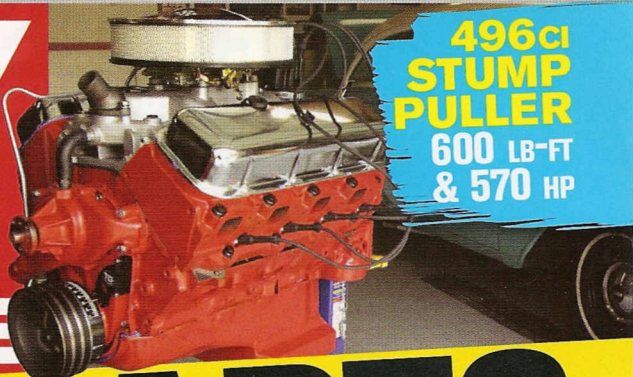


TRICK FLOW SPECIALTIES TALKS CYLINDER HEADS

CHEVY

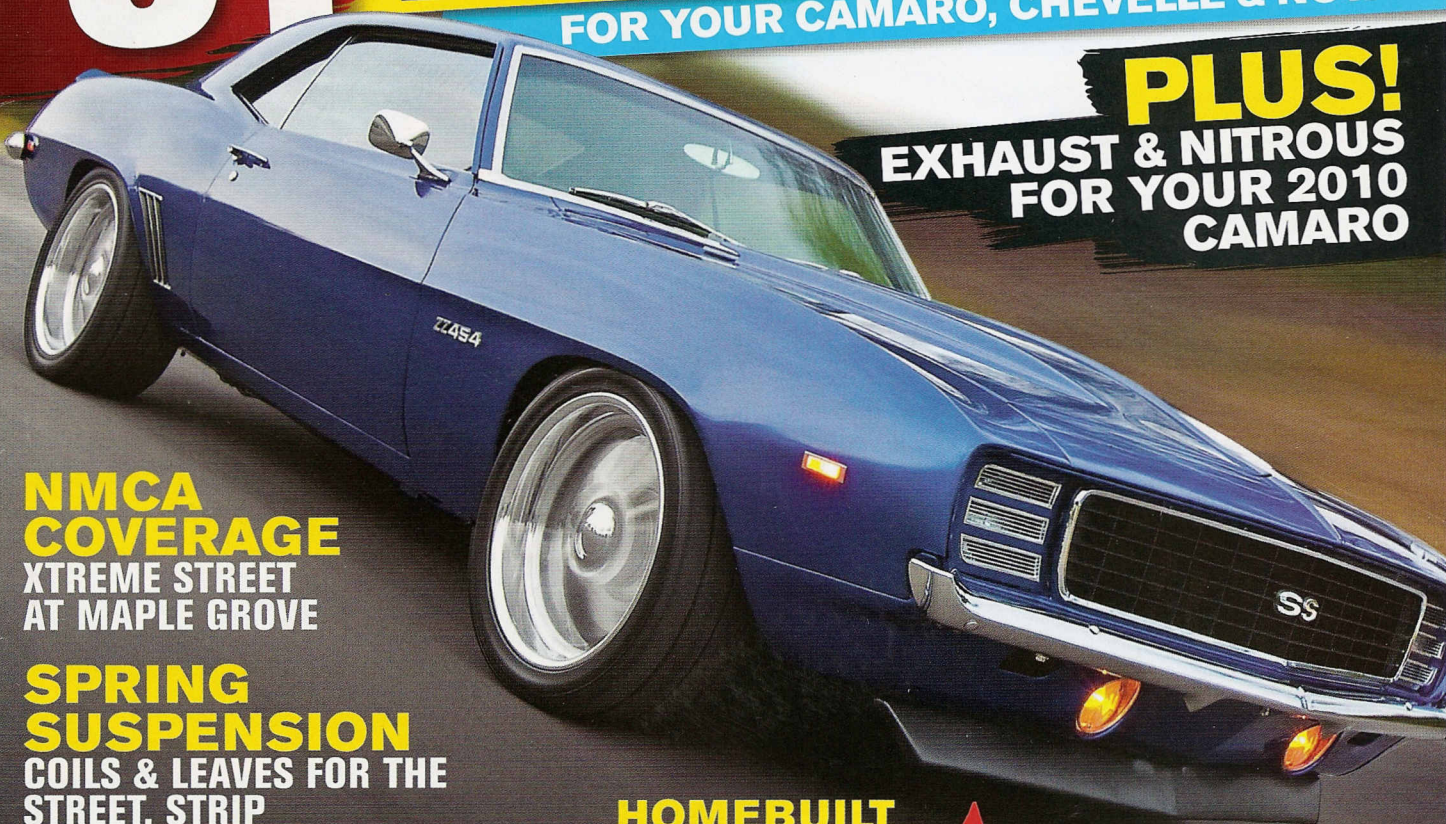
HIGH PERFORMANCE



496ci
STUMP
PULLER
600 LB-FT
& 570 HP

31 HOT PARTS

FOR YOUR CAMARO, CHEVELLE & NOVA



PLUS!
EXHAUST & NITROUS
FOR YOUR 2010
CAMARO

**NMCA
COVERAGE**
XTREME STREET
AT MAPLE GROVE

**SPRING
SUSPENSION**
COILS & LEAVES FOR THE
STREET, STRIP
& AUTOCROSS

**CHP GOES
RACING**
WE SURVIVE
THE 24 HOURS
OF LEMONS...
BARELY

HOMEBUILT
PRO-TOURING
BIG-BLOCK CRUISER



OCTOBER 2009 • USA \$5.99 — Canada \$6.99
A SOURCE INTERLINK MEDIA PUBLICATION




CHEVYHIPERFORMANCE.COM

GOIN' FOR BROKEN

**We Entered, Raced & Survived
the 24 Hours of LeMons**

*Text: Henry De Los Santos
Photos: Curtis Little & Henry De Los Santos*





If you dig corner carving but don't have the deep pockets associated with it, then 24 Hours of LeMons is the event for you. Unlike other motorsports programs, where the costs can escalate into no-man's-land, 24 Hours of LeMons has a few choice rules, enabling everyone to become a race car hero for the weekend—provided your car can last that long. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to run the greatest number of laps possible in the two-day marathon. OK, so it's not really a 24-hour race that runs straight through the night (with the exception of The Lamest Day event at Nelson Ledges Road Course in Nelson Ledges, Ohio).

