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DREAM IT, DRIVE IT!



Year One's '69 Camaro convertible may look like a pipe dream, but it's actually a blueprint for an affordable performer.

"If you're one of the legions of '69 Camaro lovers, a brand-new Dynacorn Camaro body is the perfect clean sheet of paper for your next project."—Johnny Hunkins

By Ro McGonegal • Photography by Robert McGaffin

You may have seen a Dynacorn Camaro, maybe in your dreams or in your nightmares, but most likely in some high-zoot magazine or at a trade show. It is important. It represents the final chapter. It's how to build a new '69 Chevy that hasn't a single Chevrolet-branded part. If you plan on starting a '69 Camaro project from dead scratch, and have the mental and monetary presence of mind

to see a project through from beginning to end, a crate Camaro may be your kind of gig. When it's all said and done, you'll most likely spend less money and time—and best of all, you'll have a detailed road map to help you get there.

Year One pioneered the use of these repro bodies and put a crate Camaro together for the 2006 SEMA show, and painted in blue. It was one of the

first examples of the newly struck sheet metal. During that process, Year One created a comprehensive 74-page color build book based on this initial build, with hundreds of photos, captions, instructions, and parts lists in every chapter. For the '08 show, Year One redid the whole thing in yellow for GM's 40-acre booth, this time incorporating the first of the new Performance Parts LSX376 crate engines.

According to Year One's Kevin King, "This was the one of the first complete vehicles built from the reproduction Camaro convertible bodies produced by Dynacorn [Classic Bodies, Inc., Oxnard, California]. Year One built the car in 2006, testing reproduction parts, gaining knowledge of parts availability, and documenting the process in a book. Virtually no original parts were used in the build. For SEMA '08, the Camaro received a thorough makeover."

While the coupe bodies were on the drawing board, they benefited from a couple of improvements that have also been incorporated into the convertible packages. Most obvious are doors and a decklid, which arrive hung and fitted to the body. "The doors and decklid are brand-new stampings and fit much better than what was out there before," said Dynacorn's Jim Christina.

Another significant improvement is the addition of the trim studs around

the windshield opening (and back-light on the coupes). In the early bodies, you had to drill holes in the windshield frame and install special Phillips-head screws in place of the original spot-welded studs. The bodies are e-coated black rather than sprayed in red oxide primer, and the ragtop models include a proper actuating mechanism. Remember, seeing is not believing. The MSRP for complete bodies is \$13,500.

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The Dynacorn convertible body used by Year One is like a blank canvas—it can be built completely stock, just like they came off the assembly line in 1969, or highly modified. This car has actually been both: a stock-style build was performed on this shell in 2006 (the earlier blue iteration), and the current high-tech version you see here in yellow.



No minimalism here, just understated elegance and the flavor of the original interior left pretty much intact. Note the custom console that is actually a stock console with a fabricated enclosure for a GPS/DVD center.



“These save the enthusiast hundreds of hours in labor, and the steel is as good as, or better than, the original. The steel is 1006 World Grade, and in some places it’s two-thousandths thicker [than GM’s original sheetmetal],” Christina told *PHR*. Options include pre-installed mini-tubs and three different firewall configurations: factory A/C, factory non-A/C,

and smooth. The transmission tunnel comes without holes, allowing the choice of transmission and shifter arrangement without having to spend time to cover up the voids.

As the car would feature a hot, yet-to-be-released crate engine, Year One deemed further enhancement unnecessary and lowered the power

module into the phantom Camaro’s engine compartment. This car was built as a driver, at least for now, and the Year One folks naturally wanted a spicy yet palatable motive source, and if need be, stuff that could be bought over the parts counter at a Chevy store.

Though the body and its various panels were straight, they still had to be prepped flawlessly for the paint applications. Year One’s Keith Maney on the actual surface condition: “Well, it’s like any body reproduction panel, except the whole begins that way. If you want the finish to be very nice, you have to spend the time to make it so. We had to do quite a bit of work on the SEMA car, but for the majority of people who just want a nice driver, a little bit of basic work, and it would be fine.” (Maney literally wrote the book on assembling the Dynacorn Camaro, so he should know.) Year One applied the BASF Millennium Yellow and the silver stripes, the latter shot with SATA guns.

