

INSIDE THE LIFE OF A HOT ROD MAG PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE '50s

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# MAN VS METAL

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HOT ROD WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

**GV** GEAR VENDORS  
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# HOT ROD DRAG WEEK 2010



Gear Vendors Presents **HOT ROD Drag Week™ 2010**,  
Separating the Real Street Cars From the Phonies  
and the Real Men from the Quitters.

By Mike Finnegan Photography: David Freiburger and Mike Finnegan

# MAN VS.

**D**rag Week™ isn't a race as much as a drivetrain death match and a fight for survival. It's a war between road and machine and a true test of man's ingenuity, perseverance, and intestinal fortitude. Finishing the ungodly, 1,000-plus-mile, mandatory HOT ROD Drag Week™ route while stopping to lay down passes at four different dragstrips in five days has become a badge of pride for anyone seeking dignity in his claim that his stupidly fast ride is a real street car.

This year's event, sponsored by Gear Vendors, had 112 entries and journeyed from Hebron, Ohio, to the site of the NHRA U.S. Nationals in Clermont, Indiana, and then powered its way through

the rain to Milan Dragway in Michigan before heading east through the hills to Pittsburgh Raceway Park in New Alexandria, Pennsylvania. Then it was 200 miles southwest back to Ohio's National Trail Raceway.

Drag Week™ is the polar opposite of HOT ROD's easygoing Power Tour™ because it's completely about performance and longevity. Winning means finishing and also averaging the lowest e.t. in your class. There are classes for bracket cars (Daily Driver is an open class that culminates in a comp ladder for cars slower than 10.80); back-half, big-tire cars (Pro-Street); small-tire cars with nonstock suspensions (Modified); and small-tire, stock-style suspension



# METAL

cars (Street Race). Pro Street and Modified have power-adder and naturally aspirated classes, while Street Race is split into big-block and small-block classes with power-adder and naturally aspirated divisions. There is a place for anyone at this event; we watched a Chevy Vega run an 18-second pass in Indiana, and in Ohio we witnessed the very first 6-second lap in Drag Week™ history.

Hardly anyone gets through Drag Week™ without the help of their racing brethren, and this has fostered an aspect of the event that's perhaps more important than victory itself: beating the odds and making new friends along the way. While having a chase vehicle following your race car is strictly forbidden, you'll

never be alone on the side of the road if you break down in sight of another competitor. Ridiculous as it may sound, most of the carnage victims we met were smiling after finding a creative way to bandage their car and then soldier on to the next checkpoint. We followed the same path as the competitors partly to ensure no one was sidestepping the route but also because we wanted to suffer the same fate they did. We have our own tales from the road, which you'll read about in another issue of HOT ROD. In the meantime, these are some of the incredible stories of the men and women who ignored the naysayers, faced Drag Week™ head on, and lived to tell about it.



**BEST PASS: 8.77 AT 159 MPH**

"We got here at 4 in the morning and then laid down our fastest pass ever, short-shifting Second and Third gears."

—Rick Kornowski



## LIFTERS ARE OVERRATED

Thanks to near-perfect styling, brilliant fab work, and an 8.87 average during the first three days, this solid-axle, *Two-Lane Blacktop*-inspired '55 had the approval of nearly everyone who laid eyes on it and was a serious threat in the Modified Power-Adder class. When it mangled a pair of Isky solid roller lifters and the accompanying cam lobes in front of an ice cream stand somewhere in Ohio, no one expected Green Bay resident Rick Kornowski to pull up to the starting line in Pennsylvania the next day. The car became a phenomenon af-



ter laying down its best pass ever, even with two destroyed lobes, and Rick and his copilot, Ben, became instant heroes. The duo finished the rest of the week by tying up a new set of lifters off the cam lobes with safety wire (removing them entirely would have killed all the oil pressure). An 18mm socket wedged under the exhaust rocker arm gave enough lift to crack open the valve, allowing the Whipple-supercharged big-block to run on seven cylinders. The Chevy beat the road, and an 8.84 average netted the guys Third Place in their class.

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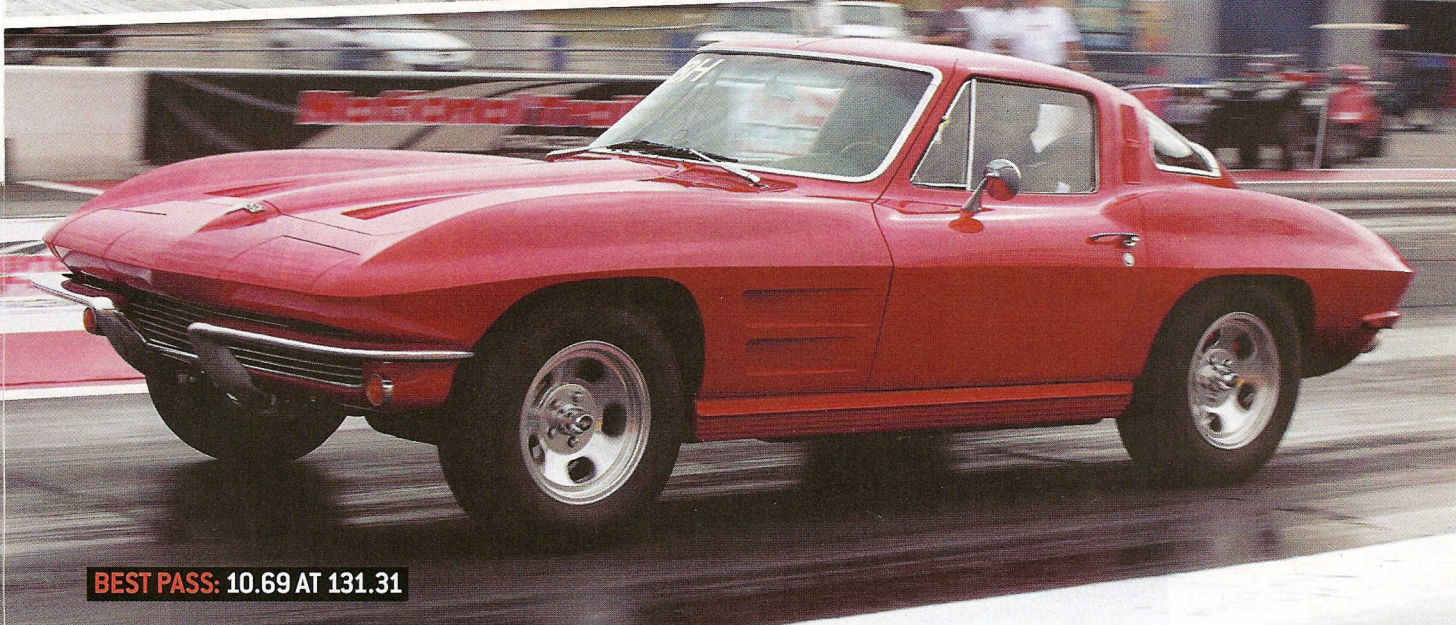
Want to see photos of every single car at Drag Week™ and 10 videos ranging from hot to hilarious? Just hit [HOTROD.com/2010/](http://HOTROD.com/2010/)

dragweek. You can also see the videos on HOT ROD's YouTube channel—sign up as a video subscriber while you're there.



## PINT-SIZED PERFORMER

Very few of the English Ford Thames panels were exported in the '40s and '50s, which makes this one pretty rare. Not too many 12.60 cars are capable of hoisting the hoops 3 feet in the air like Canadian Spanky Goodin's '49 model, either, which makes it even more special. But most of all, we're willing to bet money that nobody but Spanky bought a Thames at age 14 and is still finessing it 40-plus years later. The car he learned to drive in is the same one he finished Drag Week™ with, going quick enough to get into the field of Daily Drivers on the last day before breaking. We dug the Halibrand Champ quick-change rearend and electric rear doors, and the 448hp 383 Chevy stroker wasn't too shabby, either.



## NO SLICKS NEEDED

When was the last time you watched any car go 10.69 on BFGoodrich Radial T/As? Not drag radials, radial-radials!

Sometimes the struggle between man and machine is to handcraft the unexpected, and sometimes the metal is actually fiberglass. We didn't expect much from Bobby Russo's little red '64 Corvette when it pulled up to the line in Ohio, and when it quietly rolled away from the Tree, we actually turned our heads back to the burnout box to see what was coming up next. The track announcer let us know we'd

underestimated the car, and we had to find out what was up with this Vette. The answer was a bone-stock LS1 from a '99 Firebird augmented by a nonintercooled 67mm turbo Bobby swapped in four years ago. A 200-R4 transfers the power to the factory IRS with 3.36:1 gears and, get this, 235/70R15 tires mounted on Ansen Sprints. Bobby ran midpack in Small-Block Power-Adder all week long, and no one left Drag Week™ without talking about his sleeper.