You'll also need to keep in mind that this is not a demolition derby. Overly aggressive driving will get you promptly escorted off the facilities. Of course, this is assuming they don't demolish your vehicle with a tractor first. No, I'm not kidding. Once you pass tech, the LeMons crew is able to purchase your vehicle for the set budget limit, at any given moment.

While the complete rules can be found on the website 24hoursoflemons.com, We just want to go over some of the more basic requirements. For starters, every vehicle entered has a price cap of \$500. If you happen to go over the allotted budget during the initial purchase, you're more than welcome to sell anything and everything you don't need from the vehicle to help recoup some of the money.

The good news is that safety is taken very seriously, and there's no limit to spending on the protective stuff. Granted, you'll be lucky to hit the upper 50-mph barrier at select tracks; however, for what it's worth, I've always acknowledged the fact that I don't want to crash on the freeway even at 55 mph. That said, every vehicle entered is required to have a rollcage, with detailed requirements for some of the heavier cars.

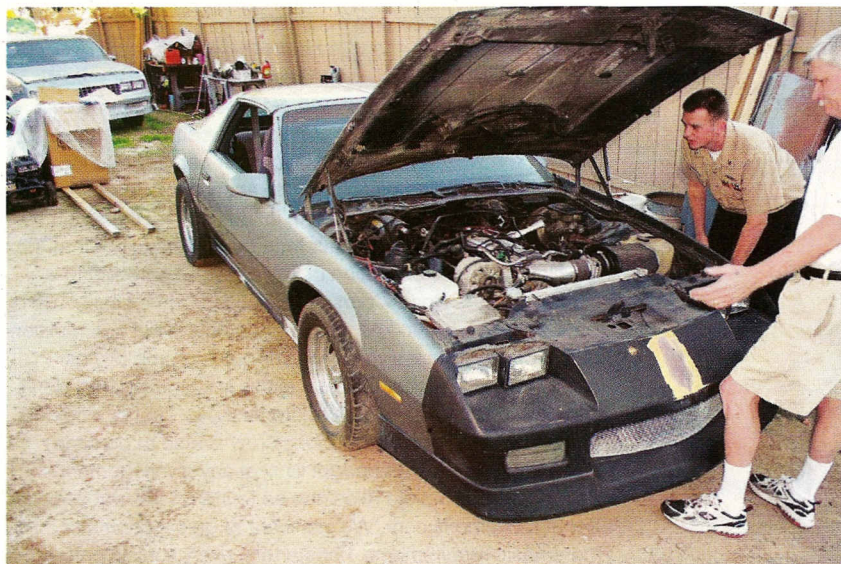
Also included under the safety category and not in the \$500 limit are wheels, tires, and brakes. The only stipulation is that the tires must be DOT-legal with a minimum 190 treadwear rating. When it comes to the helmet, you can toss out the open-face units or anything with an M rating, which is typically a motorcycle helmet. And finally, you'll need proper attire: a real race suit with an SFI 3.2A rating.