But a funny thing happened on the way to SEMA, an incident that may or may not reflect the chaos at GM. You call it. About six weeks before the show, GM ordered this convertible to put right next to a 2010 Camaro wearing the same undeniable hue. The Dynacorn example would showcase the new LSX376 crate motor. Certainly for the Year One crew, it was the kind of thrash you don’t even remember for the inten-



sity, but they rolled the screaming yellow zonker into the GM booth as promised. In the ultimate irony, the '10 Camaro failed to show.

You’ll notice that the Camaro’s wheels, especially the honkers in the rear, are way unruly for the novice. Further, to fit that monstrous negative offset with a smile, the axlehousing was narrowed to accommodate. (Don’t fret—it’s comparatively easy due to the Dynacorn body coming equipped from the factory with mini-tubs.) The Yenko-style hood is actually a Year One S800



GM Performance Parts’ new LSX376 crate motor is internally stock (see sidebar p. 29), but wears headers and an exhaust system built with Stainless Works parts. Note that there’s plenty of room on either side of GMPP’s brand-new crate bullet. Detroit Speed’s contribution is noticeable; can you spot the remote ignition coils?

composite piece; the trim, lighting, and the small items are Year One repro pieces, as is the air dam. The “styling bar” behind the seats then becomes the most radical visual departure. Even though it juts straight up there, Year One has done a wonderful job of camouflaging this faux rollbar (it holds the third brake light), which also contributes nominally to stiffening the car as a whole.

Year One’s produc-



tion of the subdued and functional interior is right on the money. No squawkin’, no hollerin’, just stuff that flat looks good and works without fail. Here, too, you’ll find items that are typically available in the Year One catalog—not special one-off stuff. The reproduction center console was modified to house a GPS/DVD screen, which is about the most radical departure from off-the-shelf items. Auto Meter gauges, a DSE

“We had to do quite a bit [of bodywork] on the SEMA car, but for the majority of people who just want a nice driver, a little bit of basic work, and it would be fine.”—Keith Maney, Year One

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interval wiper kit, and Vintage Air controls occupy a custom instrument panel in a stock-style dashpad that's been wrapped in leather. It's business inside there—sure you wanna ride?

The immediate hit comes from those Cerullo seats, not so much their dusky charcoal shadows, but from the matching yellow accent running through the middle of them. Marketing: right to the point. Your eye sees the whole thing, but your brain is inexorably, magnetically drawn to those lines. From there, the scheme unfolds into familiar territory trod by rank and file Year One customers. It's a mechanical yet pleasing sobriety. Year One made some smooth instrument panels to cosset those fancy Auto Meter gauges, modified the console to accept power window switches, and quietly surrounded the 4th-Gen Camaro shifter



wagging from the T56. A brushed aluminum plate caps the console for a no-nonsense look.

To some people, where you sit is of more concern than what you're sitting on, but not in this world. If the modern custom builders learned anything from the master automobile builders, it was a thing called understated elegance, so called by the mouths of some *Car And Driver* guys who were old back in the late '70s. Some guys get it; some guys don't. The gut in the Year One Camaro gets it. The Cerullo GT seats (their stuff is good enough to supply Porsche) are leather-



“The doors and decklid are brand-new stampings and fit much better than what was out there before. In some places, the metal is 0.002 inch thicker than the original stampings.”

—Jim Christina, Dynacorn

BUILD ONE YOURSELF

Is building a muscle car from a kit the future of our hobby? Some people think so, while others like a more free-form, creative approach. If you're going to use a Dynacorn body as the basis for your project, however, it's probably a good idea to grab a copy of Year One's "Mail Order Camaro" build book—it will greatly simplify things. Look closely at the cover car. Is it familiar to you? Give up? It's actually the same car as the Millennium Yellow convertible featured in this story. The first time around, Year One gave the Dynacorn Camaro a pretty basic buildup

with a stock-style suspension front and rear, a \$3,000 350 crate engine, and a mostly stock interior. (The entire buildup took just 59 days the first time

around.) The Year One build book details the process with many color photos, captions, part numbers, and chapters covering every phase of the project. Key chapters include: Subframe/Rear Axle Prep, Engine/Transmission, Steering Components, Fitting Sheetmetal, Engine Accessories, Engine Compartment Wiring, Hood/Bumper/Grille/Window Assembly, Cooling System, Convertible Top, Interior And Dash, and Final Details.—Johnny Hunkins