## USED CAR = AUSTRALIAN FOR EXPENSIVE VACATION

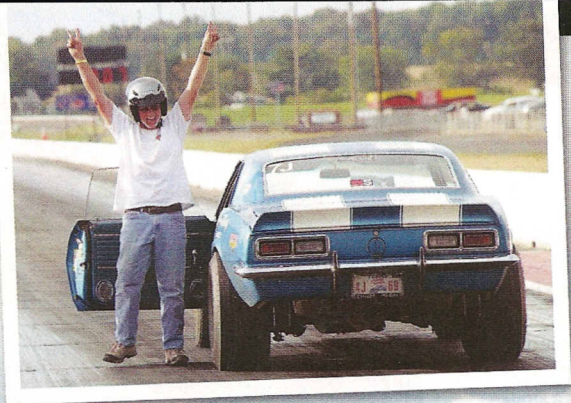
Sometimes the best fights are with the unknown. Greg Borel and his buddies flew to the States, bought this 14-second '71 Chevelle from a friend 10 days before Drag Week™, and then flogged it until the cast-iron 355 puked its guts onto O'Reilly Raceway Park's dragstrip. Like, *bad*. But the guys would not be beaten. They called the local O'Reilly auto parts store and had it deliver a fresh long-block to the track. So, \$1,800 and a few hours later, the crew had the car running again and soldiered on to Milan, Michigan.

**"This is America. Throw enough money at it and you can fix anything."**

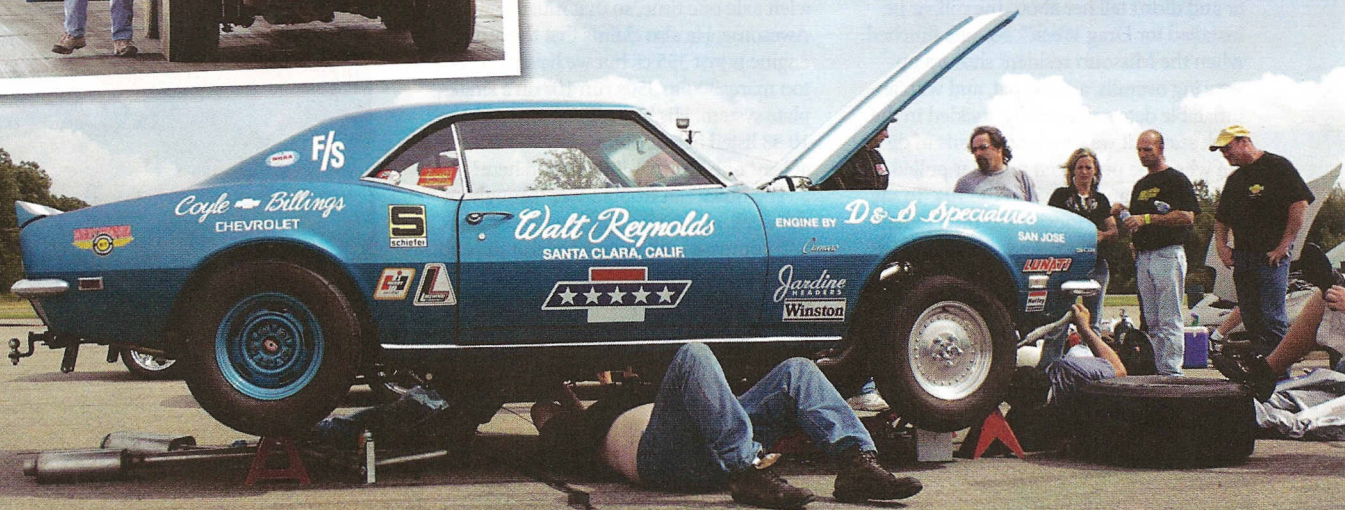
**—Greg Borel**



**BEST PASS: 14.27 AT 95.95 MPH**



“Apparently, I pushed the clutch in too far during the hellacious drive to Indy and it bent the fingers. It has nothing to do with the 7,000-rpm launches.” —Walt Reynolds



**BEST PASS: 12.37 AT 109.5 MPH**

## BANG-SHIFT Z/28

Lucas, Texas’ Walt Reynolds has mercifully speed-shifted this O.G. ’68 Z/28 Camaro since he bought it brand-new. It still wears the original paint, interior, and suspension, but that’s not the cool part: Walt raced this thing in Stock Eliminator in the ’70s, and at HOT ROD’s request, this multitime Drag Weeker was dressed in its original lettering for 2010. But there’s

more: The bottom end of the 302 is bone stock except for a set of Manley rods, which makes most collectors wince every time he bangs the T56 from First to Second gear at the dragstrip.

Walt went 12.37 on Day 1 and hoisted his best wheelstand ever, but then clutch problems slowed him down at Indy. A new clutch was installed in Michigan, and he

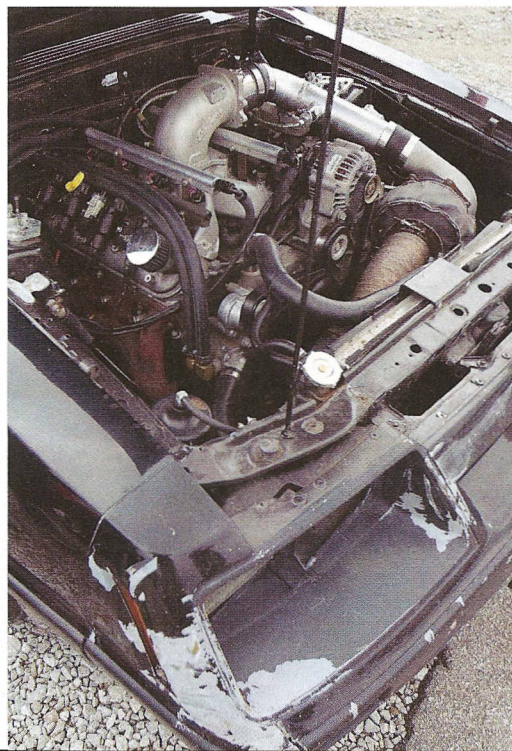
went the distance, punishing his left leg in small-town traffic along the way—but then he shattered the 12-bolt at National Trail. Adding to the punishment was that he was just one spot away from qualifying for the 32-car Daily Driver showdown on the last day, and another car fell out at the last second, so he could have been in, but not with a ring gear in pieces.

## GUARDRAIL: 1, MUSTANG: 0

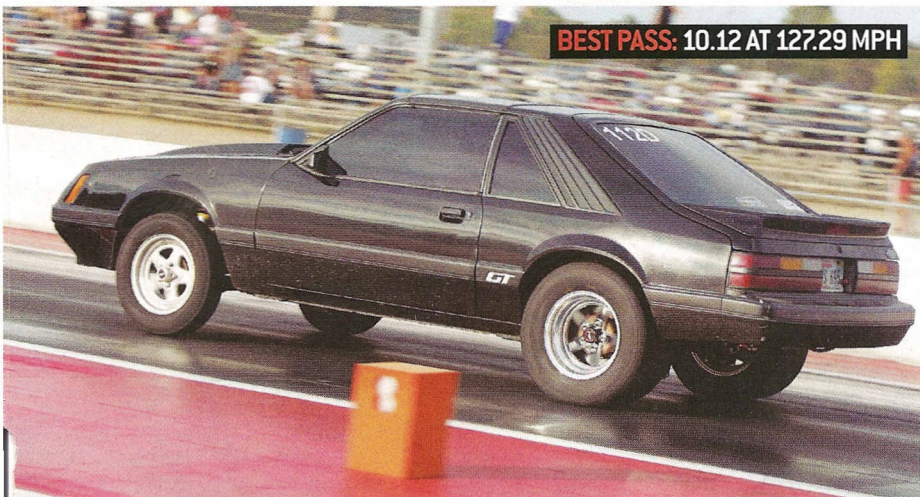
Mike Wilde has zero luck. First, a nonstock chassis mod bumped him out of the Small-Block Power-Adder class, where his 6.0L LS-powered Mustang had a shot at winning, and into Modified Power-Adder, where it was more than a second off the pace. The Omaha native took the news like a champ, though.

Later, he was caught in a rainstorm and his week went from bad to worse as his car

swapped ends on the slick highway and met the guardrail. The body damage was light (see the pic with the engine), but the rear wheels both ended up bent. To top it off, an officer of the law gave him a \$130 ticket for “failing to control his vehicle.” Mike was beaten but not out. He bought a cheapie set of steel wheels and radial tires and finished the drive, racing with us all the way back to Ohio.