To participate, you must explain in detail why you should be accepted. Most teams have a theme, some of them really offbeat and nearly mistaken for a bad Halloween costume. In our case we wanted to be a little more serious and build something that resembled the Penske/Donohue Trans Am Camaro from the '60s. We wanted the unmistakable blue paint scheme and the number 6 on the side, with a '80s flare that only a third-gen Camaro could bring. While the fuel sponsor at the time was Sunoco, we opted to bring in our own personality by placing "Rockett Brand Race Fuels" on the side and dubbing our ride the Rockett Camaro.

Assuming you are accepted, you'll then have to send in your registration and have between four and six drivers. In our corner we had Vince Stroud, Curtis Little, Rick King, and me. And while a pit crew isn't particularly necessary, we had LeMons graduates Rich Southerland, who brought his monster RV and played the gracious host with home-cooked goodness; Kris Linquist, who outfitted our third-gen with two-way radios; and Scott Chamberlain, who did a little bit of everything.

This is definitely an experience everyone needs to try sometime. The good news is that the LeMons series is growing and currently has 10 events across the country, making it easy to try your luck at it. After entering my first event, I have to say that LeMons, at least in my interpretation, is an event for those who still have a sense of humor and just want to get out and have fun. You can make it as serious or relaxed as you want. It has a little something for everyone.

GOIN' FOR BROKEN



Stroud found our '83 Camaro on the Craigslist of San Diego, California, and managed to haggle the price down to a mere \$400. While this was originally purchased for the transplanted LT1 drivetrain, it was a project that had been sitting idle for quite some time and owners were ready to let it go. Notice the later-model front fascia.



Even the interior was in relatively decent shape with newer fourth-gen Camaro seats. All we cared about was the untapped potential to sell everything, including the carpet, seats, and T-tops, to offset the costs of other items we needed.



It took a couple days for Stroud to strip the interior apart and sell off everything we didn't need. Looking back, it probably would have been a good idea to keep the gauges—or at least to substitute a set of aftermarket units.



Less than a week later, we received the Chris Alston's Chassisworks weld-in 10-point rollcage we'd ordered, and we started the mockup. Everything from the main hoop and sidebars to the downbars with gussets and mounting plates was included for just \$359. All tubing is constructed with 1 5/8x0.134-inch-wall mild steel, making it perfectly legal for NHRA and more than adequate for LeMons.



If you don't have experience with a welder, you're going to have to pay someone for the 'cage work. Per LeMons rules, "A poorly built, improperly mounted, or badly engineered rollcage can keep you from racing." Safety is not the place to get sloppy.



All open and T-top cars require drivers to wear arm restraints. Since none of us are fans, Stroud went ahead and welded in these bars and eventually constructed a roof out of aluminum.



Rather than having the traditional downbar on the driver side, the doors were gutted of glass and everything associated with it to extend the 'cage bar into it.



We eventually learned why the Camaro was so cheap. Everything on this car had issues. Check out the hose clamp on the brake line. It was just a matter of time to get everything sorted, roller-bomb the exterior with house paint, and finally apply the vinyl stickers.



A short four months and a 600-plus-mile tow later, we actually made it to the tech line in Reno. We weren't without issues, though. The LeMons tech crew didn't like the way the seat was mounted, so we had to find a welder and secure the seat to the rear crossbar, off the main hoop. A couple spare Grade 8 bolts, small steel plates, and a quick \$40 later, we were good to go.



Another item the LeMons tech will look for is a third brake light. Should a mishap occur, they want to make sure you still have one light functioning so the competition doesn't turn into a game of bumper cars. We used a simple trailer light and tied it in directly to the taillamp harness.



You can expect a drivers meeting before anyone gets on the track. If you're the least bit confused about anything, this is the time to listen up for the day's schedule. And yes, that guy in the green shirt is dressed up as Rambo.



