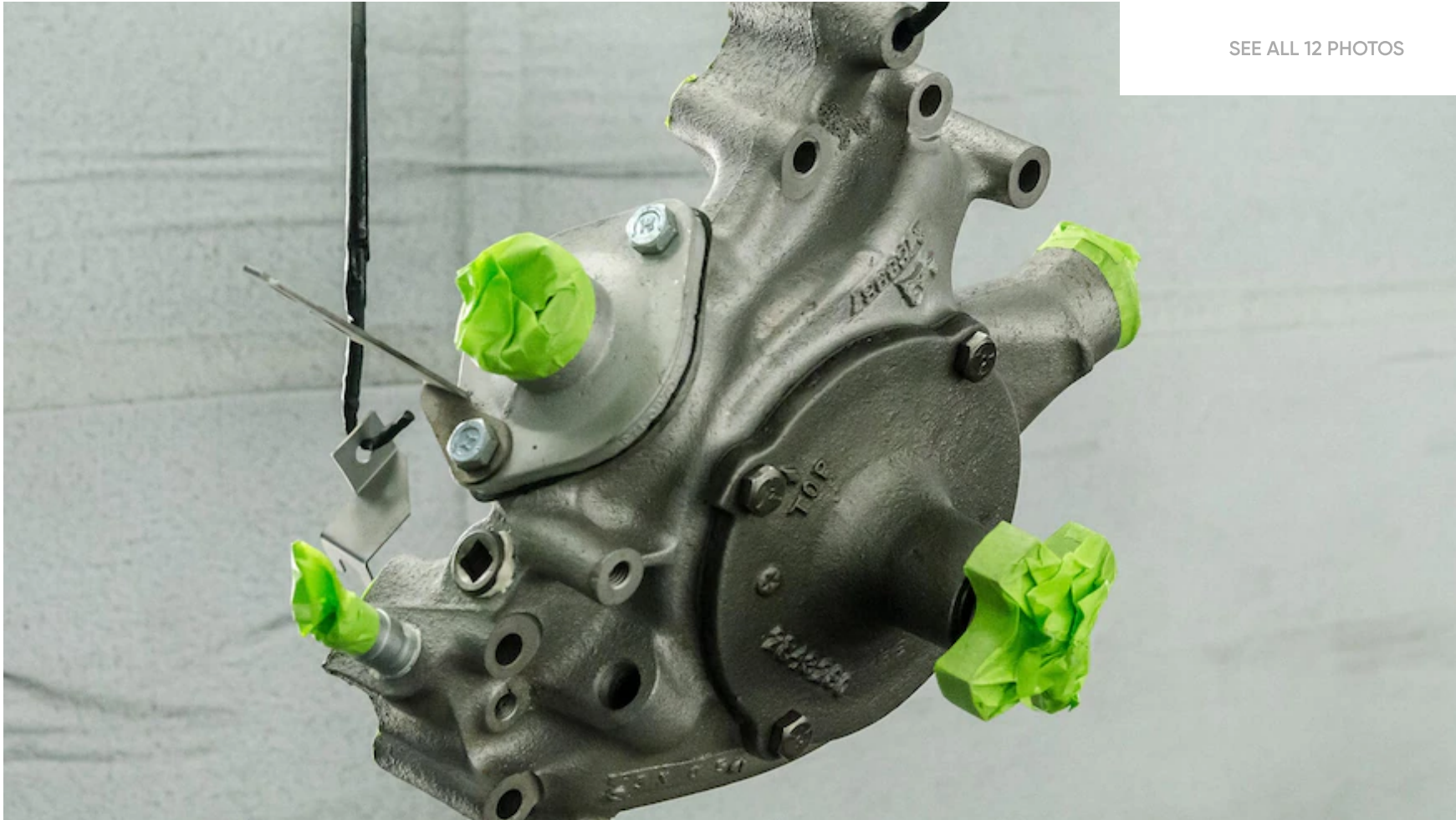
Normally, the factory painted the engine with the exhaust manifolds in place, but this owner wanted a cleaner look. Muscle Car Restorations left them off. Only the ports and bolt holes are taped so that there will be engine color behind the manifolds. Freeze plugs also should be bare so they are taped as well.



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All the mating surfaces that are not supposed to be painted are masked off. The oil filler hole is plugged, and the negative battery cable is taped off partway up to mimic the factory overspray.

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The water pump needs to be painted separately so the timing cover will get full coverage.



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MCR wraps 3M Soft Edge Foam Masking Tape around the balancer and water pump seals to keep paint off of the shafts near the seals. It's possible for paint to flake off near the seals and then get under them and cause leaks.