**BEST PASS: 10.12 AT 127.29 MPH**



## GRANNY'S BUICK

The story we got on this sleeper, four-door, '68 Buick Skylark was that Brent "Buck" McCoy "borrowed" it from his grandmother and didn't tell her about the rollbar he installed for Drag Week". No one flinched when the Missouri resident showed up wearing overalls, a straw hat, and with an inflatable date named Sally buckled in the back seat. But we shook our heads in disbelief when the pea-green monster pulled the front wheels and went into the 10s. To say it leaves hard on Hoosier 295 drag radials is an understatement. And did you notice those hub caps?

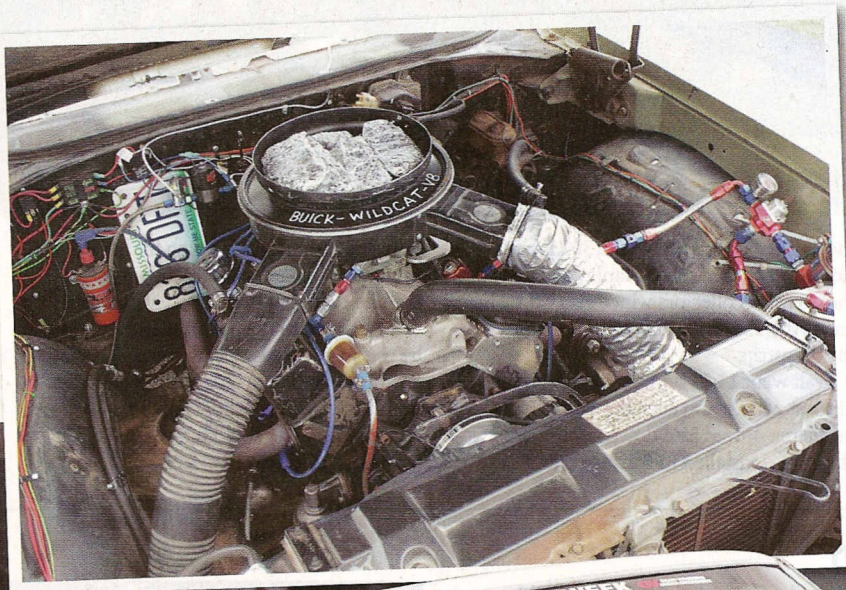
The small Chevy under the hood wears one Dart aluminum head and one cast-iron

double-hump head. Buck said, "I think it must make more power on the left side because of the aluminum head. We broke a left axle one time, so that must be why." Awesome. He also claims that the junker engine is just 355 ci, but we haven't seen too many 300hp 350s run 10s on a single plate system. His best official pass was the 10.88 listed below, but we saw it crack off at least one 10.40. A little fiction here?

The Buick ran trouble-free throughout the week, and it was hilarious to see Buck and company pull up to a hotel at the end of each day, pop the hood, and grab a hot burrito off a frying pan that was bolted to the top of the air cleaner.



"The engine was mostly built from free parts, with a cast crank, Wiseco flat tops, and a \$190 set of rods." —Buck McCoy



**BEST PASS: 10.88 AT 122.69 MPH**





# MAN VS. METAL

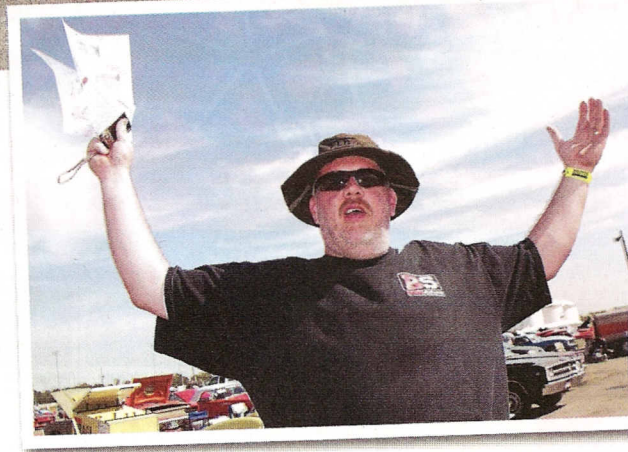


**BEST PASS: 12.26 AT 109.84 MPH**

## MR. NICE GUY

Bubba is 6½ feet tall with a heart of gold. Danny Morrison is the only person to enter *and finish* every single Drag Week™ event. He's also wrenched on and bailed out more competitor cars than anyone else in the history of Drag Week™. Among other saves this year, when he heard that Unlimited racer Jeff Lutz was tearing apart his engine in the last few hours of competition to fix it and take a shot at making a 6-second pass, Danny grabbed his tools and friends and headed right over to Jeff's pit to help out. That's just the kind of guy he is.

Did we mention he raced his father-in-law's clean '66 Fairlane, fixed a U-joint problem with a shim made from a beer can, and drove it to Third Place in the Daily Driver class? The guy more than earned this year's Spirit of Drag Week award.



**"The Ford picked up a front vibration last night. I checked to see what it was and the yoke was hogged out like Sally in the back of Buck's Buick."**

**—Bubba**

**BEST PASS: 12.05 AT 111.23 MPH**



**TWO-TIME DAILY DRIVER WINNER**

Missouri resident Geoff Dugopolski describes his '78 Malibu's paintjob as "ghetto" and says it's rockin' 10-year-old drag shocks. The car should look familiar, though, because it won the Daily Driver class last year, when Geoff also took home the Spirit of Drag Week award.

This year, he repeated his on-track performance, winning the Daily Driver class after throwing together the 383 just 11 days before Drag Week™. To win that class, a car has to run a quick enough average e.t. to qualify for the 32-car field. HOT ROD takes that average, subtracts a tenth, and issues a dial-in that must be used for every round. It's pretty amazing to win the thing twice, and in the final, Geoff ran a 12.08 on a 12.06 dial-in for the win.



**BEST PASS: 14.62 AT 88.37 MPH**

## NO PIT STOPS NECESSARY

George Browning is the iron man who drove alone from Sarasota, Florida, and made 28 passes in a row on the last day of Drag Week™ for a grand total of 70 passes for the 70-year-old. He was at the starting line in his bright-blue '26 Ford Model T so many times that we should have given him lap times instead of e.t. slips. It looked like he never even set up a spot in the pits. And why would he? The car is powered by a stock, fuel-injected Mustang 302, and it proved reliable enough to make the drive without incident and was totally capable of frying the 325/60R15 BFGoodrich All-Terrain tires.

## ELVIS LIVES!

Eddie Miller is a veteran of the mental, physical, and mechanical warfare that is Drag Week™ and earned the Fastest Street Car in America title in 2006. His purple '73 Duster brought a threat to the '10 Pro Street Power-Adder class, running the first three days with an 8.43, a 7.93, and an 8.53, but the nitrous-swilling Mopar didn't walk away happy about it. Fragged pistons moved enough oil that Eddie tried to vent it through a hose running all the way to the back of the car so he could make the drive to the next track, but the engine was too far gone. Eddie mooched a ride back to the starting point on a local farmer's trailer, but we saw him enjoying the party the rest of the week. We seriously doubt this is the last we'll see of him.



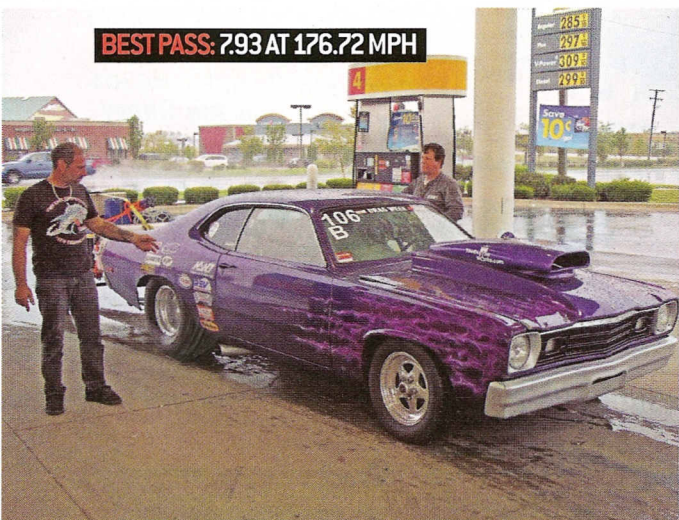
**BEST PASS: 10.36 AT 131.61**



## SMALL-BLOCK NATURALLY ASPIRATED WINNER

Mike Crow is a repeat offender who bagged his third class win with his '73 'Cuda, our Dec. '09 cover car. The Plymouth went 10.36 on Day 1 at National Trail and never looked back, averaging 10.47 for the trophy and free stuff. Except for the time he tried to remove a manhole cover from the road with his chassis (and it left a chunk attached to the car; see the pic), his week was pretty smooth. The 420ci Mopar is stuffed with a BRC crank, Oliver rods, and JE pistons. W9 Mopar heads, an Elgin cam, FAST EFI, MSD ignition, and a set of homebuilt headers round out the 650hp combo. A G-Force five-speed trans makes this 'Cuda a hoot to drive and to watch.