SCREAMIN' YELLOW • BUILDUP HIGHLIGHTS

The decision to build a car for the SEMA show isn't one you take lightly, but when the opportunity came to put together a rolling display for GM Performance Parts' new line of affordable LSX376 crate motors, Year One gladly pulled the trigger with their partners in crime. For one, Year One knows that LS-series engines and first-gen Camaros are a marriage made in heaven—it's by far the most popular pairing of a new engine in a classic muscle car. In fact, Detroit Speed & Engineering even offers a hydroformed front subframe, complete with C6 Corvette suspension and rack-and-pinion conversion, designed specifically as a bolt-in kit for LS engines in first-gens. And by no coincidence, that's exactly the running gear Year One chose to showcase GMPP's LSX376. The SEMA project came up at the last minute, and the Year One crew had just six weeks to complete the transformation. Using the original blue Dynacorn crate Camaro allowed a convenient shortcut, but it wasn't a slam dunk by any means. Besides a complete repaint, the conversion required all the running gear to be upgraded (DSE for front and rear suspension), and the fuel-injected LSX376 powertrain needed to be installed. Adding to that, a new gut, seats, custom console, electronic conveniences, instrument panel, spoilers, LED taillights, and more needed to be either fabricated or installed. The coolest part? Year One has a history of taking one-off custom parts from their projects and turning them into real production parts you can buy.—*Johnny Hunkins*



Phil Brewer: "We custom-built the Camaro's instrument panel. We actually plan on making a production piece out of this soon. The hard part was getting the gauges to all fit inside the center of the cluster so that we could use a stock dashpad. The stock '69 dashpad has a point where it sticks out for the clock right in the middle, and space is at a premium. We want people to be able to use their stock dashpad, so that was a requirement. We made this out of sheetmetal, but the production one will be plastic or fiberglass, and the holes will be left blank so you can use either the stock controls and gauges, or aftermarket ones."



After the Dynacorn body came back from paint, the Year One crew got to work installing the DSE suspension, the new LSX376 engine, accessory drive, wiring harness, and Stainless Works exhaust pieces. Integrating all these systems simultaneously is difficult, and requires competencies in many different disciplines. The Year One crew had this covered handily, but you may not necessarily be that lucky. The good news is that you can have confidence that Year One has the parts and the firsthand knowledge to make your project a reality.



The Year One crew designed the NAV system binnacle from a cardboard model, then the cardboard pieces were copied in sheet aluminum and TIG-welded together. Once the console was modified for the binnacle, the console was covered in leather by Henderson's upholstery in Buford, GA.



Year One built the Camaro's taillights out of a generic street rod LED taillight kit. LEDs are brighter than conventional incandescent bulbs, and they respond faster to input. Year One now offers an LED taillight conversion kit for '69 Camaros (PN LED2) for \$79.



"We built the rear spoiler out of foam," says Year One's Keith Maney. "When we finished, we put tape on it to give it a solid look. We worked it into the shape we wanted, and then we made a fiberglass mold out of it. We actually molded the spoiler on our Forza car while the yellow one was in paint, so it didn't fit perfectly when it translated over to the SEMA car. If we decide to sell it, buyers will have to understand that it may need some tweaking."



"Our guy, Mark McDonald, fabricated the console plate out of 1/8-inch aluminum. It was cut to fit, bent on a metal brake, then grained with Scotch-Brite," says Year One's Phil Brewer. "The aluminum insert fit pretty well. It had to be bowed just a little bit because it's curved, but it fit really well. We just wanted to use as many stock parts as possible, including a reproduction console."



The GM plug-and-play wiring harness for the LSX376 crate motor includes the mass air sensor and fly-by-wire throttle control. The kit requires that you fabricate the inlet tube out of 3.5-inch tubing so that the mass air meter fits and is correctly calibrated to the programming. "We bought a bunch of elbows and curves and cut them up to fit nicely," says Brewer. "We tacked them up, then welded them once we liked the fit."