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Spark plug holes are protected by stuffing a pair of foam earplugs into each one.



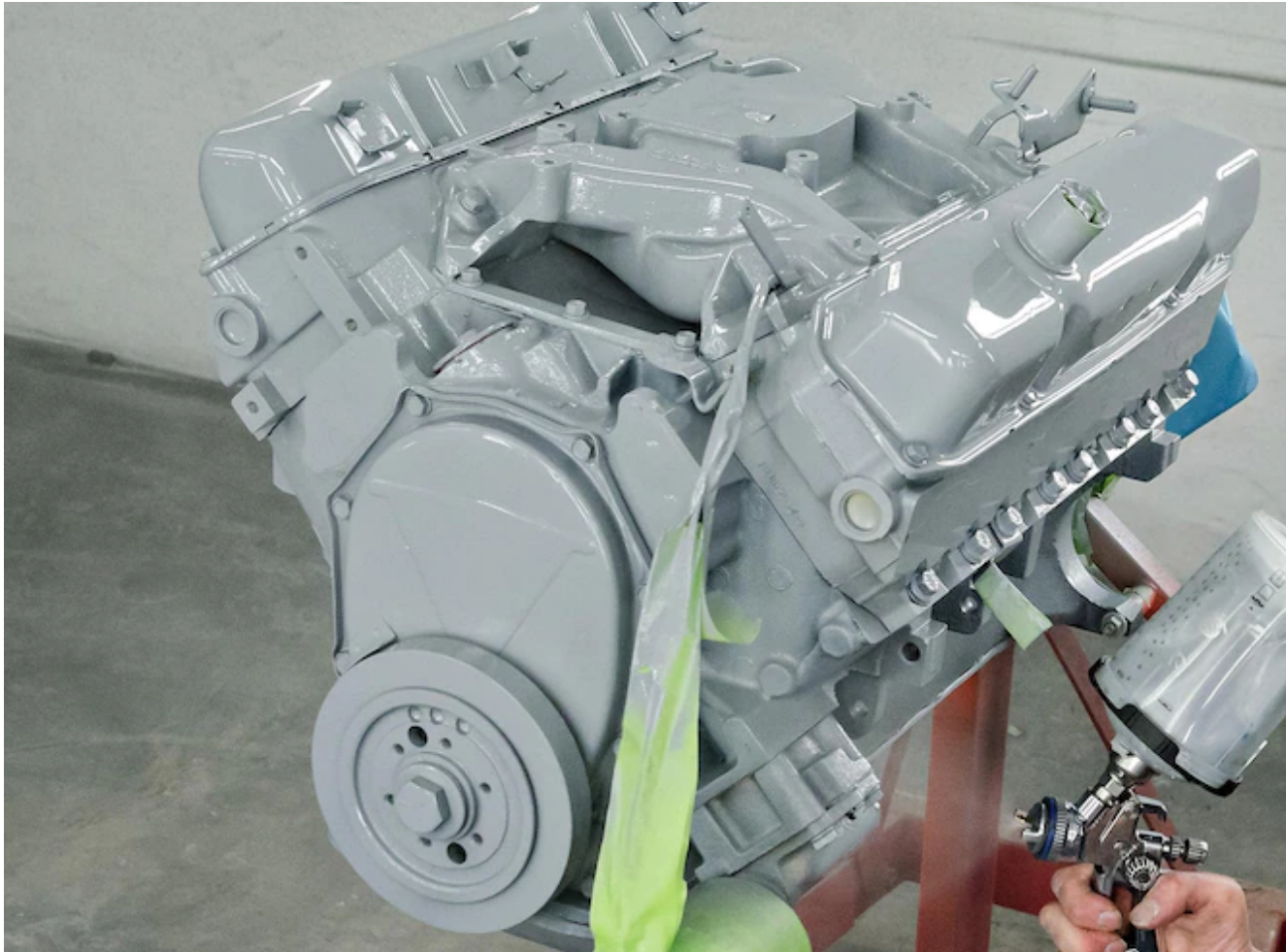
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The engine-to-trans mating surface should be bare, as should the entire back of the block. That's why it is completely covered.