**BEST PASS: 7.93 AT 176.72 MPH**



# MAN VS. METAL



**MUSTANG'S BEST PASS: 10.08 AT 133.22 MPH**  
**CAMARO'S BEST PASS: 10.01 AT 132.17 MPH**



## SMALL-BLOCK POWER-ADDER DEATH MATCH

There was a classic Mustang versus Camaro battle for the top spot in Small-Block Power-Adder, and it was amazingly tight all week long, with a finish just 0.01 apart.

Tom Franks' blue Fox body came out swinging on Day 1 with a 10.14 pass. His car is powered by a 408 using a Ford Lightning truck block, Eagle crank and rods, and Probe pistons. Trick Flow Track Heat heads, an Edelbrock Victor Jr. intake, and a Quick Fuel 850 carb round out the combo. The cam is a Bullet roller grind with 0.584 lift,

242/250 duration at 0.050, and a 109-degree lobe-separation angle. Nitrous oxide is the Homer, Illinois, resident's power-adder of choice. His average was 10.11 overall, and he led most of the way.

Denver, North Carolina's Jamie Hacking waited until the last day of Drag Week™ to

unleash his best pass, a 10.01 at 132.17 mph that gave him a slim 0.01-second average e.t. advantage and the class win. All week long, his '68 Camaro was running neck and neck with Tom Franks' Fox. He must have saved the big jets for the end.



**BEST PASS: 11.04 AT 125.02 MPH**

## THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB

Wantagh, New Yorker Frank Romano speed-shifted the Jerico DR-4 tranny in his big-block-powered '55 Chevy while running bottom 11s at the first two stops. When he went to downshift and pass a semi on

the highway during the drive to Indy, the pivot ball for the clutch linkage fell apart. A Phillips-head screwdriver fed through the hole in the Z-bar made a suitable roadside replacement, and he claimed it even felt

better through the pedal. Frank's ignition system also crapped out in the heat during the longer portions of the drive, and the clutch gave up in Pennsylvania, but he managed to finish Drag Week™ anyway.



## BIG-BLOCK NATURALLY ASPIRATED WINNER

Collin Williams' '99 Camaro SS is painted Hugger Orange, but it doesn't exactly hug the road. In fact, almost every pass this car made was wheels up by a lot. The combo is as serious as a heart attack: an LSX 454 with parts from Callies and Manley filling up the bottom end and a set of massaged GM L92 castings working with an Edelbrock intake and a Demon 1030 carb. A Comp hydraulic roller stick actuates the valves, and an MSD Digital 6 box provides the spark. A TH400 transfers a reported 550 rear-wheel horsepower to a Dana 60 axle.

**BEST PASS: 9.63 AT 139.44 MPH**



## PRO STREET POWER-ADDER WINNER

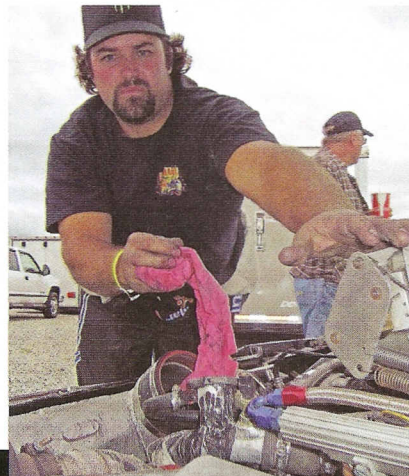
Eric Yost was back again with Jeff Pearley's third-gen Firebird that won HOT ROD's '10 Top Speed Shootout running 241.408 mph at Maxton's standing mile. This year, the road-wearied car became known as the Dirty Bird, and unlike last year when Yost broke the car on the last day and handed the win to Mike Roy, Eric was ready for anything.

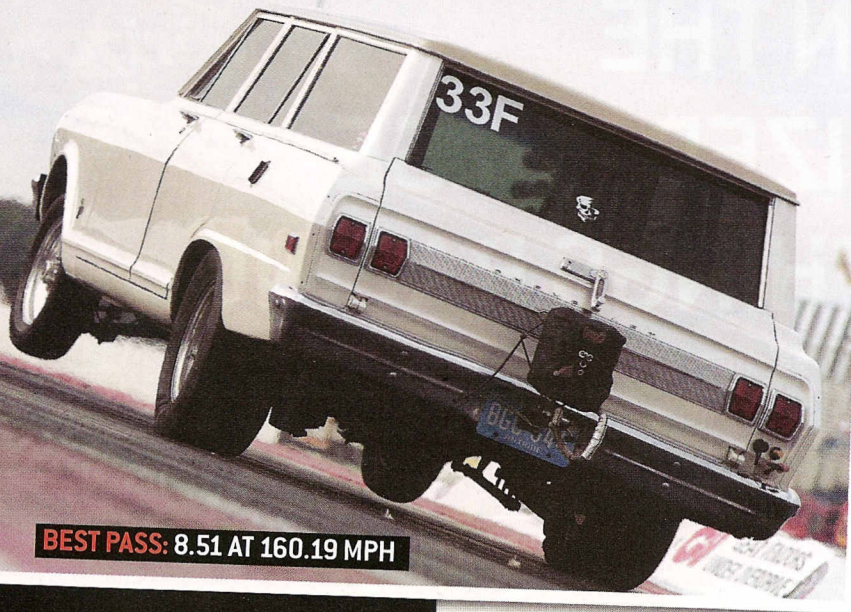
That was a good thing because on the first day, the car couldn't be certified to run in the 7s because it was missing a few bars in the rollcage that an overzealous tech inspector deemed necessary. Eric backed down the car to an 8.84 for his first timeslip, then hit the road and bought some tubing from the local Jegs store and went to NHRA Pro Stock racer Larry Morgan's shop to weld it in place. He turned the Firebird loose the rest of the week, averaging 8.03 even after the engine sucked down a throttle blade screw in Pittsburgh.

The 400ci Chevy runs 23-degree Pontiac heads, Jesel shaft rockers that are at least 15 years old, and twin 76mm Turbonetics hair dryers. A TCI TH400 with a Gear Vendors unit handles the shifts, and a 9-inch is hooked up to Mickey Thompson rubber. While the power has previously been reported as an old Lingenfelter engine, only some parts came from that source. The builder is actually 3V Performance.



**BEST PASS: 7.57 AT 158.73 MPH**





**BEST PASS: 8.51 AT 160.19 MPH**

## BIG-BLOCK POWER ADDER WINNER

Rick Prospero's '65 Nova wagon was fast last year, and it blew everyone's doors off this time around, running more than half a second quicker. The Chevy 461ci big-block is based on a '76 Chevy truck block with an Eagle rotating assembly. AFR 357 CNC heads provide big-time flow and a 0.590-lift, 260-degree-duration Cam Motion stick moves the valves. This was all intended for a centrifugal blower, but the final answer was twin 80mm BorgWarner turbos. The combo puts 1,300 hp and 1,100 lb-ft to a TH400 and 9-inch. A set of stock leaves and CalTracs provide the hook for small Hoosier drag radials. Rick was one of the few guys on Drag Week™ who only performed routine maintenance on his car, not breaking anything.



**“We were running too quick for our tech cert, and my wife says, ‘Hey, we can just get some more bars welded into it, right?’ We ended up handing in the timeslip from our fartin’ and poppin’ pass on the first day, an 8.68 e.t.” —Rick Prospero**

## MODIFIED POWER-ADDER WINNER

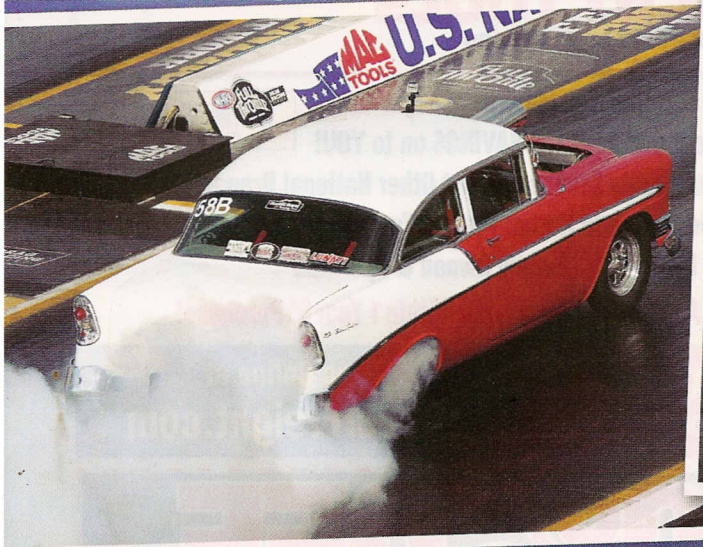
Todd Maschmeier's '68 Camaro pushed the Modified Power-Adder rules to the limit with its chassis mods, and it dominated the field. We'll have to go back to the drawing board since the rules haven't changed much over the last three years, and Todd's car

pointed out a small but serious flaw. The gray first-gen put on a show, pulling the wheels and breaking into the 7s once during the week. He took the win with an 8.15 average thanks to an engine that was reportedly pulled out of a boat just days earlier; it was

an angry 605ci Chevy with Dart heads, a single Dominator carb, and nitrous. The car hooked hard with a chassis back-halved to 7-second safety specs and with a bolt-on Smith Racecraft front clip that only barely prevented this from being a tube-chassis car.

