

# Tired Tires

BY GLEN DONALDSON

It was the Summer of '09 and, as my Nephew Ian and I sped around the Track at Mosport, I began to realize that maybe I should check the tires on the TR7. OK so we were not really zooming around the track – and yes, it was a parade lap at The Canadian Classic and the track was a little damp – as were we after the biblical rains that fell that Saturday morning. However, there was no mistaking the way that the rear end seemed to slip just a tad sideways on us as we left Quebec Corner. Hmm... might be an English car in a French Canadian Corner... might be oil on the track (following TR6s after all)... or, how old are those spiffy looking Michelins? As we pulled out of Moss Corner an application of throttle was met with a brisk sideways motion... so we just cruised around and enjoyed the throaty burble of the sports exhaust. Much to my amazement when I did check the invoice for the tires it became apparent that they had been touring the land for 15 years, my how time does fly on by.

After a bit of research it would appear that 6 years is the life span that most tire manufacturers and European car companies recommend for car tires, as after that time the rubber will start to deteriorate both internally and externally and begin to go hard. So yes, copious amounts of tire sauce keeps the tires looking nice and black and keeping the car garaged so that the tires are out of the sun helps to, but really when they start to go hard it is game over. This hardness is like many things on our old cars, we just gradually accept that the car does not stick as well in the corners or that the seats are not as comfy. I began

to take notice of this in the Spitfire too, we would turn into a corner and the old girl wanted to take a rather wide slippery path around the corner.

The research also found that there is a date of manufacture stamped on tires, in a small rectangular box near the DOT stamping. The DOT Code should tell you where and who made the tire and then the last four digits tell you the date the tire was made. Since 2000 the year has been two digits, 09 for 2009, 10 for 2010 etc. and the digits before that indicate the week of the year that it was made. In the attached picture the 8PY806 means they were made on shift 8PY in the 8th week of 2006. Before 2000 the year only had 3 digits. However if your tires are that old, go out right now and buy fresh ones! There has been discussion on expiry dates, why everything else has them, but tires don't? The tire industry has not done this, because tires vary in chemical make up and therefore vary in life span and conditions they are exposed to; hence the general rule of thumb of 6 years.

Fast-forward to Spring 2010 and Captain Brown is trying to source two sets of tires one for the Spit in the original 155SR13 and ones for the TR7 in 185/70R13. Yes there is a very slight difference in 155SR13 vs. 155/80R13, Google that and ye shall see. I also prefer the classic look of the skinny wee tires on the Spit. The TR7 being



a 5-speed car has the wider rims and 185 tires over the early 4 speed cars and 175s. Both my cars run slightly wider rims being the Mini-Lite style mags, but the original size tire is no problem on the wider rim.

The Spitfire got treated to Vredestein Sprint +, fresh from Holland and pretty sticky with a 240 tread wear rating. They made a huge difference; smoother and quieter, plus they held on when you tossed the corners at the car. I also changed the original Goodyear G600 spare tire, as it looked as though you could poke your finger through the sidewall. Sadly this was replaced by a CTC brand tire and the worst part is it is made in China.



But it is only intended to get me home. The TR7 ended up with Toyo Extensas fresh and new, but not as sticky as I would like. I used Paul Ross at RNJ Tires, not the cheapest place but great service and Paul and his son will do the final balancing with the tires on the car. Granted this means you have to put the wheel on the same corner and same location, but I was willing to give this a try. And in reality rotating the tires on



on. I always try to keep my cars safe and ready for use in town or blasting down a highway to enjoy a TTC event or outing. If we do a few jobs each year then the cars are always ready for a spin or trip and the chances of coming home via the CAA are lessened. Believe me I have been there and done that and maybe that is why the TR3A is but a memory of my Triumphs past. Have a great winter and check out those tires, belts and hoses. It sure would make the family's Christmas shopping easier. **RAGTOP**

a car that does a few thousand kilometers a year is not a big issue, age and lack of use will kill our tires first. I also got to thinking about the rubber fan belts on the cars. It seems that no matter what I did the TR7 belt was making ugly noises. A fresh new German belt from British Auto Sport made all the noises go away, so nice, and it cost less than \$10. I changed it in less than 5 minutes too, with no swear words from the garage and no skinned knuckles. Try that with your modern day ride. When I put the old belt in the boot as

a back up, I realized it had been 15 years since the fan belts were changed. Radiator hoses are fresher as I do coolant every 4 to 5 years. You know I already did the brake flex lines and put the vastly superior stainless steel flex lines on, which makes the pedal feel firm and modern. No, I shall resist a pun here!

After one summer of use I am happy and confident that the cars have fresh safe rubber on them. Too often I see a great looking car at a show and it is running tires I would not drive across town

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