HIDE AND SEEK

WATCH AS STEVE AT MKAL PERFORMS A MAGIC TRICK ON PROJECT PHOENIX'S ENGINE BAY – PRESTO CHANGE-O!

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It has been a few issues since we started showing you images of our giveaway project car Phoenix and all the cool stuff that is being stuffed into it in the lead-up to its big day. Perhaps we were a little premature in starting that coverage, but you guys and gals were screaming to know more about the car that almost any one of you could potentially win in due course.

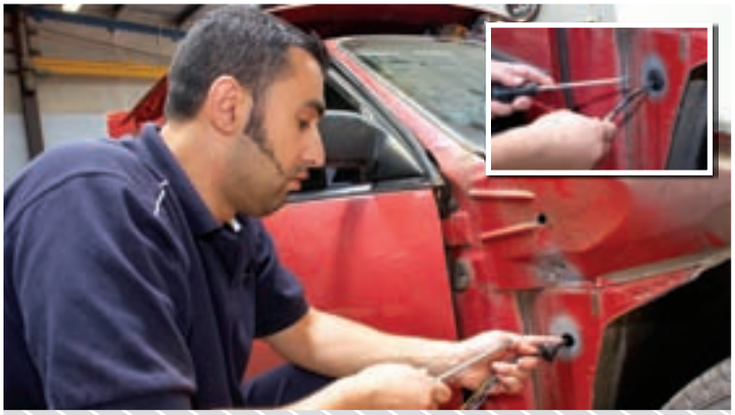
So here we are, about six months into the schedule of events and we're bringing you the first decent coverage of the work being performed on this tired old faded-red VN 5L five-speed sedan. Phoenix is having its wiring hidden from view by Steve Kelfat at MKAL Automotive Electrical Services. I guess some could be forgiven for wondering why the hell anyone would bother performing such work on a car. It doesn't make it faster, lighter or stop better. However, no-one can deny the impact of a clean, smooth and spaghetti-free engine bay, which is why we called upon the ultra-capable talents of Steve at MKAL.

Follow on as we show you the work done thus far.

1
Here's the engine bay prior to any tampering by the *SC* staffers or MKAL. Not too pretty is it? Dirty, dusty and hosting a battery, alarm siren, ugly relay box and a bunch of wiring that all has to go.

2
First step was carefully reefing the harness and relays from the engine bay as well as anything else that was going to get in the way, such as the airbox, radiator, guards, bumper, lights, grille, battery, thermo and bumper support. It's looking better already. Sometimes you find some nasty surprises like this rusty battery tray (see below).

6
With the guards removed, Steve has easy access to make the necessary holes in the inner guards for running all the wires behind the panels instead of inside the engine bay. If you're making any cuts or holes in the metal, always be sure to coat the bare metal with cold-gal or equivalent to prevent rusting.



7
Here's the same hole, now inhabited by fresh wiring and a factory-style rubber grommet to prevent any shielding from wearing away, which if it occurs can see your pride and joy burn to the ground in minutes. So spend the extra couple of cents!

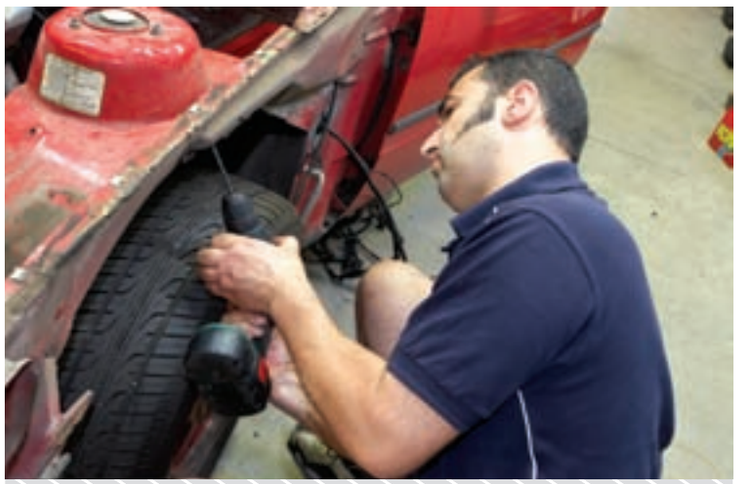
8
Steve did plenty of this on the project. Re-routing wiring on any kind of vehicle or project will undoubtedly require extending or shortening just about every wire present and you can tell from the inset that Steve has had plenty of experience soldering. Heat shrink is mandatory for any electrical wiring to protect the bare wires from touching any metal, other wires or corrosion.