**BEST PASS: 7.96 AT 173.54 MPH**





**BEST PASS: 8.62 AT 157.37 MPH**

## WHEELIE KING OF NEW YORK

Glen Hunter's monster '56 Bel Air yanked the wheels a good 2 feet in the air en route to mid-8-second passes all week. The car is almost too nice to run Drag Week™, which is why we like it, and it hauls the mail, too. Motivation comes from a 548-inch big-block Chevy with a Lunati crank, Oliver rods, Diamond pistons, and those trick CFE BMF 385 conventional heads we keep hearing about. A Whipple huffer and twin Dominators top it all off, and the fuel is E85. The power goes through a TH400 and a Dana 60 rearend with 3.73 gears. Glen nabbed Third Place in Pro Street Power-Adder with an 8.75 average. Vid from the roof-mounted camera can be seen on the YouTube channel for 1320Video.

## McGYVER DRIVES A C2

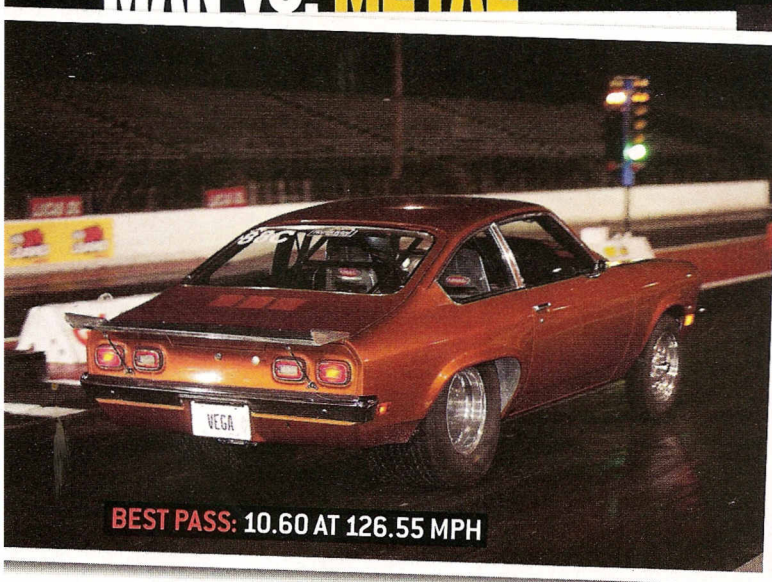
Michigan resident Doc Fox is a regular on Drag Week™, and his '67 Vette is no slouch thanks to a 565ci big-block and a healthy dose of squeeze. When we found his Sunfire Yellow Vette on the side of the road on Day 4, we also learned that he's pretty crafty when he needs to be. The trailer the Vette was pulling seized a hub, which mangled the axle. A few friends successfully found a replacement axle and road-tripped to go get it, but it was the wrong diameter for the trailer's U-bolts. What did Doc do? He robbed three of the four U-bolts that just happened to be securing the Vette's wheelie bars to the top of the trailer to put the trailer back together. Doc finished the journey with some of his best runs ever thanks to help from tuning hero Monte Smith from NOS and scored Second Place in Modified Power-Adder as well.

**BEST PASS: 8.78 AT 155.93 MPH**

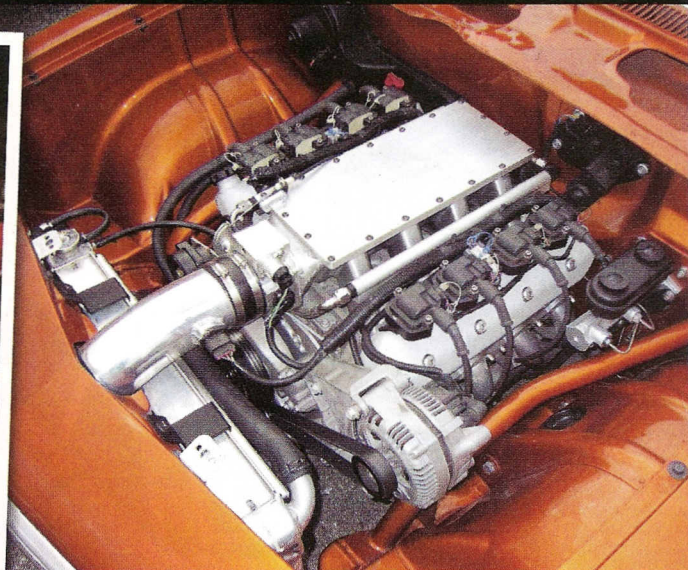




# MAN VS. METAL



**BEST PASS: 10.60 AT 126.55 MPH**



## PRO STREET NATURALLY ASPIRATED WINNER

With only three cars entered in Pro Street Naturally Aspirated, Darrin Pape had a good shot of winning. Clark Rosenstengel's entry broke early, but Darrin still had to finish ahead of Radar Watkins' 12-second Plymouth Fury. The lightweight '73 Vega

from Illinois had plenty of grunt under the hood with a punched-out LS1 displacing 427 ci with Callies, Oliver, and Diamond parts in the short-block. LS6 heads, a Beck EFI system, and a Comp 0.623-lift roller cam put an untold amount of power to a

4L60E automatic. A Ford 9-inch swinging on ladder bars, 15x14 Weld wheels, and 31x18 Mickey Thompson Sportsman tires provided the grip Darrin needed for a 10.72 average. Darrin and a friend built the entire car in their home garage, paint and all.

## DETAILS, DETAILS

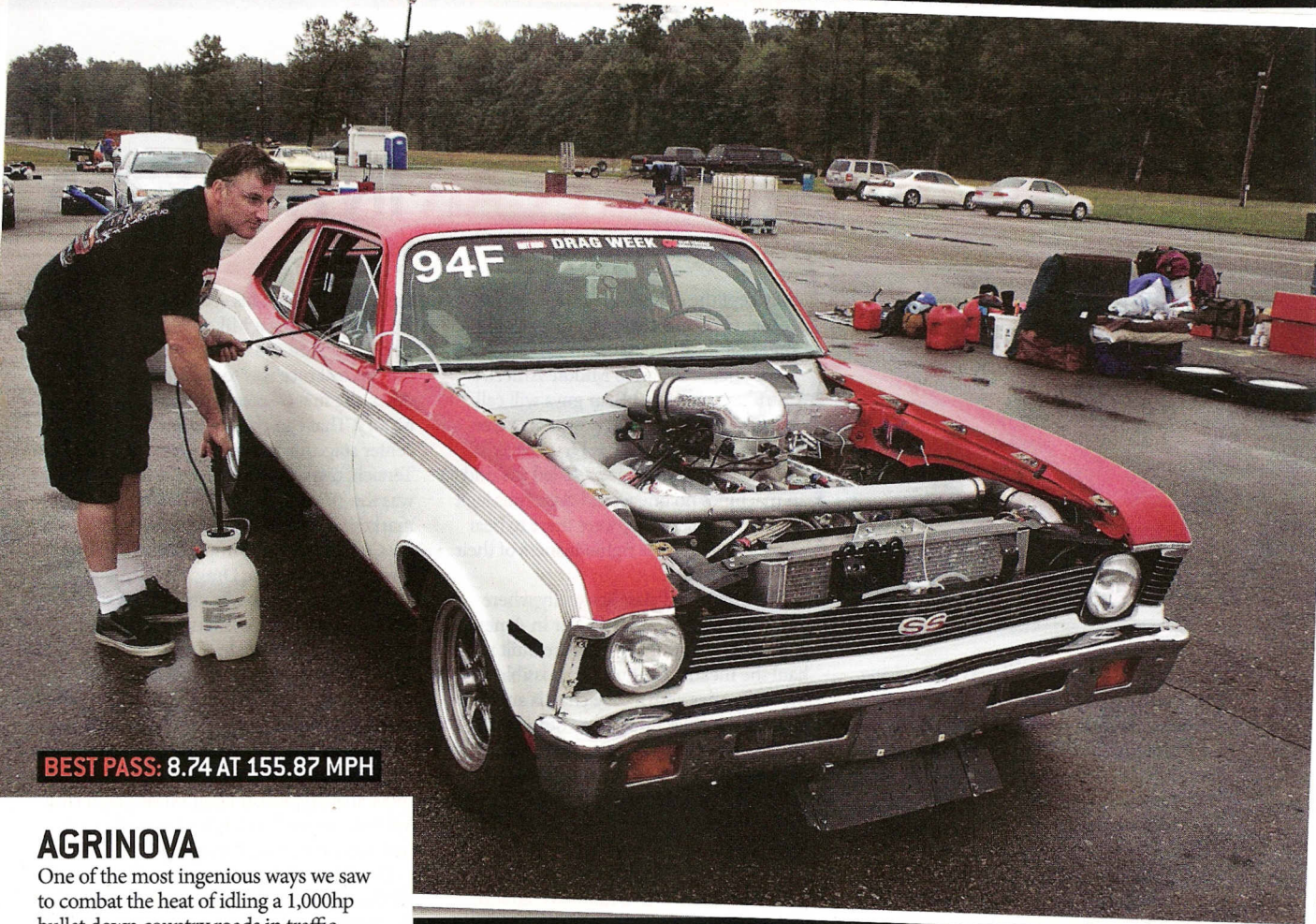
It's the little things that will shaft you at Drag Week™, and beating this beast of a test requires maximum attention to detail. James Hahn found that out the hard way when a leaky distributor gasket wreaked havoc on his more-door '67 Pontiac Tempest. The leaking oil made its way down to the bellhousing and onto the clutch surface of the Muncie M22, wasting the clutch.