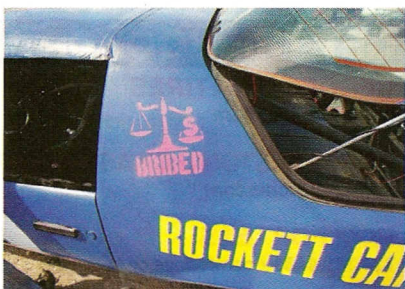
Even though the series celebrates and has fun with "lemons" with the \$500 cap on your vehicle, it also recognizes the importance of tires and puts no limit on spending, only on minimum treadwear rating (190). This allows everyone to choose tires that will perform best and be up for the endurance challenge. Our personal favorites from both a performance and economical standpoint were the P245/50ZR16 BFGoodrich g-Force Sports on all four corners. Suffice it to say, grip was never an issue. We're planning to use the same set at the upcoming event at Buttonwillow Raceway Park in Buttonwillow, California.



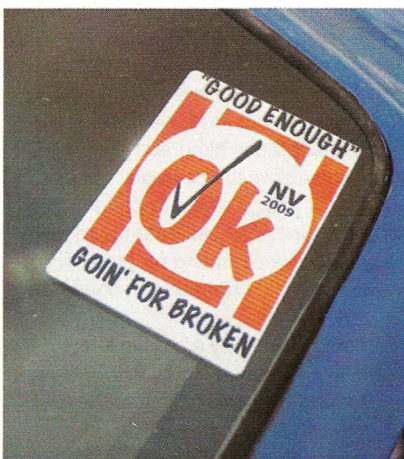
Up first was Stroud, with the starters giving a final look-over, mostly checking for any leaky fluids. A few cars ended up heading back to the pits for minor fixes, but we had the green light. After 40 minutes on the track we had our first electrical gremlins pop up and had to get pushed back into the pits. Between the rough idle and immediately dying after starting it, we were assuming the Opti-Spark was on its last leg.



After a short cool-down period, the LT1 fired up with no hesitation and Little jumped into the seat for the second round. Thirty minutes into it, the power steering let go, causing him to veer off the track and limp the third-gen back into the pits.



Before finishing tech, if the judges think you're lying about the purchase price of your entry, they'll require penalty laps to be completed before any laps get credited for the actual race. For added measure, it's not a bad idea to bribe the judges. In fact, they suggest it. Of course, there's no guarantee that will help, but it definitely adds to the LeMons antics.

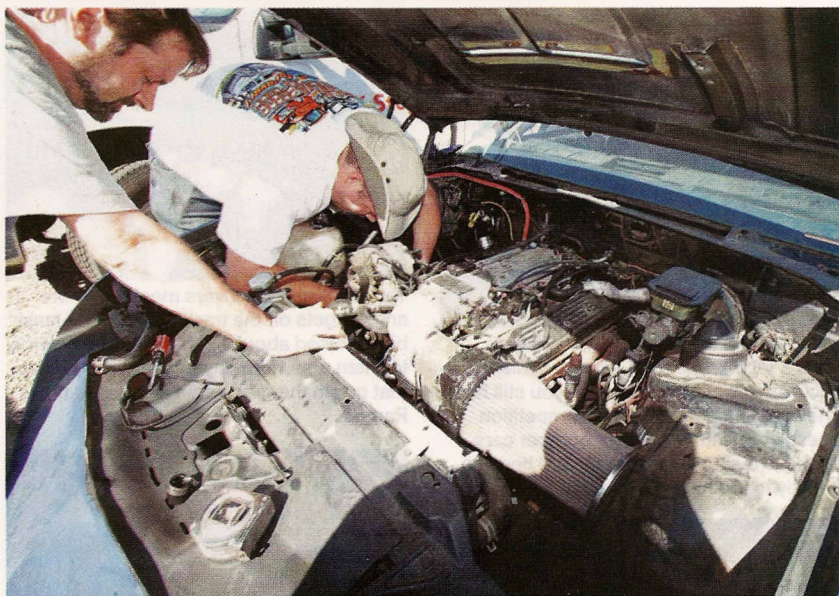


There you have it. We earned the seal of approval, at least for this event.

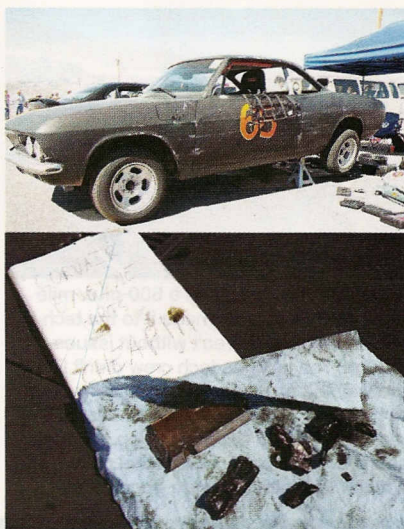


With the power steering fixed, King got his chance at flogging the Rockett Camaro. This is where the third problem reared its ugly head: rod knock. At this point we had to call it day.