"...Year One knows that LS-series engines and first-gen Camaros are a marriage made in heaven—it's by far the most popular pairing..."

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trimmed and surrounded by leather throughout the cockpit.

Controls for the Vintage Air HVAC system are barely noticeable. Visually, the audio system has been condensed to a discreet LCD screen on the console, which is also the nerve center for the DVD/NAV system. An Alpine head unit



“This was one of the first complete vehicles built ... but virtually no original parts were used.”

—Kevin King, *Year One*

is teamed with Boston Acoustics amps and speakers, but you can't see any of that, either. On top of the steering post sits a Budnik Sport wheel, perfectly in league with the rest of the trappings.

If you look past the Camaro's distinctive end-all tires and wheels and the

vibration of the Millennium Yellow, you find a street tapper of the first magnitude, ostensibly a chick magnet, a woman web, a car more at home with the canvas dropped on humid, twilight streets than slicing through a line of cones or around a road course—



We're suckers for big wheels done right. Mini-tubs (which are part of the Dynacorn's standard package) and a narrowed axlehousing position the heavily negative offset of the 12-inch-wide Budnik hoops. Try fitting those inside your ordinary '69 Camaro.



Just as with “real” '69 Camaros, the Dynacorn body that Year One sells can be built with a stock leaf spring rear suspension, or with modern bits like the Detroit Speed & Engineering Quadra Link setup. The Quadra Link is a parallel four-link geometry with a Panhard link that eliminates all the compromises of the stock leaf spring system, while being a true bolt-in kit needing no fabrication.

LSX376 CRATE MOTOR

This GM Performance Parts crate engine, along with the higher-output LSX454, debuted at the '08 SEMA show. Billed as a budget assembly, the LSX376 is based on an iron standard-deck (9.26 inches) LSX block and LS3 cylinder heads (PN 12615879) with rectangular-shaped intake ports that flow more than the cathedral port heads, but less than the wider-port LS7 heads. These heads