James thought he had himself covered, but the spare parts he brought were for the wrong application. Still, the 455-powered Poncho won our Quickest Pontiac award.

**BEST PASS: 12.85 AT 103.89 MPH**







**BEST PASS: 8.74 AT 155.87 MPH**

## AGRINOVA

One of the most ingenious ways we saw to combat the heat of idling a 1,000hp bullet down country roads in traffic came from Mount Joliet, Tennessee, racer Shannon Carnathan and his engine builder, Daryl White. To keep the twin-turbo and fuel-injected 555ci Chevy cool, the duo first ditched the '71 Nova's hood and then made a chin spoiler out of cardboard and aluminum foil. Finally, the guys stopped at Home Depot and bought flexible plastic hose and a fertilizer hand pump and used that to douse the front of the radiator with water as they drove. Shannon says they went through about 15 gallons of water the first day. Imagine how tired Daryl was after pumping that thing for six hours. The Nova took Second Place in Big-Block Power-Adder with a 9.004 average.

**"If we're gonna make it, we are gonna have to get creative. It's just time and money." —Shannon Carnathan**

## THANKS TO THE DRAG WEEK™ SPONSORS

Drag Week™ simply would not happen without our crew of enthusiastic sponsors. From MSD hosting lunch at the kickoff, to Lunati and NOS sending reps to help the racers, to Jack Day from Rockett Brand cruising with us every year, to Amsoil in its second year as the official oil, and Mickey Thompson always supporting us as the official tire of Drag Week™, these companies get it. Perhaps none more so than title sponsor Rick Johnson of Gear Vendors, who could not love Drag Week™ more. He swears he's sponsoring it till the grave, since these racers are exactly the type of people who need an overdrive unit that can survive 2,000 hp and many road miles.

Also, we can never send enough thanks to our friends Tonya and Keith Turk for all their help running the event and the same to our own Jenny Schmitz and Michelle Turczyn for doing all the stuff we don't want to.

## **GV** GEAR VENDORS UNDER/OVERDRIVE™

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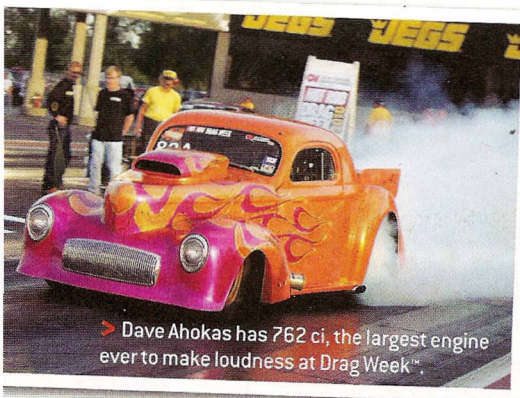
**NOS**  
Nitrous Oxide Systems

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The First in Synthetics®

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**LUNATI**

## THE BATTLE TO BECOME THE FASTEST STREET CAR IN AMERICA



➤ Dave Ahokas has 762 ci, the largest engine ever to make loudness at Drag Week™.

Fact: There are 7-second street cars cruising America today. Let that idea sink in for a minute. It's true. At Drag Week™, there were cars that blitzed the 1320 in less than 8 seconds, some at more than 200 mph, and then the drivers packed up everything into the trunk or onto a trailer hitched up between the wheelie bars, and then hit the road. These guys drove, not rode, to four more tracks and kept on making all-out passes for five days while piloting their cars through torrential rains, searing heat, traffic, and pockmarked roads. Oh, and somehow

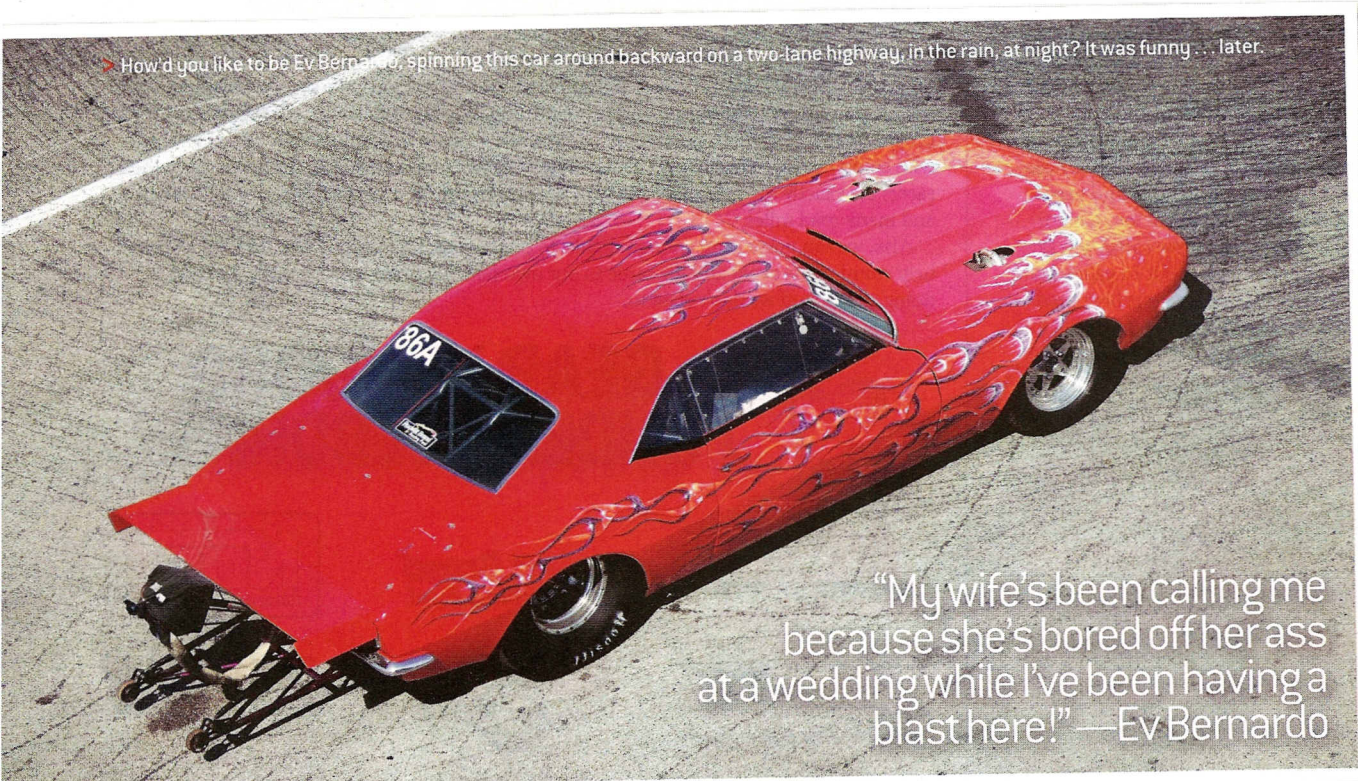
they kept the drivetrain living with the consequences of treating a race car like a street car long enough to finish the brutal, 1,000-mile trek across Middle America. Can't happen, right? Four guys will call you a liar because that's how many averaged in the 7s this year at Drag Week™. We watched as these guys defied the odds in machines no one would classify as legit street cars unless they were there to bear witness to the sheer righteousness of their accomplishment.

