



Other than the red MSD plug wires, there's not much else that isn't factory appearing on this car, although there is also an MSD ignition hidden inside the interior to help burn all the fuel those three carbs can spit out. Note that the air cleaner sticker reads 400 hp. That's because 435-hp cars, with their solid-lifter camshafts, were not permitted to have air conditioning.



Putting The Power To

OUR TRI-POWER BIG-BLOCK FINDS A FITTING HOME
BY ANDY BOLIG

Last month, we brought you along as we assembled a streetable big-block with big power potential. This month, we're going to show you the lucky Corvette that engine now calls home and take you along for a ride as we put it through the most grueling test there is – the real world!



The Pavement

When we left our engine, it was churning out over 650 streetable horsepower with a factory-appearing tri-power setup and it was on its way back home to Florida to be installed in a '67. In the meantime, the '67 was working its way through a restoration of its own. Actually, you could consider it a resurrection since the car hadn't been driven since the early '70s and was pretty much left for dead until Tom Roe and restorer Jerry Clark came along and saw the

potential under all those years of junkyard grime and slime. The entire fiberglass front end was shattered in an accident in Texas, but there was no frame damage as the bumper mounts took the majority of the impact. Being in Texas all those years, the frame had accumulated a layer of clay, which had protected it. Under all the crud, there was a diamond waiting for its turn to shine but everyone kept walking past, looking on the surface and seeing the

amount of work it would require to make it all right again. That is, until Jerry and Tom started talking about the possibilities. Then it became quite obvious to both men that this car was worth salvaging.

It was obvious to them, but someone needed to sell it to Tom's wife, Linda. Tom thought about that on his way home from Jerry's shop. He thought REAL HARD about it. Stammering, he found the words to convince his wife. Then she asked if he had



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1 The restoration could best be described as a resto-mod. The chassis was restored but included several upgrades to help contain the enormous torque from the tri-powered engine.

2 Inside the car, it's out-of-the-box stock. The seats were re-skinned in true black leather and the rest of the interior pieces come from Al Knoch. There's also a teak steering wheel to complement the all-black cockpit.

3 Even with over 650 horses creating heat under the hood, this '67 still uses the factory-style clutch fan with a radiator sourced from Best Radiators in Hays, Kansas.

4 Unless you were looking for it, it would be easy to overlook the Keisler five-speed conversion in Tom's '67. That is, until you drive it – then the difference at highway speed is nothing short of amazing.

5 One of the things that makes this Corvette so appealing is the fact that it retains much of the original car. It started out as a '67 convertible with air, and Tom decided not to mess with a good thing. Even with today's refrigerants, a properly set-up system can put a chill in your bones, even in a mid-year.

6 The crank pulley still spins an original Frigidaire compressor. A nice touch.

any photos of his new pride and joy. From the frying pan into the fire. It wasn't until the project was well under way several weeks later that he finally found some photos of what the car looked like and showed them to Linda. After a short time (Tom refers to it as an eternity), his wife started to breathe again. Tom tried to comfort her by explaining how the Texas clay had preserved the frame and there was little or no rust. Then she spoke. "Yeah! It doesn't have anything for the rust to stick to! Have you lost your mind!?" Tom eventually convinced Linda and they proceeded on with the project, but she told her beloved husband that she didn't want to hear any complaining about ANYTHING! Tom determined to keep his side of the deal.

Tom and Jerry played their own cat-and-mouse game, searching for parts and pieces to put everything back together again, and they did more than make it right – they made it better. This time, the car runs on a set of Bridgestone Potenza radial tires and now has a Kiesler five-speed residing under the console plate. Both contribute greatly to

the car's driveability and make opening up the ponies a joy ride instead of a hair-raising experience. And when you do open up those three carburetors under that striking Marina Blue stinger, the world just starts to fly by. The vacuum-operated front and rear carbs make their presence known when they open up, and the sound emanating from those side pipes is true music to the ears. Of course, Tom wanted to help out the engine as much as possible without being too obvious, so he located a set of old Hedman headers that were designed for a big-block with sidepipes. If you've ever noticed how a dog whistle drives all the neighborhood dogs crazy as they twist their necks, trying to figure out where that sound is coming from, well, this car has the same effect on gearheads. It's simply music. The cam, compression and carbs all work together to let anyone within earshot know that this definitely isn't factory, even if it does look like it.

Inside that stock-like appearance is a rotating assembly built and balanced by Lunati. With a longer throw and bigger



Believe it or not, the red convertible is how Tom's project started. The car had been in this state of neglect since 1971.

slugs, this engine now breathes about 489 cubic inches and, as we mentioned earlier, those additional inches help to pump out 655 hp and 591 lb-ft of torque at 5,100 rpm. Each one of them totally streetable. Rotating directly above the crankshaft is a Lunati hydraulic roller with .650" lift, 304 and 312-degrees of duration on a 110 and 118-degree lobe separation angle. It will definitely give the radio antenna a nice wiggle while you're waiting for the stoplight.

On the outside of the engine, there is very little to let the observer know of the potential that resides under the hood. The heads are aluminum just like the L89s of that era. On Tom's car, though, they were manufactured by Air Flow Research and they greatly contribute to the engine's breathing at about 315 cfm per port. Other

than the heads, the rest of the under-hood experience is stock, right down to the factory A/C compressor and heater A/C box which came with this car since it was a factory-air convertible '67. Of course, with the A/C system so obvious, Tom needed to put a 400-horse sticker on the triangle air cleaner so as not to throw up too many red flags, since the 435-hp versions never had air as an option.

Bringing the rest of the Corvette's body up to par was the handiwork of John Ames and team at J & M Corvette Auto Body in Brooksville, Florida. They started with what was left of the '67's original body and removed most of it. The entire front end and the rear quarters were replaced with press-molded units from Sermersheim. Everything was fit to perfection and then draped with that forever-

deep coat of black urethane that makes the Marina Blue stinger really stand out.

We got the opportunity to put a few miles on Tom's fine ride, and we'd have to say that the car is surprisingly enjoyable. Starting out in low, there's not a hint of stumble and the car has plenty of torque for around town. It never loads up, and when you hit high gear, it's content to simply sip on the fuel through only two barrels. Since it's been finished, Tom and Linda have put a few miles on their new high-horsepower highway hauler and have attended quite a few shows – and they've started a collection of awards to prove it. So far, in the short time that this car has been back on the road, it's garnered the Best of Show award at the Silver Springs Corvette Show, the Best in Class at the Vinoy/St. Petersburg event and best in Class at the Ultimate Corvette Party at Ferman Chevrolet in Tampa. While Tom does enjoy hauling home the awards in his big-block bruiser, that's not why he built it. He'd much rather watch the odometer whirl around with the top down, listening to the music from those sidepipes. We think he's got his priorities in the right place, and that just makes this '67 that much cooler. ■

Tom Roe would like to thank Jerry Clark of Jerry's Corvette Restorations, Ed Dixon of Dixon Innovations, the Team at J & M Corvette Auto Body, Tony Mamo at Air Flow Research, Matt Held at Lunati, Gray at Keisler Automotive and, most of all, his wife Linda, for looking past the body panels and helping him build his dream Corvette.