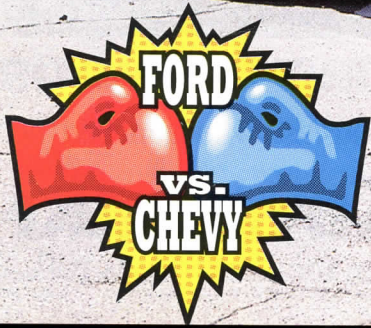




Rat Attack



By Kevin Wilson

Wouldn't it be cool to take a full-race NHRA drag truck, slap on some headlights, taillights, mufflers and license plates and cruise the streets with the top off and the tunes cranked, looking for unsuspecting street racers? Sound like the wish list from a Keystone beer commercial? Not exactly. For Phoenix, Arizona, resident Brian Senft and his '68 Chevy pickup, this is reality.

An avid drag racing participant since the age of 16, Brian became interested in NHRA's truck class and started building a '68 Chevy as a racetruck with which to compete. Unfortunately, the truck division never fully took off, so Brian converted his tube-chassis pickup to a full-on Pro Street machine. The Pro Streeter features a 1½-inch-tube chassis utilizing Ford Pinto independent suspension up front, while an Aston ladder-bar setup is used at the rear with coil-over Koni shocks. A narrowed Ford 9-inch rearend is mounted out back, fitted with 4:11 gears and a Detroit locker. Rolling stock is pure Pro Street with monster 33-inch 21.5x15 Mickey Thompsons mounted on Weld Racing five-spokes in the rear and narrow 16.5x15 Winstons, also on Weld wheels, mounted up front.

Under the louvered hood is a balanced-and-blueprinted 454 Rat motor bored .030-over, fitted with a steel crank, Childs & Albert bearings, Stage 3 connecting rods and TRW forged pistons. Lunati supplied the valvetrain components, including the .710-lift, .325-duration camshaft. Ported and polished Chevy square-port heads are fitted with Manley stainless-steel valves and Lunati triple springs. Lopers Performance Service Center of Phoenix, Arizona, did the balancing and blueprinting on the engine along with the head work. Aspiration is via a Holly 1055 Dominator perched atop an Edelbrock Victor Jr. manifold. An MSD ignition provides spark while a Milodon 7-quart oil pan and high-volume pump take care of oiling. For overkill, the Rat motor was fitted with an NOS system. Once completed, the engine was painted body color and dressed out with B&M valve covers and a K&N air cleaner. Harnessing the horsepower of the big-block is a TH400 automatic fitted with a 4500-rpm stall-speed converter, manual shift body, trans brake, oil cooler and B&M shifter.

Prior to painting, the truck's original short-wide body was fitted with front and rear custom roll pans, and the tailgate was welded, smoothed and filled. New taillights were added to the pan and the top cut to be removable. A hard tonneau tops the bed and covers a 10-gallon fuel cell. For safety, a 12-point full rollcage was added along with Simpson harnesses for the truck's custom bucket seats. A custom dash is fitted inside with a full complement of Auto Meter gauges, while a Grant steering wheel transfers driver input. A 150-watt Pioneer/Fosgate sound system is capable of overpowering the engine for cruising atmosphere.

The truck is truly a home-built custom, with nearly all of the work on the truck done at home by Brian and friends Ken Stevens and Jim Varella, including the paint and body work. The Rat-motored Pro Streeter has made a few passes down the quarter, running 9.80s without nitrous. Needless to say, this radical Chevy has no trouble garnering attention at area cruise nights and has been known to roast the tires on occasion just for kicks. The truck has also earned a few local honors at area shows. But best of all, it's a kick to drive. Just ask Brian. ■

A Former Drag Truck Makes for One Mean Street Machine