The Unlimited class is usually where HOT ROD's Fastest Street Car in America comes from. It's for cars that are built to haul the meatloaf as quick as possible, meaning ones with a tube chassis and virtually no rules limitations outside of the street-legal equipment. There were five Unlimited entries at Drag Week™: Dave Ahokas in his '41 Willys with a 762ci Sonny Leonard engine, Doug Cline with a nitrousd 632 in his bright-orange '67 Camaro, '07 Small-Block Power-Adder winner Ev Bernardo with a new '68 Camaro, Jeff Lutz in his very threatening '57 Chevy loaded with 598 inches of twin-turbo power from Pat Musi, and two-time champ

Larry Larson with his seemingly invincible '66 Nova packing a Mike Moran turbo Rat. They were at battle for the overall win, but the real race was to see who could lay down the first 6-second pass in Drag Week™ history. That ego challenge has been taking center stage for nearly two years, as Denny Terzich, owner of the black Camaro that was the '07 overall winner, has been loudly marketing his Project Sick Seconds orange '69 Camaro with the implicit message that it would become the Drag Week™ 6-second hero. The car was finally completed scant weeks before D-Day. Then, days before the race began, the thing barfed connecting rods all over the burnout box. Out.

There was more drama at the MSD-sponsored test and tune the day before competition, when Larry Larson finally used up the clutches in his Lenco transmission. In a class move that's typical at Drag Week™, arch rival Jeff Lutz stepped up to give Larry the parts he'd need to keep in the fight.

Day 1 brought more carnage. Dave Ahokas had a nagging valvetrain issue with the Willys' mountain motor, and it roughed him up bad right from the first pass at National Trail Raceway. The guys from Lunati



➤ How'd you like to be Ev Bernardo, spinning this car around backward on a two-lane highway, in the rain, at night? It was funny... later.

"My wife's been calling me because she's bored off her ass at a wedding while I've been having a blast here!" —Ev Bernardo



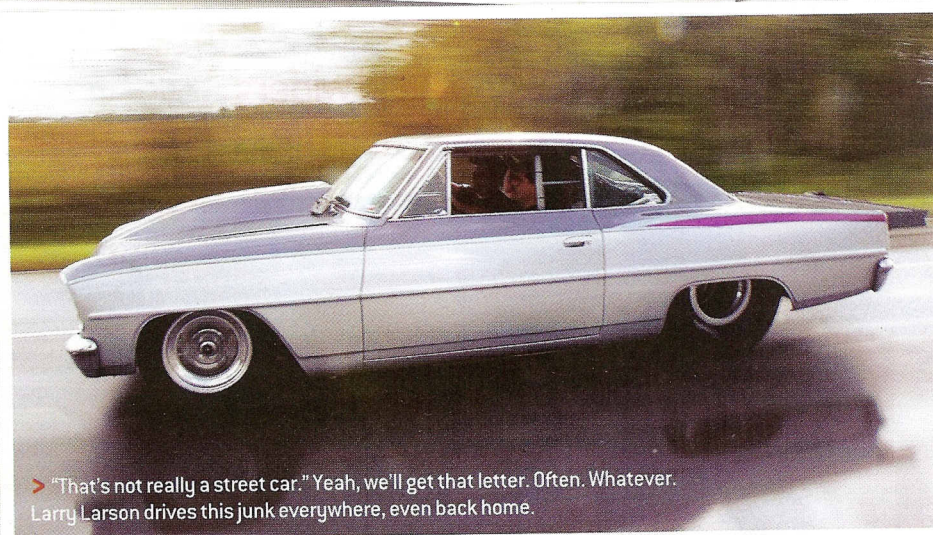
> Repeat offender Doug Cline averaged 7.97, making the Camaro Drag Week's™ quickest-ever nitrous car.

sponsored the event and had some help on site. They diagnosed the wrong valvespring retainers and provided a cure—just not in time to keep the Texan's '41 Willys in competition. He took a couple days off to fix the problem, then showed back up to make a few more runs even though he was no longer a contender. With the Willys gone, there were just four cats in the alley.

We give a lot of credit to North Carolina's Doug Cline for not packing it up and heading home on Day 1. His Camaro reached for the sky on his first pass and the resulting bounce knocked the fire bottle loose in the cockpit, covering everything in flame retardant. Still, he went 7.92. At the end of the run, he popped the chute, but the throttle-cable mount came loose and his 632 Chevy was still at full song after the lights before he realized it and jammed on the brakes, sliding into the sand trap.

Meanwhile, no one was expecting Ev Bernardo. After missing the last two Drag Week™ events while his wife battled cancer (and won), he was determined to show up this year and ditched a family wedding to make the show. Six weeks before the event, he removed the 762ci mountain motor in his '68 Camaro and installed the twin-turbo 427ci small-block Chevy that had been in his Small-Block Power-Adder-winning '96 Mustang in 2007. Packing the smallest engine of the field, Ev put the class on notice with a stout 7.60 pass at 184 mph on Day 1.

Pennsylvania resident Jeff Lutz put down a 7.41 the first day and let it ride, choosing to save his '57 for the rest of Drag Week™. We couldn't blame him after his last engine locked up halfway through Drag Week™ '09,



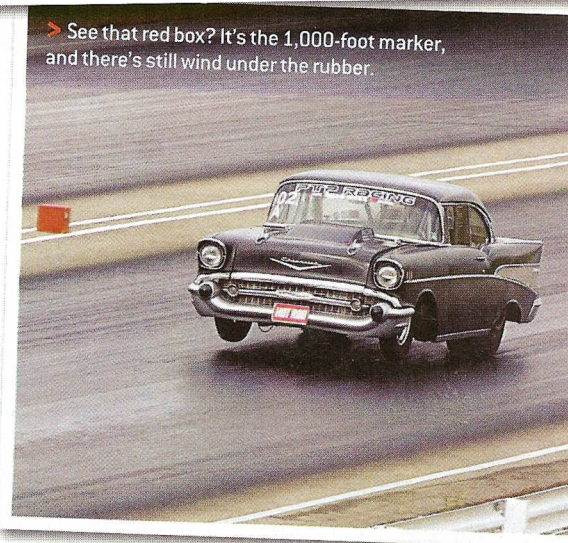
> "That's not really a street car." Yeah, we'll get that letter. Often. Whatever. Larry Larson drives this junk everywhere, even back home.

the victim of a valvetrain failure. He had his sights set on making a 6-second pass, but more important, finishing the challenge and joining the Drag Week™ 200 MPH Club with his son, Jeffrey, at his side.

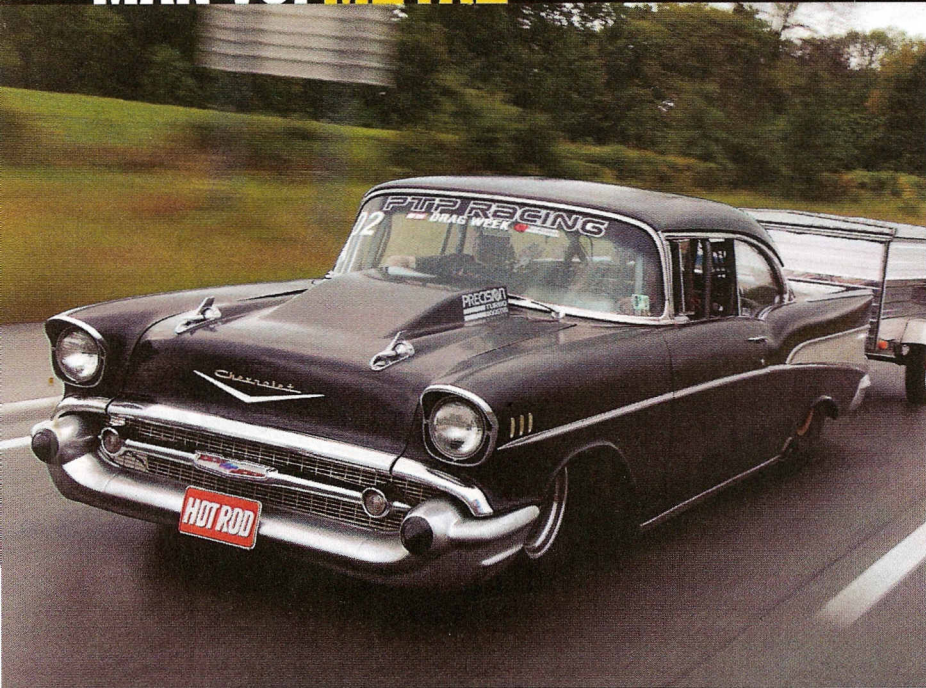
It must have been tough for Jeff to make the safe call, especially after watching Larry hand in a timeslip of 7.12 from a run that looked effortless. But as every Drag Weeker knows, it ain't over until it's over. A minor slip-up on the very last day could mean hara kiri, and there were 1,000 miles and three more races between here and there. And it was an eventful trip.

