

Operation Muscle Truck Part 5

HOUSECLEANING FOR A SPECIAL GUEST

WHEN WE LAST VISITED THE MUSCLE TRUCK PROJECT, A DEDICATED GROUP OF GEARHEADS HAD GATHERED AT EDITOR NOACK'S HOUSE TO REMOVE THE OLD 305-CI SMALL-BLOCK ENGINE AND 4L60-E AOD TRANNY IN PREPARATION FOR A WICKED NEW POWER PLANT. The "motorvation" will be provided by a righteous HT383 stroker long-block courtesy of GM Performance Parts. But, before we stuffed the new mill between the frame rails of Travis' Silverado, we had to tidy up the decade-old engine bay. You wouldn't invite friends over without cleaning up the house a bit, would ya? Neither would we.

We relied on some good old-fashioned elbow grease and products from KBS Coatings' line of restoration materials to clean and paint everything within the engine bay of the truck, including the new engine. Once the house was in order and the guest of honor was dressed to impress, we stuffed the stock 4L60-E tranny with a B&M shift kit and a new 2,000 stall torque converter, and then dropped the masterpiece in place.

Check back next month for the wrap-up of this installation and our driving impressions of this revitalized street truck. For now, sit back, pop open a cold one, and check out the progress of Operation Muscle Truck. ■



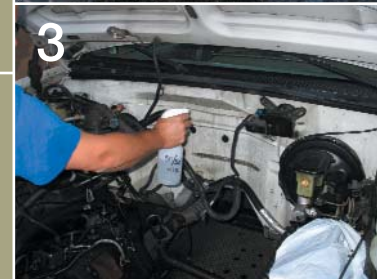
Our journey begins at the local quarter car wash where, after Travis finished doing a burnout in his dually to free the car trailer from the grips of a really steep driveway, we unloaded the Muscle Truck and assessed the dirty engine bay's condition.



As you can see, this truck really wasn't all that greasy. But, since we are going for a factory-fresh look, we still had to get what little grime was present off of the inner fenders, firewall, chassis, and suspension. We cut a solution of KBS Coatings AquaKlean biodegradable cleaner into two separate spray bottles. The first bottle we labeled "straight nuclear" because it was the more powerful of the two solutions. We sprayed this one on the grimy chassis, suspension and inner fender wells, allowing it to set up for a few minutes before rinsing with the pressure washer.



We then used a 50 percent solution of AquaKlean to wash years of dirt from the firewall, bottom of the hood, and the plastic reservoir tanks on the inner fender wells. We liked AquaKlean because it's water-based and will remove soil without leaving a residue or killing your sinuses with noxious fumes.



Since our cleaning products are environmentally friendly, we had no qualms about going nuts with the pressure washer at the public car wash and allowing it to flow right down the drain into the sewer system. This is a big deal because in our neck of the woods that stuff ends up dumping right into the ocean. The EPA will love us for this.



So fresh and so clean: Travis admires his handiwork.



Back at Travis' domicile, affectionately known as the "House of Hair Metal," work commenced on restoring the accessories within the engine compartment. A session with a Scotch Brite pad and some satin black spray paint had things looking new again.



Marcel got busy restoring the core support with more elbow grease and spray paint.



Next, the suspension and white areas of the truck were masked off to prevent the spray paint from creating more work for us.



When it came time to give the motor a once-over, we went straight to KBS Coatings because its Motor Coater high-temperature enamel is a godsend. Easy to spray and long lasting, this simply works wonders on an engine block.



Before we could bust out the spray gun, though, we had to tape off the exhaust ports, spark plug holes and everything else that didn't need paint on it. We did paint over the bare machined spots on the engine that GM didn't, such as the front of the cylinder heads and block.



Marcel is a wizard with a paint gun so he was tapped to lay down the color.



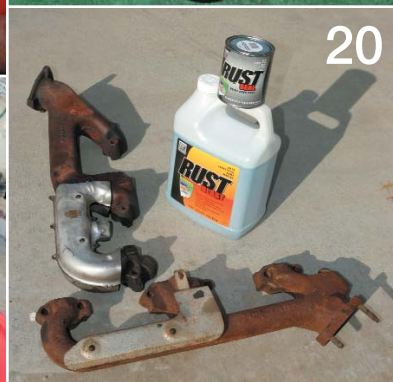
Here's another look at the lengths we went to protect every surface of the HT383 engine.



We also gave the new intake manifold a gun-metal gray coating to protect the bare cast aluminum and make future cleanups a lot easier.



We also treated the GM Performance Parts accessory drive brackets to the same gray paint. On the right of the photo is the stock, bare aluminum alternator bracket. On the left is a coated bracket. This will keep corrosion at bay for a long time to come, beautifying the engine compartment.



Cast iron exhaust manifolds usually only do two things well: they tend to keep the under-hood temperatures down by retaining more heat from the exhaust system than a thin-wall tubular header does. But, they also rust and look awful after a few months of winter driving. KBS has the solution with its line of Rust Blast and Rust Seal products.



Here's a cool cleaning tip: remove oxidation from brass fittings with Taco Bell hot sauce. It works just as well as carbonated soda does on a battery terminal.



Whether you are a mechanic or not, GMPP has you covered when it comes time to mount the accessories to one of its crate engines. The hardware is clearly labeled and the instructions are easy to understand.



Once we tackled the majority of the restoration work, Marcel brought the engine hoist out once again and had the HT383 swinging in the air in preparation for its reunion with the transmission.



In addition to servicing the transmission pan, we hooked up with the guys from B&M to firm up the transmission's manners. A 2,000-RPM stall converter will help the holed-out truck a handful on the street, while a Shift Improver kit will make the shifts happen faster and more precisely. The Shift Improver kit is an economical way to improve transmission performance at home and only hand tools are needed to do the job.



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Before we slapped the new parts onto the transmission, the converter was filled to the brim with ATF.



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Marcel then hoisted the engine over to the truck and dropped it in place between the freshly painted frame rails.



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Once the converter was slid onto the input shaft and the flex plate was bolted up to both the crankshaft flange and converter, the engine and transmission were joined once again.



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Our story ends here, until next month, with the truck waiting for us to install the engine accessories, plumbing, wiring, and other odds and ends that will have it coming to life.

Sources

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