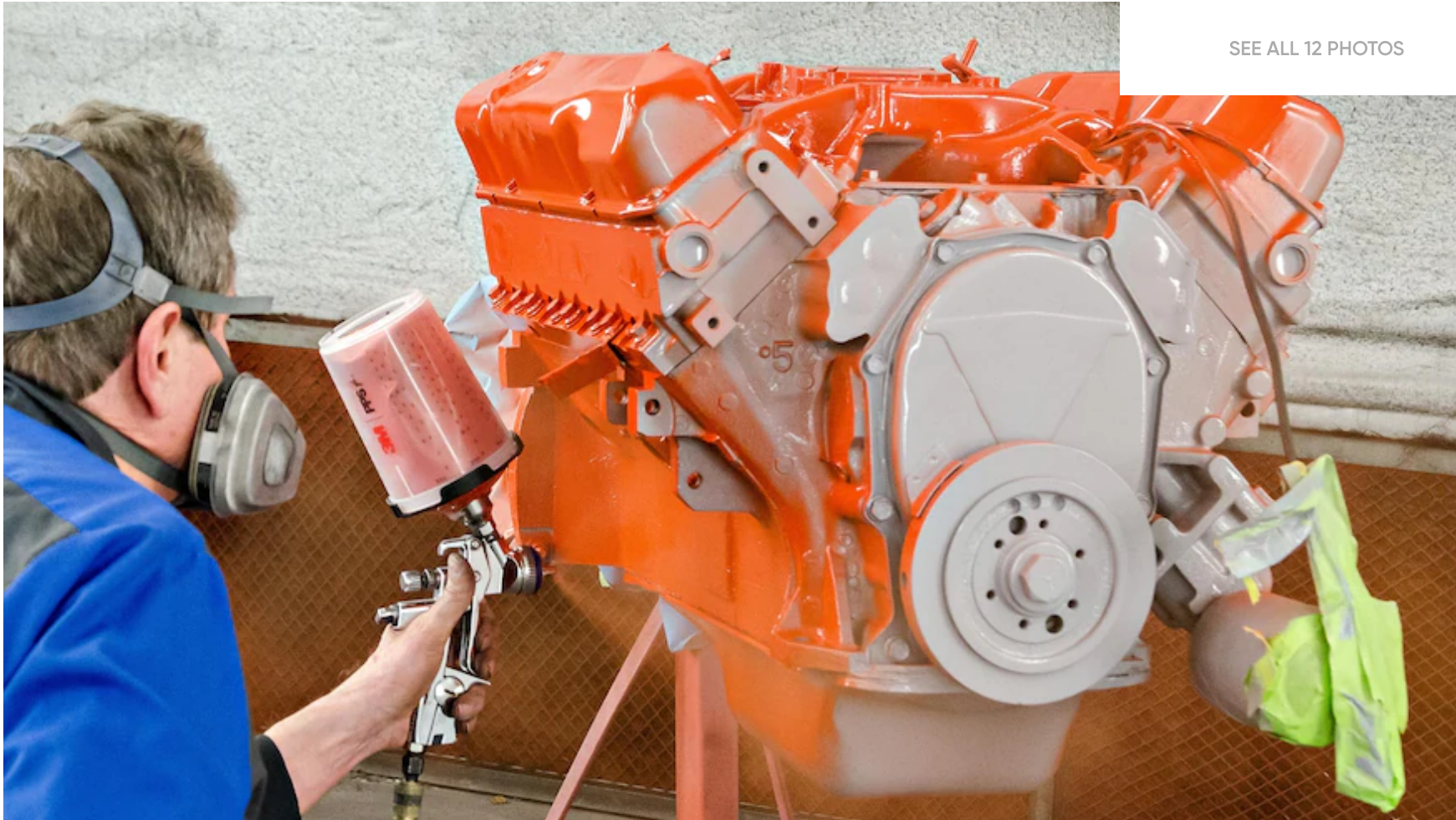
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Just prior to paint, the entire engine is sprayed and wiped down with PPG DX 320 to remove all traces of oil and grease.



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The primer is PPG LV Epoxy Primer. MCR will spray two coats about 15 minutes apart and then leave it to cure for about an hour.



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The color sprayed on this engine is Code No. 2226 Street Hemi Orange. The paint is PPG DCC single stage. It is a catalyst type paint



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Between coats, the balancer is rotated to expose the area under the timing tab so it gets painted with the next coat.

Engine Color Chart, '64-'74*

Turquoise

1964-68 361/383 with Carter

1966-68 440 with Carter

1968-69 383 with Holley

1967-69 440 with Holley

Red

1965-68 273/318/340

Race Hemi Orange

1964-65 426 2x4bbl

Hemi Orange

1966-68 426 2x4bbl

1969 383 with Carter

1969-71 426/440

1970-71 383 with Holley

Orange

1970-71 340

Street Hemi Orange

1969-71 426 2x4bbl

Blue

1969, 1972-74 318/340/ 360

1970-74 383/400 with Carter

1970-74 440 with Holley

1972-74 440 with Carter

**Note: There may be variations in production and/or final options.*



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