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EXCLUSIVE! BUILDING THE WORLD'S FIRST HOT ROD 2010 CAMAROS



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CAMAROS
INSIDE

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SPEED SHOPS YOU GOTTA SEE

INSANE!
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HOT ROD WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

THE CAMARO IS HERE



HOT ROD Gets an Advance Look
at Four Special 2010 Camaros.

By Bill McGuire

Photography: David Freers, Bill McGuire, and General Motors

THE CAMARO IS HERE

GM RACING CAMARO



> Lowered to the minimum allowable 3.5-inch ground clearance, the Grand Am Camaro has a killer stance. Customer Camaros for the Koni Challenge will be built and sold by Riley Technologies in Mooresville, North Carolina, in turnkey form or in various stages of completion. The new Camaro will be at the Daytona 24 Hours weekend in February, racing in the Grand Am Koni Challenge Series. GM Racing had this test mule/show car painted up in Mark Donohue's historic Penske Racing colors of blue and yellow. Squint just right and it's 1967 again.



> Koni Challenge rules are very strict, requiring a full factory floorpan and a regulation rollcage. Program Manager Dwight Woodridge was also responsible for the Chevy Cobalt Grand Am production racer.



> A production dashpad is used but with a full race LCD data display where the instrument panel once lived. The development car carries an extra set of hydraulic valves (to the right of the shifter) for adjusting the front and rear brake pressure.



> Tires and brake selections were easy. They were determined by the rule book: four-piston Brembo calipers with two-piece rotors; Hoosier 275/35R18 spec tires on Fikse aluminum racing wheels.



> The engine is a nearly stock LS3 V-8 with a racing oil pan and solid engine mounts. The transmission is a Tremec TR6060 with a close-ratio gearset, coupled with a production AAM differential unit. Note the four-point tower brace and adjustable camber plates.

My, don't we feel special today. It's a pleasant and sunny autumn morning and HOT ROD has been granted access to a place few civilians will ever see: Building 27 at the General Motors Proving Ground in Milford, Michigan. As this is GM's version of Hangar 18, the security is squeaky tight here. When we enter at the main gate, we have to turn over the serial numbers for our laptops and camera equipment. There is no patdown or cavity search, but it's close.

We are here to pay one final visit to some very special cars we have been following for some weeks now: a unique group of prototype '10 Camaros GM has been constructing for the SEMA show in Las Vegas. Once our photo shoot is completed, the cars will be given one final tuning and tweaking and then loaded up into their semi-trailers for the long haul out to Vegas. We got to look in on the process as these cars, originally constructed as preproduction units in Australia, were torn apart, customized, and reassembled again. This also allowed us—and you—an advance look at how the production Camaro is put together, so you might want to study the photos carefully.

It may seem strange that GM is taking cars that, at the time this is written, haven't even been formally introduced to the public yet—then immediately blowing them apart and modifying them well beyond their original specs. The Camaro will not officially be out until mid-February. But that is not how Sangyup Lee, design manager for the production Camaro, sees it at all. As we stand in a corner of Building 27 watching the photo setup unfold, Sangyup says, "One of the main characteristics of the Camaro has always been that it is a personal car. Virtually everyone who buys a Camaro is going to make it their own in some way. That's what we're doing here. Each one of these SEMA Camaros

has been targeted to a different type of individual." Well, sure. The designers and engineers on the Camaro program know their car is going to be hot-rod-d to heck and back. They just wanted to get the jump on the rest of us.

The four Camaros are a 6.2L coupe for Dale Earnhardt Jr., modified to run on gasoline or E85; Camaro Black, a V-6 six-speed designed to showcase GM's line of factory accessories for the next-gen Camaro; a bright-red, weekend-warrior bracket racer, as visualized by GM Performance Parts, complete with LS7 crate engine; and finally, the prototype mule/show car for the Grand Am racers, built to contest the Koni Challenge in 2009. So... which Camaro are you?

> Unlike our other three SEMA show cars, the Koni Challenge racer started not as a complete car but as a body in white on a surface plate in GM's race shop.



> Penske Racing ran its trademark Sunoco paint scheme on a number of race cars in the '60s, including the Trans-Am Camaros driven by Mark Donohue. It looks pretty fine on the new Camaro as well.

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> The Dale Earnhardt Jr. Camaro was designed to reflect Dale's affection for early Camaros while throwing in a few NASCAR styling elements for good measure. But Dale's key requirement was a killer audio system, here assembled from Boston Acoustic components.

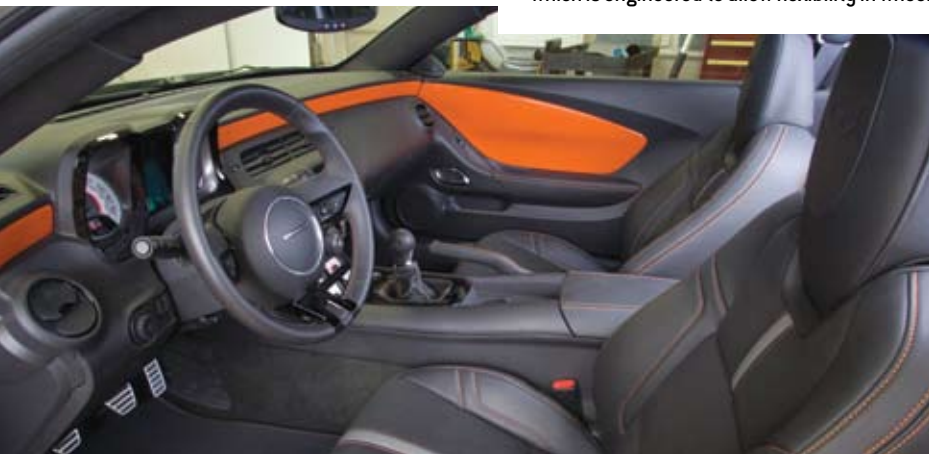
DALE EARNHARDT
JR. EDITION



> The 6.2L V-8 is nearly identical to the production Camaro engine but with a twist: This one is fully flex-fuel capable, modified to run on gasoline or E85. The gearbox is a Tremec six-cogger. Two 6.2L engines will be offered in the production Camaro, initially: LS3 (422 hp) and L99 (400 hp).



