

Super Rod Magazine was conceived to reinvent the editorial coverage of the high-performance marketplace. **By John Dianna**

▶ SUPER EDITORIAL

I learned from that, and I am embracing technology.

EVERY DAY SEEMS TO BE

ANOTHER LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR ME LATELY.

AND IN THIS HOBBY OF OURS, JUST WHEN YOU

BELIEVE YOU FULLY UNDERSTAND WHY YOU MAKE

THE DECISIONS THAT YOU DO, AND THAT WE ARE

ON TOP OF OUR GAME, ALONG COME A FEW WELL-

PHRASED WORDS OF WISDOM...AND, SMACK...WE

FIND OURSELVES MUTTERING QUIETLY.

It happened to me again a few weeks ago. I was amazed at how much I didn't know about what I thought I knew and that I've taken for granted for so many years. How many of you own car covers? Then ask yourself, how many car covers do you own? Are they all the same, as mine are?

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Jim DeFrank began selling car covers at his old company, which he built into the largest car cover retailer in the U.S., and then he sold that business to his partner and formed California Car Cover Company. He proceeded to do it all over again when he created the single largest, most respected car cover company in the business. Personally, I have a car cover for every car I own, and have owned, and I've never purchased a car cover from anyone other than DeFrank. So what's this mean after all these years and all those covers? It means I hadn't a clue what I was doing, and I relied instead upon what I had learned so many years ago. "Hello, Jim, will you send me a cotton cover for a (whatever)? No, just that standard soft cotton one will do!"

Mistake number one. I never stopped to ask why there were so many different types of CCC covers—count them, nine—in his catalog. I simply assumed the standard cotton style was the logical choice. After all, it served me well for many years. That was mistake number two.

Thankfully, DeFrank's two fine sons,

Jimmy and Tony, asked if they might bring over a few of their contacts from Kimberly-Clark, a major supplier of car cover materials for California Car Cover. Certainly, I replied, never expecting to do much more than show them how we built our magazines and to talk some about our marketplace. That we did, and that's always a treat for me, but our meeting ran well into the afternoon, because once we got into the topic of car covers, my simplistic notion of what they were, and how consumers viewed them, was blown to shreds. No wonder DeFrank is so successful and sells so many of the nine different kinds of covers he markets. I could have been a better student, Jim, over the years, but...

I decided that you shouldn't wait as I did and that I would share with you some of the interesting information I learned that day. The obvious question is: why a car cover? The answers may not be as you would expect, as our needs vary greatly in that category. However, some of the rationale, in order of measured consumer importance, is as follows:

1. Protect the car from weather.
2. Protect the car from sun.
3. Protect the car from dust while in storage.
4. Protect the car from scratches, nicks and dings.
- 5 & 6. Protect investment and protect the car from bird droppings and tree sap.



Noah®

Evolution®

Dustop®

Now, I'm not certain if this order of importance exactly fits your criteria or not, but I for one have never considered a car cover important to protect any of my cars from weather. Yet that ranks No. 1 on the consumer index. Sun doesn't rank high either in my book, because when my cars are in the sun, I'm either cleaning them or using one of them. Ah, No. 3 ranks as my No. 1, and scratches, nicks and dings, investment protection and bird crap don't register whatsoever!

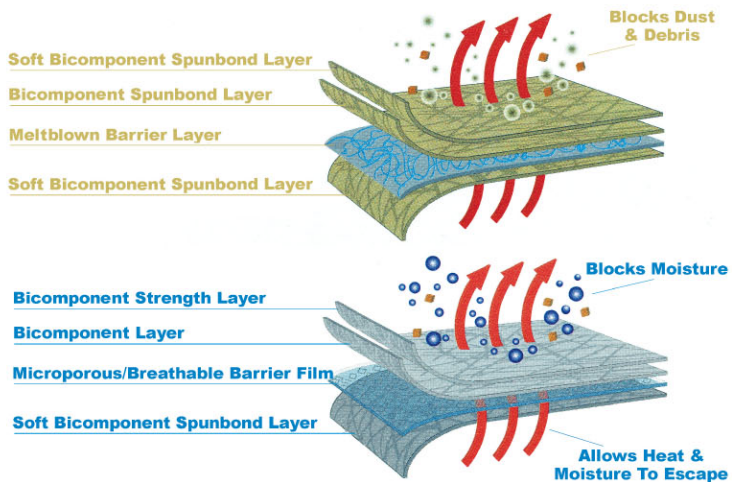
Yes sir, that's why I've been buying cotton car covers all these years—as if I had a clue: I'm keeping my cars "dust free." Of course, I knew I wasn't, because I can see the dirt left on the car finish after long periods of sitting, and I try not to drag the cover over the dust while removing it. And when you are my size, that's a tall order on some of the larger vehicles in my garage. That's when the technical portion of our discussion led to this: Block-It, a Kimberly-Clark line of fabrics, offers a wide range of choices to protect a perfect paint finish. And to accomplish more specific objectives, it comes in six specific blends: one for indoor; one for strength; a triple-layer and a four-layer that will impede water while promoting evaporation of trapped water; and a thicker cover to ward off those scratches and dings should that be important to a would-be car-cover buyer.