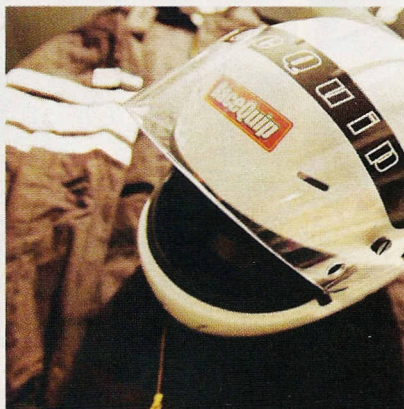
GOIN' FOR BROKEN



The following morning we added a host of fluids to the engine in hopes of getting a few final laps in, but it just wasn't meant to be. The rod knock was worse than ever, and we even had water spewing out in between the block and driver's side cylinder head. In the end, we placed 95th out of 101 cars and learned that the rod knock video shot by our crew guy Linquist was shown the following Monday on *Good Morning America*. Be sure to drop by chevyhiperformance.com for that video clip.



Another casualty was Team Unsafe at Any Speed with their Corvair. They ended up placing 98th, but we certainly have to applaud their efforts. Even with the motor in pieces, they did everything they could to get back onto the track!

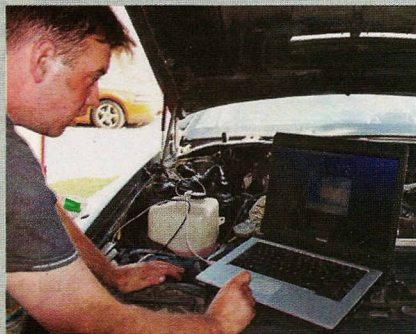


In case of fire, the one-layer SFI 3.2A/1 suit is rated to 3 seconds before you can expect second-degree burns, whereas the multilayer SFI 3.2A/5 suit is rated to 10 seconds. My personal choices were RaceQuip's multilayer suit and SA-2005-rated Ridgeline helmet, along with the gloves, shoes, and support collar from sister company Safe-Quip. **CHP**

EASY COMPUTING

Ed. note: Stroud had the opportunity to work with PCM for Less, and here's what he had to say about them.

With the introduction of GM's LS engine family, the Gen II LT1 and LT4 small-blocks have been all but forgotten. It's a shame, because they offer easy retrofitting into older cars originally equipped with a standard small-block (the mounts literally bolt right up), come stock with great-flowing aluminum heads, and offer lots of performance for the dollar.



One of the hassles with getting these motors going in a car that didn't have an LT1 from the factory is the fuel injection system. While the systems are pretty advanced compared with the earlier TPI and TBI setups, simple performance upgrades or using a nonstock transmission can make the stock computer go nuts.

Our \$400 Craigslist-score '83 Z28 was originally a Crossfire Injection ride, but that lump was mercifully replaced at some point with the LT1 out of a '94 Camaro. Our initial excitement was short-lived, however, because when we hooked the laptop up to the car's PCM (power control module) we learned it was throwing just about every smog-related trouble code possible. No wonder the seller's ad said, "No smog shop will touch this car with a 10-foot pole!" Undeterred, we hopped on PCM for Less (pcmforless.com), a company that literally tunes hundreds of cars a year, both by mail-order and on the dyno. That volume allows the company not only to offer its product at a cheap price, but it ensures that you get the max performance out of your car. We opted for the email version of the tune. You just enter the modifications of your car, and in a few days you'll receive a new operating program. The only equipment needed to load it is a Windows PC, a cable ordered from one of the many sources on the Internet, and the ability to click a mouse.

The performance gains and improvement in overall driveability are definitely noticeable. The PCM controls nearly everything in the drivetrain: fuel delivery, timing, even the automatic transmission line pressure. The new program optimizes these settings and also gives you the option of deleting the smog controls. Since our car has seen the street for the last time, we tossed the emissions stuff and never had to get greasy doing it!—Vince Stroud

GET THE HOOKUP

BFGOODRICH TIRES

bfgoodrichtires.com

CHRIS ALSTON'S CHASSISWORKS

cchassisworks.com

PCM FOR LESS

724.349.4431 • pcmforless.com

RACEQUIP

racequip.com

ROCKETT BRAND RACING FUEL

rockettbrand.com

SAFE-QUIP

813.642.6644 • safe-quip.com