> While Junebug's Camaro was on the lift, we took this shot, which shows the multilink IRS setup and how the rear fascia and body panels fit together. The Camaro is built on GM's Zeta II platform, which is engineered to allow flexibility in wheelbase and track width for different models.



> The Dale Jr. interior features a Z28 sewing pattern on the retrimmed seats, along with a leather-wrapped steering wheel, shift knob, armrests, and console lid with matching stitching.

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CAMARO BLACK

> We caught one final look at Camaro Black as it boarded the trailer for SEMA. Note the pronounced Coke bottle effect at the door and quarter-panel, which required considerable finagling on the production Camaro—including the slimmest internal door hardware they have ever developed.



> Black's engine is a stock 3.6L LLT V-6 with variable valve timing and direct fuel injection. Before you tut-tut the base six, know this: It will be rated at 300 hp. It will also carry an EPA highway rating of 27 mpg. MSRP for the V-6 Camaro LS will start at just under 23 grand, GM has announced. Chevy expects the V-6 to account for more than 50 percent of Camaro sales.



> Here's what the new Camaro's engine compartment looks like without its engine. A tall deck Rat motor ought to drop right in there—what do you think?

> Slate leather with light gray accent stitching on the production seats is designed to complement the glossy black door inserts and instrument panel. Available upgrades from GM Accessories include a Boston Acoustics stereo system with amps and subwoofers.



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CAMARO LS7

> According to GM, the Camaro LS7 was racked into place by GM Performance Parts as "proof of concept for a weekend bracket drag race car," powered by a GMPP LS7 crate engine. As we heard it, the car was originally going to be called the COPO Camaro, but the suits nipped that one right in the bud. They want no suggestion that this combination will ever show up on a dealer lot.



> An LS7 crate engine (see "The Jumbo Crate Motor Comparo of Death," Oct. '08) has been converted to wet-sump oiling and fitted with a GMPP Hot Cam, PN 1248003. Since this basic engine ran 10.70s at 120 mph in the yellow Chevelle (without the trick cam), it ought to be pretty stout here as well.

> As with many current front-drive cars and the rear-drive Mustang as well, the Camaro's powertrain, front suspension, and cradle assembly load in from the bottom as a unit. Steering is via variable-ratio rack-and-pinion.

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> The Camaro LS7's interior combination is the simplest and we think the cleanest. The shifter for the Tremec six-speed is a Hurst short-throw unit complete with white knob, soon to appear in the GMPP catalog.



> What's it take to perform a SEMA-quality paint job? You don't even want to know, but you can start with near-infinite man-hours of primer surfacing, color-sanding, and power polishing.



> V-8 short-tube headers (PN 92213295) and an after-cat high-flow exhaust system (PN 92206992) terminate in these 3.5-inch chrome spigot-thingsies. See the Camaro LS7 on the '09 HOT ROD Power Tour®.

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'12 FIREBIRD?

Psst. So we heard this story going around town. It goes something like this: If the new Camaro meets all its initial manufacturing and sales targets in the first 12 to 18 months of production, GM might be prepared to spring loose with a Pontiac Firebird version. Now, we have no idea as to the accuracy of this story. Frankly, it sounds more than a little spurious. This is not how the Detroit automakers do business anymore. To control costs, they now strive to minimize the number of models they introduce, not multiply them.

But hey, we're HOT ROD. It's our job to spread disputatious stories such as these. We might even start a good rumor if it tickles our fancy, see if it finds some traction. What could be cooler than a next-gen Firebird as a companion piece to the new Camaro? To develop a concept of what this car might look like, HOT ROD commissioned Detroit automotive designer and hard-core rodder Murray Pfaff to take the idea and run with it. Now that we've seen the renderings, all we can say is that if the new Firebird is half as sharp as Murray imagines it, we hope GM can find a way to build it.

—BILL MCGUIRE

> Three-bar taillamps and a decklid-mounted ducktail spoiler complete the Trans Am formation at the rear.



> While the '10 Camaro's look is clearly based on the '69 Chevy F-Body, Murray chose the '77 to '78 Firebird as his point of departure for a Pontiac version—"the most iconic of all Firebirds," as he sees it. The clear plastic hood bubble merges the Trans Am's original Shaker unit with the modern power blister found on the Corvette ZR1. Note the coupe's 70½ Trans-Am stripe.



> Other signifying Pontiac design cues include twin fender vents and honeycomb aka snowflake wheels. Got to have the snowflake wheels.

> "From the rear this car is unmistakably a Pontiac," Murray says, thanks in part to the full-width taillamp assembly. "The rear diffuser has a color-matched panel flanked by stacked dual exhaust—a modern rendition of the Trans Am slash-cut dual tips."





> "Instead of rectangular lights, I created a modern projector beam lamp with glowing halos mounted in a hexagon grille mesh. Lower air intakes with foglights add a smirk to the menacing demeanor. Twin scoops and a hood tach complete the look," Murray says.



> "If GM were to green-light a Firebird based on the new Camaro, I'm sure it would reuse as much sheetmetal as possible," Murraray notes. He achieved this look with new front and rear fasciae, front fenders, and a hood. **HRM**