But let's begin at my needs; I am aston-

ished to learn that CCC's basic Block-It Dustop, which is an indoor cover, provides more than twice the dust protection of my beloved woven-cotton flannels. And it has a soft inner layer that provides superior gloss retention—measured in sample tests against cotton and after repeated rubbing cycles. Tests further showed that the Dustop fabric does not reduce the gloss of clearcoat paint. How clever! Safely said, with this cover you would be half as likely to scratch or swirl your car while putting the cover on or taking it off. Duh!

That means, I suppose, that those of us who are not 5 feet 8 inches or better can add greatly to that statistic as we drag the cover off the top and over the fenders.

Okay, so I feel a little stupid, but I'm learning. They've got my attention, and I want to learn more, and I do. That same basic cover, the one DeFrank sells for \$150, is made with a state-of-the-art non-woven fabric, as opposed to the woven cotton, and it is made of four layers: a soft Bicomponent Spunbond layer (top), a second Bicomponent Spunbond layer, a Meltblown Barrier layer, and a soft Bicomponent Spunbond layer (the bottom, which touches your car). The technology is more lightweight than a flannel cover, and yes, it is just as soft or softer and will provide short-term protection from moisture or light rain.



The CCC Noah car cover, which sells for \$10 more, goes way beyond what I ever felt were my basic cover needs. It, too, is made of a Kimberly-Clark Block-It fabric, only this four-layer mixture is water-resistant and provides superior protection in all weather conditions without sacrificing the ability to breathe that the car needs. It has a much stronger outer Bicomponent layer and a second, plus a

Microporous/Breathable Barrier film, and then the soft Bicomponent Spunbond layer. This combination blocks the penetration of liquid moisture and allows heat and moisture vapor to escape. If I lived back East, I think my cover choice just changed. This cover also offers long-term protection against all conditions, including acid rain, industrial pollutants, tree sap and, yes, bird crap! The Noah is also more



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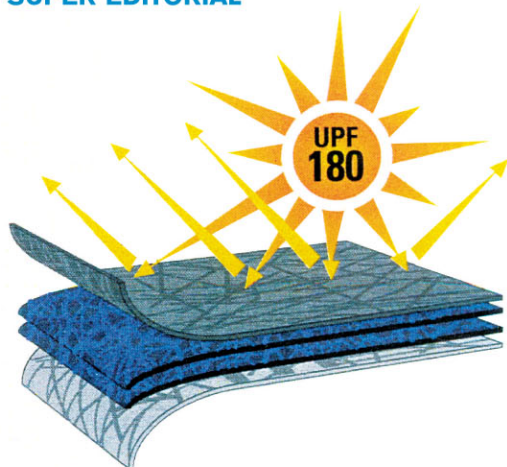
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resistant against dents and door impact, and when you look at the statistical data, it does so by a wide margin, and it's nearly three times more effective than cotton. So much for what I believed was fact.

There's more. For those of you who must leave your cars in the sun for long periods of time, even storage, the Block-It Evolution fabric is the protection you need. This material blocks out 99 percent of harmful UV radiation and has a UPF rating of 180. Here's what that means. Because of skin concerns, and the findings that our apparel doesn't do much to protect our bodies, and because after studies it was found that 25 percent of the clothing we wear offers a UPF of less than 15, the apparel-textiles industry developed standards for quantifying sun protection for our skin—that's a UPF rating. An ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) rating indicates how much UV radiation is absorbed by the fabric being measured. So a UPF rating of 20 means that 1/20 of hazardous UV radiation falling on the surface of the fabric passes through it. A car cover is the same, and while many fabrics block the sun's ultraviolet radiation, not all block enough to be classified as sun protective. Some fabrics measured had a UPF value of less than 10. Compare that to the Evolution rating of 180! Interestingly, Evolution uses the same type of UV protection chemistry that is found in the clearcoat paint on your car.

So what's an enthusiast to do? I know I'm not throwing away all my cotton CCC Softweave and Plushweave car covers, but I have two new projects just nearing completion, and I am about to go high-tech and learn from my own ignorance. I am going to test the value of new chemistry, and I am going to begin this new search with the Dustop. And because one of those projects is a roadster, sans a top, I think I'll spring for the extra \$10 and give Noah's proprietary technology a nod. They say it's good for both indoors and out, it breathes, yet it stops almost all dust, dirt and pollutants and provides a moisture barrier while permitting condensation to evaporate. And that may be just the ticket for this wicked roadster—especially when it gets caught outside the 18-wheeler on one of those back East kinda days.

I learned from that, and I am embracing technology. So why, you ask, a car cover? **SR**