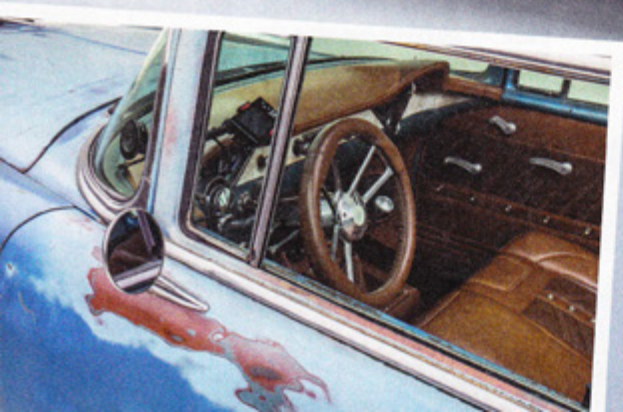


FEATURE

cover story

The Shaggin' WAGON



Would Ya Just Look At It?!
This Thing Oozes Awesome.

Building a display car for the yearly Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) show is a massive undertaking for everyone involved. The show offers exhibiting companies the opportunity to show off their wares to a captive audience, but there's a caveat to that opportunity. With well over 1,500 of the sickest rides around on display throughout the Las Vegas Convention Center, a vehicle really needs to stand out to avoid dropping under the radar.

Story **Brian Devine** + Photos **Jorge Nunez**



Enter The Shaggin' Wagon. This '55 Chevy 210 wagon owned by Denver Lawrence and dressed up by the fine folks at TMI Products, where Denver just so happens to spend his workdays as a web designer. TMI, one of the automotive aftermarket's premier manufacturers of premium interior components for the restyling and custom vehicle market, offers products for many vehicles, including Camaro, Chevelle, El Camino, pickup, and now, thanks to this project, the Tri-Five '55-'57 Chevy so loved by the car community. "This started as an idea Larry Ashley (Marketing Director of TMI) and I came up with—to do a wagon for SEMA 2017. After searching through Craigslist the perfect project popped up. I responded right away, and the seller said she only posted a minute ago," Denver says.

The following day—in the pouring rain—Denver gathered up friends Ryan Callison and Josh Nunnally to go check out the wagon. Even though many of the body parts were sitting inside the car, instead of on the outside attached to its shell, Denver knew this was the project they were looking for.

"The owner said that it had been sitting in their backyard for 30 years. I was only dealing with the wife, as the husband wasn't happy about selling his



wagon. Since I knew it was a steal, I didn't offer a penny less than the asking price," he says.

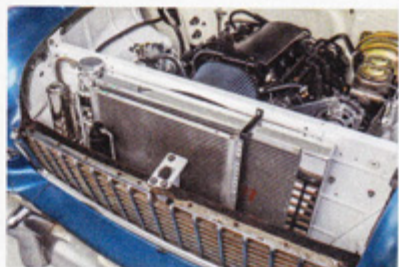
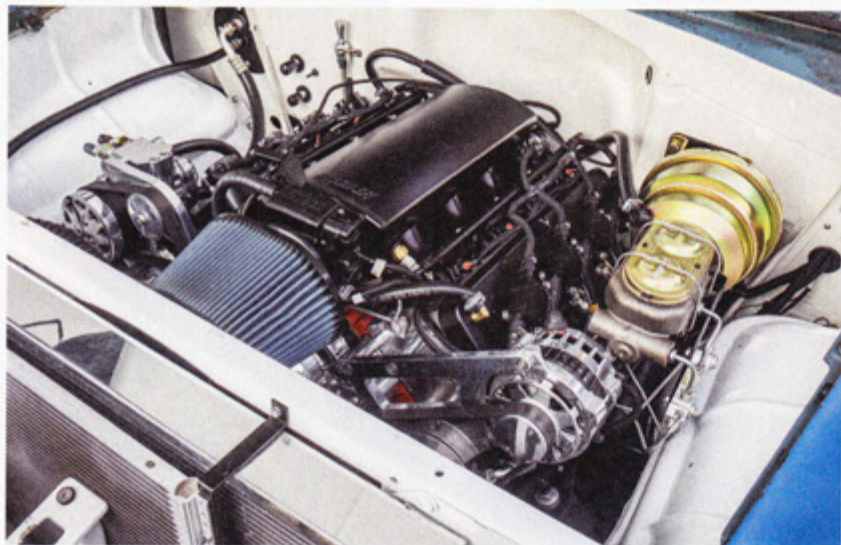
After ringing Larry up to borrow a set of wheels to use to roll the car on, Denver headed back to pick up the car—in the pouring rain again—with a jack that didn't work too well and no plan for a way to get the car home. He spent all day sitting there waiting for a tow truck that wasn't previously occupied, and once the car arrived in his driveway the rain finally stopped.