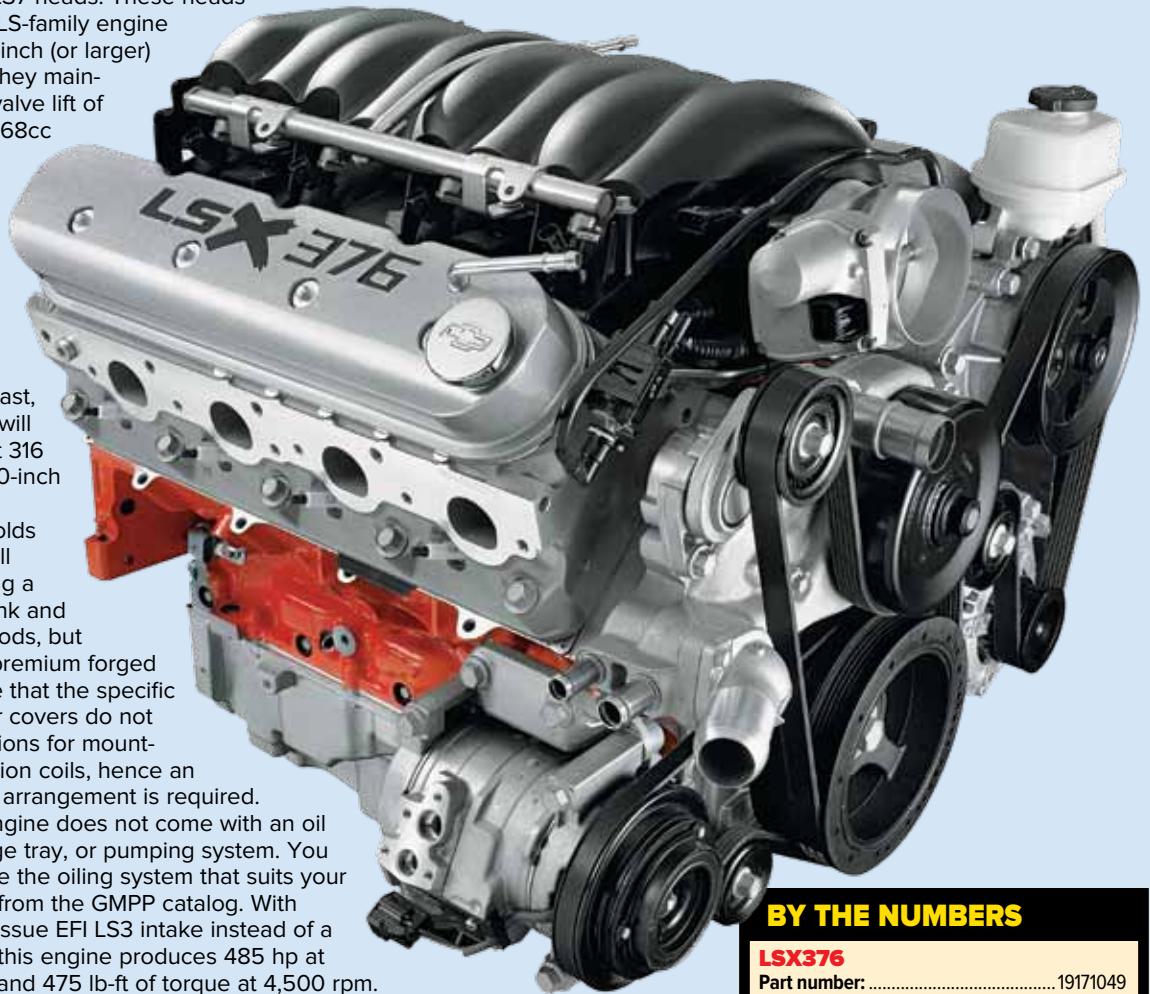
are for any LS-family engine with a 4.00-inch (or larger) bore size. They maintain a max valve lift of 0.570-inch, 68cc combustion chambers, 2.165-inch hollow-stem intake valves, and 1.59-inch solid-stem exhaust valves. As cast, the intakes will flow at least 316 cfm at 0.600-inch lift.

GMPP holds down overall cost by using a nodular crank and powdered rods, but includes a premium forged piston. Note that the specific crate rocker covers do not have provisions for mounting the ignition coils, hence an aftermarket arrangement is required. Also, this engine does not come with an oil pan, windage tray, or pumping system. You must choose the oiling system that suits your application from the GMPP catalog. With the factory-issue EFI LS3 intake instead of a carburetor, this engine produces 485 hp at 5,750 rpm, and 475 lb-ft of torque at 4,500 rpm.

This package is the introductory stage to the new LSX series, and it begs the obvious question: Who needs an iron-block version of the extant LS3 crate engine? View the LSX376 as a foundation for much more power and torque, but at, say, 600 rats. How much more do you really need? That's right, you don't ... but if you did give it more oats, you'd sleep well and have a clear conscience about loading up an iron block with them.

And to that end: A chat with GMPP's Dr. Jamie Meyer confirmed that GMPP will soon be introducing short-block and long-block versions of the LSX376 equipped with a forged 9.0:1 piston meant specifically for use with a forced air induction system. Boost-friendly camshafts are also in development, and will be available individually, or as part of a low-compression short-block. Blower and turbo testing of various aftermarket kits is underway at this very moment. Whatever system(s) deemed proper will likely be licensed and sold by GMPP. This proactive move is a positive indication that the boys in Flint will be doing a lot more testing before the latest products are released.—*Ro McGonegal*

“For about \$7,000, the LSX376 crate is an inexpensive way to get your project on track with high-tech power—and with plenty of beefcake to grow.”—Johnny Hunkins



