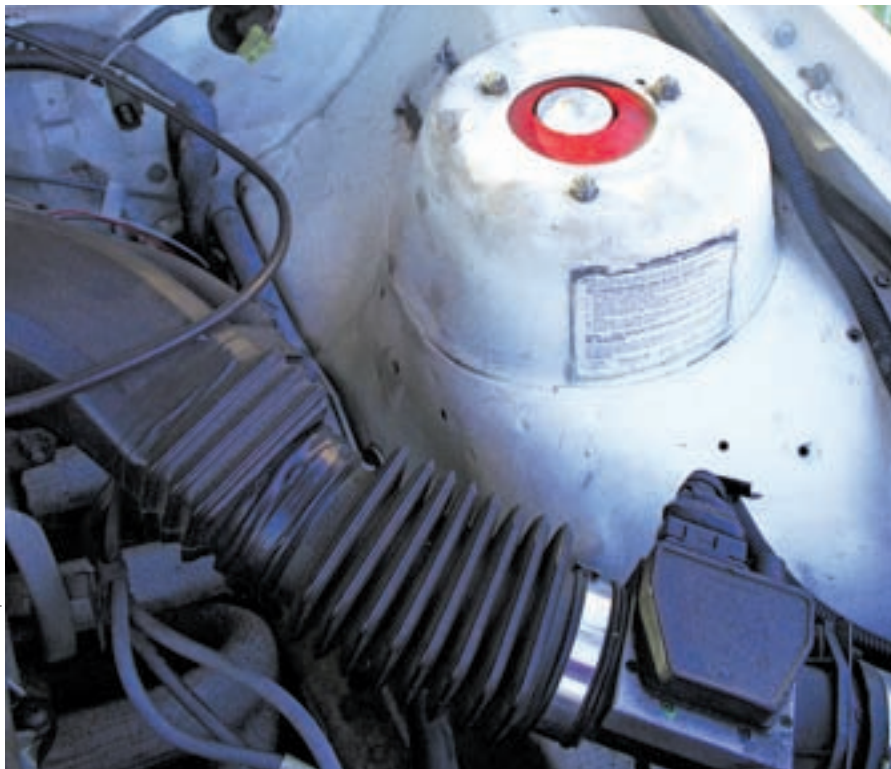


SMOOTHER STRUTS

WE ATTEND TO THAT BUTT-UGLY FUSE BOX IN SEARCH OF A MORE BEAUTIFUL BAY
STORY AND PICS BY LIAM QUIRK



If there's one thing we're keen on here it is schmick engine bays. Sure, relocating your overflow and washer bottles is easy enough (not that I've done it, whoops!) but the one thing that everyone seems to overlook when they do their wiring is the fuse box. One thing that has always annoyed me about the bay of the VL was the wires – the things are bloody everywhere. Wiring is easy enough to relocate. In some cases, it doesn't even need lengthening, but rather clever rerouting. In the process of tidying the bay, we had to stop for a minute, scratch our heads and wonder what the hell we could do to remove that unsightly fuse box. We'd seen it done before, and thought 'hey, why not give it a shot', so armed with the reassurance that others had undertaken the task and come out with a working car on the other side, we got stuck in. The VL is a simple car and the job is pretty basic. As such, you're not going to need any fan-dangled tools to get the job done. Have a socket set (even just a 10mm and you'll be right) and a few screwdrivers lying around, and you should be set. Oh, and seeing as we're working on a VL – a hammer, preferably the largest you can find.

1. We'll stop putting this step in soon and assume that you've heard it enough times for it to become second nature. Disconnect your battery.

2. Remove the fuse-box lid to expose an array of fuses and relays, as well as the mounting screws at either end.

3. Undo the Phillips head screws holding the fuse rail in.

4. Remove the relays. Simply slot a flat-head screwdriver down behind the relays, disengaging the latch and lift them out of the way. The rail itself won't come out without the relays out first.

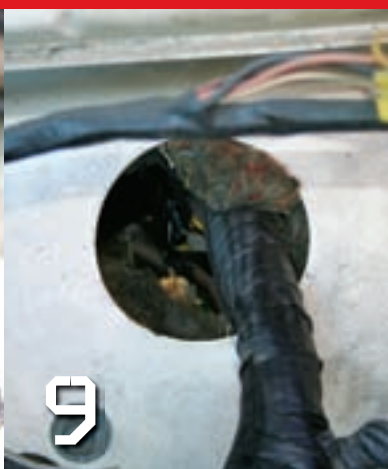
5. Remove the plastic fuse box, and file it in the nearest available round file under 'R' for redundant.

6. Jump inside the car and pull out your glovebox. There's a pin in the bottom right-hand corner, then it simply levers out.

7. Pretty much the entire dash needs to come out. Stop fretting, all up there's maybe 12 Phillips head screws



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and a few 10mm bolts. If you're worried, consult your workshop manual but you should be right.

8. Drop the fan box. Two 10mm bolts hold it in. You can now see the back-side of the loom and the grommet. The grommet needs to be carefully cut free.

9. Back in the engine bay, strip the loom of some of the insulation to allow it to flex in order to pass it through the firewall.

10. Here's the tricky part. There is already a hole in the firewall and the wires are already long enough to push through into the cabin. Do the math.

11. One thing that we didn't bank on was the headlight and clutch fan looms. They needed to be disconnected and run into the cabin with the fuse rail and then sent back to their matching plugs. We decided to hide them partially and ran them under the guards.

12. Run the wires along the top of the fan box, which will align them perfectly with the back of the glovebox. Running them underneath will leave you short of wires and this route is more direct.

13. The back of the dash needs to be modified if the fuses are going to live in

the glovebox. Don't cut off this tab even though it appears to be the solution to your woes. You need it for your glove box to open and shut properly.

14. With the dash modified, push the wires through and most of the hard work is done. The glove box itself will need a similarly sized hole in a similar position.

15. Cold chisel the brackets out of the engine bay and give the area a little spruce up, which should have it looking nice and smooth like this.

16. Install the glovebox lid and make sure that everything works as it should. We'll have to leave it there until next time when we get stuck into making the holder and dress panels to neaten up the affair.

With the box and brackets removed, it definitely makes an improvement, and with some wires hidden and maybe even a splash of paint, it'll be a show-ready bay in no time. As a bonus, with the fuse box away from the exhaust, we can run a high-mount turbo without fear of the reflected heat making a molten mess out of our electrics. Tune in next issue as we tidy up the install and finish this job off. *SC*



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