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HOT ROD WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

QUICK TEST

GM HT383 CRATE ENGINE

Cast your mind back to the March '02 issue. The cover story was about taking a GM Performance Parts HT383 crate engine and making 500 lb-ft of torque by adding a few easy bolt-ons ("500 Lb-Ft in Six Easy Steps"). If you missed it, you can see the story at HOTROD.com—just search "HT383" and you'll find it in the Engine Technical Articles section. Once we were done with that story, we threw a Vortech blow-through supercharger setup on the same engine and made 675 hp at 8 psi boost. The 383 has been sitting around our shop ever since, so when we finally got tired of our '72 Carryall's ancient 350 dispensing oil all over the driveway, we decided that the 383 was the perfect candidate to power our daily driver and parts chaser.

Prior to the installation, we reinstalled the HT383's stock hydraulic-roller camshaft, which has the world's smallest grind, with duration of 196/207 degrees at 0.050-inch tappet lift. We changed the head gaskets from steel shims with 0.015-inch compressed thickness to regular 0.041-inch Fel-Pros to deliver 9.1:1 compression with the engine's iron Vortec heads. We left our 1.6:1 Comp Cams roller rockers in place and topped off the engine with an Edelbrock RPM Air Gap intake and a 650-cfm Mighty Demon mechanical-secondary carb (not that the higher-end Mighty was required over, say, a Road Demon, but we had it sitting around). In this configuration, the HT383 made about 350 hp at 4,600 rpm and 450 lb-ft at 3,700 rpm on the engine dyno. In the truck, we used a set of 1½-inch-tube tri-Ys from Doug's Headers and added some generic but very quiet super power killer mufflers along with a complete 2½-inch exhaust system.

The best thing about the HT383 is that it's very smooth, idling at 15 degrees of initial timing at 700 rpm and 20 inches of vacuum. We've got it tuned crisply, so we can mash the gas off idle and the truck pulls really hard through First gear. It sort of wheezes from there, probably due to the restrictive exhaust. We didn't feel quite so bad, though, when we weighed the truck and found it at 5,500 pounds with a driver, a half-tank of gas, and a bare 350-block floating around the back. In that context, the thing scoots. Even so, knowing what we know now we probably would stab a 224-at-0.050 cam in it if we had a second chance.

We were planning to actually drag test it, but since it's our life, the TH350 trans started to explode right about the time we fed it more than that old, measly 110 hp. We'll get that solved, and then the Carryall should serve as a pretty good test platform for street-oriented speed parts. —DAVID FREIBURGER



> Doug's Headers is now a part of the PerTronix group of performance companies, which also includes Patriot Exhaust and Smithy's Mufflers. We used PN D372Y headers, which are of tri-Y construction with 1½-inch tubes and 2½-inch collectors. The quality was really good with nice thick flanges; they don't leak or sound at all tinny. Best of all, they dropped in from the top and didn't require even a single whack with a hammer to clear everything, including the spark plugs. It was the easiest header installation ever.



> The GM Performance Parts number for the HT383 crate engine is 12499101. At press time it cost \$4,189.99 through Scoggin-Dickey Parts Center (www.sdparts.com), and it comes complete from intake to oil pan but without a carb and distributor. Our upgraded Milodon pan, Edelbrock Air Gap intake, and Comp Cams 1.6:1 rockers cost around \$600 and added roughly 30 hp and 20 lb-ft.



> Check out the bellhousing bolt pattern on our TH350 trans: It's universal, with both the Chevy and the Buick-Olds-Pontiac-Cadillac patterns on it. We hadn't seen one of these in a while. We'll likely install a 700-R4 but keep this trans around as a core since it fits all the GM engines.

SOURCES

DOUG'S HEADERS; San Dimas, CA; 909/599-5955; www.doughheaders.com

GM PERFORMANCE PARTS; Warren, MI; 800/577-6888; www.gmperformanceparts.com

POWERBUILT TOOLS/ALLTRADE; Long Beach, CA; 800/368-6653; www.alltradetools.com