BY THE NUMBERS

LSX376	
Part number:	19171049
Engine type:	LSX Series Gen IV small-block V-8
Displacement (ci in/L):	376ci/6.2L
Bore x stroke (in.):	4.06 x 3.62
Block (PN 19166454):	LSX cast iron with six-bolt, cross-bolted main caps
Crankshaft:	nodular iron
Connecting rods:	powdered metal
Pistons:	forged aluminum
Camshaft type:	hydraulic roller
Valve lift (in.):	.551 intake/.522 exhaust
Duration (degrees at 0.050 in.):	.204 intake/.211 exhaust
Cylinder heads (PN 12598594):	LS3 rectangular port; as cast with 68cc chambers
Compression ratio:	10.7:1
Rocker arms:	investment cast, roller trunnion
Rocker arm ratio:	1.7:1
Recommended fuel:	92 octane
Reluctor wheel:	58x
Balanced:	internal

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although it can do both exceptionally well. Therein lies the ultimate purpose of Year One's highly visible calling card: to push the boundaries of style and substance while inviting the promise of attainability to its customers.



To the casual observer, Year One's flamboyant flyer seems beyond reach of the skill level of the DIY enthusiast and beyond the means of sane wallets, but more critical eyes discover otherwise. From the Dynacorn's clean-slate appeal and ease of assembly, to the bolt-in, bolt-on status of the DSE hydroformed C6 suspension, DSE Quadra Link rear suspension, and GMPP LSX376 crate engine, this Camaro is not only within reach of the typical weekend hobbyist who purchases parts piecemeal, it's within his skill level, too. A similar result is easy to achieve over the course of two or three years of weekend wrenching, and for about the cost of a new 2010 Camaro SS—if it ever shows up! And when it finally does, which one would you rather drive? **PHR**

SOURCES:

DETROIT SPEED & ENGINEERING
704-662-3272
www.detroitsspeed.com

DYNACORN CLASSIC BODIES
www.dynacornclassicbodies.com

GM PERFORMANCE PARTS
www.gmperformanceparts.com

YEAR ONE
800-932-7663
www.yearone.com



BY THE NUMBERS

'69 YEAR ONE DYNACORN CAMARO CONVERTIBLE

Owner: Year One • Braselton, GA
Vehicle weight w/driver: 3,650 pounds

ENGINE

Type:..... Chevrolet displacing 376 cubic inches (4.06 bore x 3.62 stroke)
Block:.....2008 GM Performance Parts LSX376 crate engine
Compression ratio:..... 10.7:1
Oiling:.....GMPP muscle car 6-quart oil pan, windage tray, GMPP high-volume oil pump
Rotating assembly:.....3.62-inch stroke nodular iron crank, powdered metal connecting rods, forged flat-top pistons
Cylinder heads:.....L92-style ports as cast, 2.165/1.59 valves, 68cc combustion chambers, 1.7:1 roller trunnion rocker arms
Camshaft:.....LS Hot Cam hydraulic roller, 0.525/0.522-inch lift, 219/228 degrees duration at 0.050
Induction:.....L76 nylon intake manifold, injectors, fuel rails, drive-by-wire 90mm throttle body, Holley in-tank pumps, Aeromotive filter, Year One fuel tank

Power adder:.....none
Ignition:.....GMPP controller kit (PN 19201327), 58X reluctor wheel
Exhaust:.....Year One-built from Stainless Works kit, 1 7/8-inch primary pipes, 3-inch exhaust system, Magnaflow stainless steel X-pipe and mufflers
Fasteners:.....GM
Built by:.....GM Performance Parts

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission:.....T56 6-speed reworked (cryo-treated gears and polished forks) by Pro-Motion Engineering, Ram 10.5-inch single-disc clutch and billet steel flywheel, McLeod hydraulic linkage, fourth-gen Camaro shifter
Driveshaft:.....PST aluminum
Rear axle:.....Moser 12-bolt narrowed to 54 3/4 inches, clutch-type differential, 3.73:1 ring-and-pinion

CHASSIS

Front suspension:.....Corvette C6 spindles, DSE subframe, tubular control arms and rack steering system, Koni coilover shock absorbers
Rear suspension:.....DSE Quadra Link and frame connectors, Koni coilovers
Brakes:.....Wilwood master cylinder, Baer 6-piston 14-inch disc, front; 13-inch, rear

WHEELS & TIRES

Wheels:.....Budnik Velocity R 18x10, front; 18x12, rear
Tires:.....BFGoodrich g-Force KDW, 245/40ZR18, front; 295/35ZR18, rear