In Milan, Michigan, Doug scared

> See that red box? It's the 1,000-foot marker, and there's still wind under the rubber.



# MAN VS. METAL

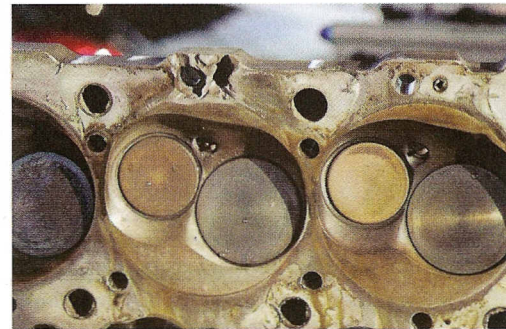


> We love the sinister look of Jeff Lutz's car, and where else but Drag Week™ do you see a 7-second car hauling freight?

**“At 190 mph, the windshield wipers just go nuts!” —Jeff Lutz**



> Guys jammed to get the old Chevy back in the game. From left to right are Danny Morrison, Jeff Lutz, Eddie Miller, and Jeffrey Lutz.



> The Lutz show-stopper. When an engine at this level loses a head gasket, the flame will actually torch right through aluminum.



the Christmas Tree, launching his Camaro dead toward it twice before discovering that rainwater had collected in the quarter-panel and was leaking onto the tires. Mother Nature also helped Ev spin out his wild Camaro in the middle of a highway one night. The Jeff and Larry show took a plot twist in Michigan when the '57 outran the Nova, 7.08 to 7.15. Then Jeff fought alternator belts and flat front tires while Larry hit the road and hauled ass. Seriously, the guy cruises at like 85 mph. He beats on this Nova like it owes him money.

At Pittsburgh Raceway Park, the leaders both handed in slips of 7.11, but the primer-black '57 carried the front wheels to the 1,000-foot before skidding sideways to a stop a few feet from the sand trap after the chutes failed to deploy. The new radials were flat-spotted like a stop sign, but Jeff's credit card had already been trained on how to buy tires.

Rolling into the last day back at National Trail in Ohio, the four players all had 7-second four-day averages. Jeff and Larry were at 7.20 and 7.10—just a tenth apart, but

the math said it would take a 6.70 for Jeff to catch up. No one had run a 6-second pass at Drag Week™. Ever. With breakage ever looming, it was still anyone's race.

In the end, every car in Unlimited would have won the first two Drag Week™ events, and three of them would have owned the third. Their accomplishments are untouched by any cars to date, anywhere. Doug Cline's 7.95-second average gave him the quickest nitrous car to date. Ev Bernardo went the distance alone and without a trailer full of spare parts in tow, knocked down an unreal 24 mpg, and closed the week with no major malfunctions and a 7.61 average that made for Drag Week's™ quickest-ever small-block.

Jeff Lutz threw the toolbox at his car on the last day of racing in what became a legendary showdown. He and Larry were both edging their way to 6-second territory, and both had run in the 7.0s. On Day 5, Jeff turned up his Pat Musi-built twin-turbo 598, handed in a 7.10, hurt something, and called it over. Then he watched that damn Nova make a few passes, got lit up, and gathered a crew to help him fix the engine

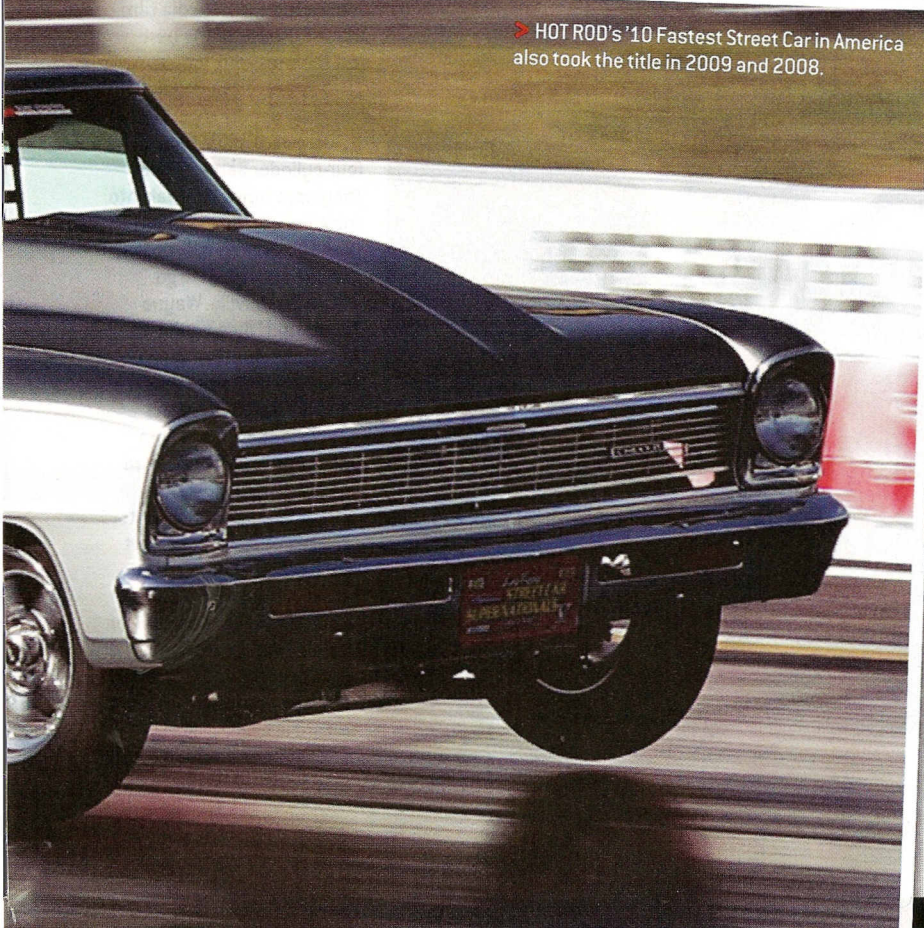
for another attempt. But sadly, he had torched the Trick Flow block and one of his spread-port Raptor cylinder heads, ending his bid for the win and coming oh-so-close to getting into the 6s. He finished in Second with a killer 7.18 average and made it into the Drag Week™ 200 MPH Club, fulfilling at least part of his dream. He'll come back and take another shot at the title.

What can we say about Larry Larson? The guy is a machine, and he stole the show with his Nova for the third year straight. He put a stranglehold on the class with a 7.01 at Indy, a 7.15 at Michigan, and a 7.11 at Pennsylvania, averaging 7.10 for the first four days of competition. But it was his nighttime heroics at the last stop that blew us all away. At 8:40 p.m., Larry staged the Nova, brought it up on the limiter with fire spewing from the pipes, and blasted 7.005 at more than 205 mph. The fans went looney. Jeff was junk, and Larry had the win locked up, but he rushed to make another pass before the 9 p.m. cutoff. He made it back to the lanes at 8:59. The track put the final round of Daily Driver ahead of him in case he oiled the place, and our Keith Turk calmed Larry as he twisted back into his suit, still tweaking the engine tune-up on the laptop. Moments later, he dropped jaws with a 6.95 at 209 mph and cemented his status as the undisputed king of door-slammer street car racing.

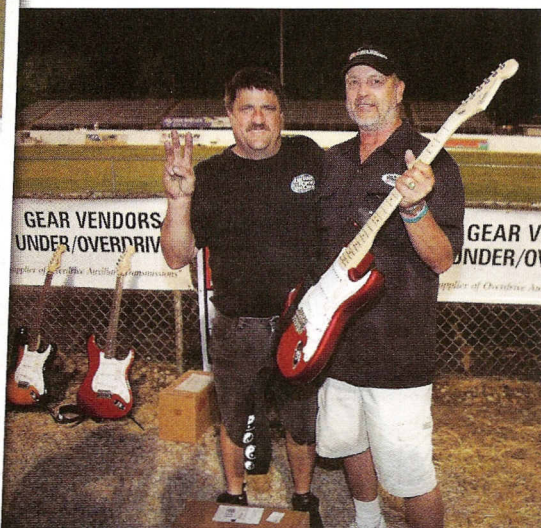
Larry Larson's '66 Nova with Mike Moran power is truly the Fastest Street Car in America. Who's coming for him?

**"You don't think I'm gonna let Denny (Terzich) wonder all winter long, do you?"**

**—Larry Larson**



➤ HOT ROD's '10 Fastest Street Car in America also took the title in 2009 and 2008.



➤ Here's the man, Larry Larson, claiming the ultimate three-peat. That's title sponsor Rick Johnson of Gear Vendors on the right, awarding Larry one of the special Drag Week™ edition Fender guitars. Rick loves Drag Week™. **HRM**