If you can believe it, much of this nine-month build was done in Denver's driveway, with the car's body sitting on jackstands. After tearing out the old

interior, he discovered that the car was mostly solid. Only one panel on the driver side needed to be replaced. It was a challenge to keep the body up in the air so he could snake the frame from underneath to clean it up. Once that issue was solved, a larger set of wheeltubs was installed in the rear floorpan, under which a modified Ford Explorer 8.8-inch rearend housing was set into place. This solved the issue of adding disc brakes to the car. Jack Cornett and Jason Sage (Denver's cousin) at Jack's Garage shortened up the rearend for installation.

After cleaning everything up under the car, a full coating of POR-15 was





applied to keep it rust-free for years to come, and on the inside Lizardskin coating was used to control sound. "With the frame cleaned up, we installed RideTech's Tri-Five coilover system with a four-link welded to our shortened 8.8 rear. We also installed front control arms and Classic Performance Products drop spindles. We slid the frame back under the body and mated everything up with the help of urethane body mounts. A CPP big brake kit, master cylinder, steering column, power steering, steering

linkage, and transmission mount was also installed," Denver says.

Since the car was purchased with no engine between the framersails, he selected a 5.3-liter LS powerplant from an '04 Silverado pickup, then Gabe Bell of R&G Customs topped the engine with a pair of Trick Flow GenX cylinder heads, a Trick Flow camshaft, and a FiTech Ultimate LS EFI system complete with fabricated intake manifold. Feeding the engine is a 255-lph fuel pump installed in the Tanks Inc., fuel tank. Performance Distributors LS

coils and wires set the fuel aflame while Doug Thorley LS Tri-Five ceramic-coated headers get the exhaust moving into the Flowmaster Series 10 mufflers.

Engine dress-up comes in the form of an All American Billet LSX serpentine drive kit and CRF Performance valve covers. Liquid cooling is handled by a B&M Racing engine oil cooler along with a Champion's four-core aluminum radiator and Tuff Stuff water pump for the engine coolant.

For simplicity's sake, a PerformaBuilt Level 2 4L60E four-speed transmission





is equipped with a Hughes Performance 3,000-stall converter. An Inland Empire Driveline Service custom driveshaft sends the power back to the aforementioned Ford 8.8-inch housing filled with a 3.73:1 ring-and-pinion.

A combination of Classic Performance Products 2-inch drop spindles and 13-inch brake kit combine with RideTech A-arms and springs to bring the wagon down to the ground in the front. The rear has a full RideTech suspension as well, including a four-link to show off the perfect stance. RideTech adjustable shocks are at all

four corners, giving Denver the ability to firm up the suspension at will. The wagon sits on US Mags Nimitz wheels measuring 19x8 in the front and 20x11 in the rear. These feature flat-black centers with cast bronze lips and are wrapped with Continental rubber.

Dakota Digital gauges help to keep tabs on the vehicle's operating conditions, while a RetroSound Wonderbar head unit and RetroSound front and rear speakers and subwoofers provide the sweet sounds of California livin' when the volume is pushed to the limit. When it gets hot, the interior

temperature is maintained with Cold Air Products' Hurricane climate control system.

But perhaps the most noticeable modification—other than the killer TMI interior re-skin—is the gigantic change made to the roof. It was opened up to let the sun shine into the interior, and it wasn't without trepidation that this alteration was made.

"Larry and I were debating what to do with the long, rusted roof. It was in good condition, just needed to be sanded down a lot, and that's where the idea for a ragtop came into





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play. I hit up Legacy Products for a custom 48x80-inch sliding ragtop, and prepped myself to cut a huge hole with a Sawzall," explained Denver. We think this simple modification helped the wagon to stand out amongst the crowd at SEMA. After all, it did capture our attention and scream for the opportunity for this feature shoot.

The star of the show, however, is the TMI Products interior package designed specifically for the Tri-Five platform. The distressed brown material provides a welcome contrast to the exterior hue to really set it apart from the crowd. "TMI took over with the interior. Larry said that we need to stop the crowd in their tracks so I gave him a picture of an interior color

I liked, and man did he run with it. Larry started off with what he calls the VXR pattern. Because it is a wagon he wanted to stick with bench seats in the front and rear so he chose the 60-inch Pro Series up front and a new-to-market 38-inch Pro Series Bench for the rear. It was like the bench was made just to fit in between the mini-tubs that I added. Now that seating was in place the interior would not be complete without matching door panels, dashpad, and color coordinated carpet," says Denver.

Developed as a system, the company now offers everything from seats to door panels, dashpad, headliner, carpet kit, and even a console and trunk kit to help enthusiastic Tri-Five

owners finish off their cars with TMI's well-known pieces, which offer a high-quality fit and finish. Kits are available for the 2-door hardtop and convertible, the 2- and 4-door sedan, and even the Nomad and 4-door wagon like The Shaggin' Wagon. There are seven different styles to choose from, offering the vehicle owner a true opportunity to customize their vehicle.

One thing is for certain, though. Denver Lawrence and Larry Ashley had a vision, which they brought to life by creating The Shaggin' Wagon for the rest of us to admire. This is how new products come to market—through visionary people with the means to develop them. We'd say these guys knocked it out of the park. **SE**

