

M3 Seat Leather Restoration

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I first purchased my M3 when I lived in Sydney in 1999. It was at the BMW dealership in Perth where it had been traded in on an E39 M5. I contacted a BMW club member in Perth, Terry LeMay, who kindly inspected the car for me. He said that he knew the car because of its unusual colour scheme, inside & out. He was right, the Vader seats are an individual colour, "Leder Nappa Lichtblau (Nr.2 136 741)"

After many years of great fun with the car, I stupidly sold it in 2004 and it went back to West Australia. In 2013, after returning home to Queensland, I was looking to get back into club life and checked online to see what an E36 M3 was worth, and "Bazinga!" there was my M3 for sale in South Australia. I could not believe it. So, the next weekend, my son Grant and I headed to Adelaide and I bought it back!



Since getting the car back, I have spent a lot of time & money bringing it back to its original glory. After major detailing, paint correction and part replacements, the only issue I had with the car was the driver's seat leather.

I contacted many upholstery businesses to no avail and even investigated importing complete Vader replacement leather seat covers, but the colour was always the issue.

No-one could help me with the blue leather.

After many hours of internet trawling, I stumbled across several threads on forums about "Leatherique Leather treatment". Thank goodness for YouTube, as it gave me confidence that this may be the solution I need. Now, I'm not the handiest of people so



Restoring the Vader seats on an E36 M3



it was a bit of a stretch for me to start this project, but at worst, if I screwed it up, I'd have to do a full leather replacement anyway, so "Let's do it, I thought".

It's a 4-step process; Rejuvenate, Cleanse, Sand & Fill, and Colour.

I first gave the interior a very careful clean and wiped all the leather down with a damp cloth.



I then applied a generous covering of Rejuvenator Oil, massaging it in with my hands. I let it soak in for 24 hours and repeated the process 4 times over about a week. Next, I used the Pristine Clean solution to clean up the residue, followed by a wipe with a damp cloth.

After allowing the seats to dry, the scary part began. This involved sanding the damaged area with wet & dry



sandpaper to remove the damaged surface.

After that, I mixed some of the dye with the white filler and filled the cracks, allowed it to dry then sanded it all flat.

I must say that the Leatherique distributor, Rob at PPC in Sydney,

was a great help before and during my project, as I did have to send one of the headrests to Sydney for him to match the dye colour.

The final step was the dyeing of the seats. I taped off the areas where I was not restoring the leather first, then mixed the dye constantly (it separates quickly). I then added some dye into a bowl after mixing it in the bottle and used a slightly damp microfiber pad to very lightly dab numerous coats of dye, waiting an hour or more between applications. I resisted the urge to apply thicker coats to cover the filler, but it did eventually disappear with multiple thin coats.



I forgot to take an after photo, but I documented the process on video so have a look at it to see how I did it and you'll see the result at vimeo.com/212713187

I was very proud to win best in my class at the 2017 BMW Club Nationals Show & Shine, but if I must be honest, the seat has started to crack again on my repairs after some use, so sadly, it's not perfect.



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