3
Here's all the old wiring, relays and connections neatly assembled in front of the naked VN. Okay, so it's not so neat, but Steve knows his way around a Commodore's wiring system like the back of his hand, so it's cool. Steve coincidentally worked with Holden for many years and helped out on the amazing Efijy project, among others.

4
Next up, completely disassemble the dash and console. This looks daunting and probably isn't for the first-timers out there, but it can be done by paying close attention to how everything comes apart and keeping all nuts and bolts in sealed, marked bags. For Steve, it's just another day's hard work. You can see the relays sitting on the passenger-side floor.

5
This is roughly where Steve will be mounting the relays, once and for all ridding their ugliness from the engine bay. The inset shows a grommet Steve has installed in the firewall under the dash on the passenger side for running the wiring out of sight.

9
The size of the hole you cut into the sides of your car will depend on how many wires or tubes you need to run through it. Always be sure to check the backside of the panel you wish to cut through before grabbing the drill. This shot shows our dangerous little friend that was disturbed by all the cutting.

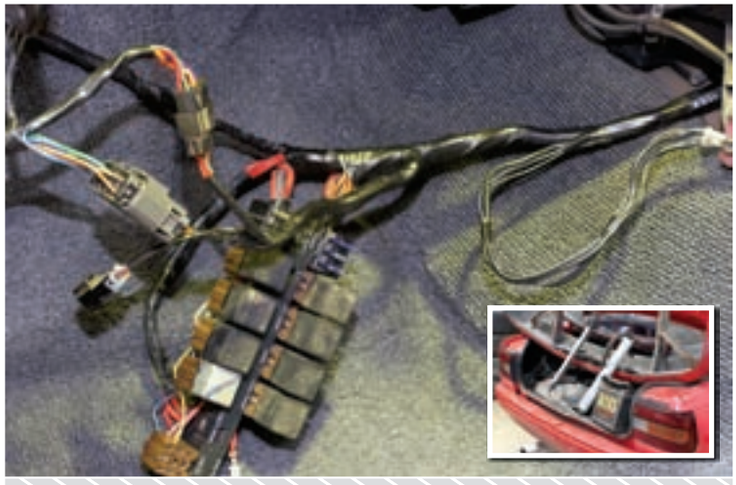


10
Grab a drill bit and make a series of holes along the length of the car between your hole-sawed orifice and the front. Again, check what's behind your drill bit and just enough holes, not too many.

11
These are what will fill those drill holes – factory-style quick ties that lock into the panel to hold your new wiring firmly in place for many years to come. The work MKAL does is first rate.

12
Here's one we prepared earlier. No, not really, I just always wanted to use that line. Here you can see the new wires firmly locked into place in the space that will be behind the guards and out of sight. Genius! The thicker grey-ish tube is for the vacuum ball under the headlight opening.

13
The new wiring then runs under the headlight opening and under the front of the radiator with a few wires breaking off here and there where necessary. Notice that everything is neatly and safely wrapped in electrical tape or some form of shielding. This is not just for good looks. It is much the same story for the other side of the car.



14
Here's the relay panel all wired up into its new home. Properly earthed, if the motor was running we would now be able to turn this puppy over and make sure everything was right. As the car is now off to Auto Image in Thomastown VIC, the assembly has been left hanging until we can get the dash back in and the battery relocation will be completed then, too.

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