

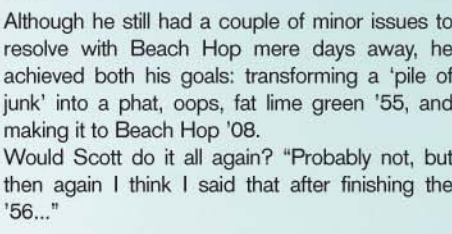
What is that pile of junk, Mr Mackenzie?

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When Scott and Theresa Mackenzie's '55 Chevrolet 210 Del Ray was unloaded in their driveway back in April '05, a young girl who lived next door asked "What is that pile of junk, Mr. Mackenzie?" At first glance Scott was pretty much thinking along the same lines...

Although Scott owned a multi award winning '56 Chevy four-door, he'd always wanted to build a 'fat line green '55 Chevy'. That's 'fat' as in low and wide, not 'phat' as in youth-speak for cool. Scott, Theresa and their daughter Mallory (now 13) were at the 2004 NZHRA Street Rod Nation in their '56 which they'd just bought back after selling it to a fastidious enthusiast in Wellington. Scott had no intention of letting it go again, at least that was until Chuck from Chuck's Restoration Supplies slapped a bunch of photos of a '55 Chevy 210 Del Ray two-door sedan on the table and said "Scottie, I've got the car for you!" "I love '55s, but I didn't have a good understanding of the 210 series, or the Del Ray, so I guess it was just pot luck," says Scott. "I've since learned that the 210 sedan appears to have been a much more popular model in the States and was used a lot more in the '60s and '70s as gasser-style drag cars." That was to be the fate of Scott's '55 as the guy Chuck got it off in the States had started to build a drag car out of it. He'd built the motor, slotted it into the chassis, then lost interest. Scott bought the '55 and when it arrived in April '05 it was a body on a rolling chassis, the rebuilt big-block was still in place, and the front sheetmetal was jammed inside the cabin. Quite a few parts were missing such as the glass, the splash pan behind the front bumper, and the front seat. But on closer inspection the car proved to be quite sound, and a great foundation on which Scott could build his dream green '55.

The '56 was sold to Roy Rawson (who has become a good friend of Scott's and has helped him with the '55), however the proceeds only funded about half of the cost of the '55's build. And what a build it turned out to be. You'd be excused for thinking that this a mega-buck probuilt car; in reality it's all Scott's vision, and while he enlisted the services of professionals and friends alike he managed the project and put the Del Ray together in his home garage. Scott's target was to have the '55 done for Beach Hop '08, and when you're pushing for deadline that constant shed time can be quite destructive as far as relationships go. "My wife Theresa has been so supportive, and propped me up when things were not going right," explains Scott. "I think that if anyone wants to build a car like this it takes your best friend and partner to help you along with it. Thanks too to my daughter Mallory who has seen me in the shed more than inside the house in the last few months." Luckily for Scott, Theresa was equally focused on her studies (She's just achieved a Masters of Nursing with distinction at Victoria University) so when Scott was wrenching in the shed, Theresa was buried in her textbooks. Scott, who's been a youth aid police officer in Ngauruhia for the past six years and has almost 24 years with the force, drove the '55 into Craig Brown's photo studio only hours after tightening the last fastener.



This is what arrived in Scott and Theresa's driveway, no wonder young Briana Robson wondered what the pile of junk was. Scott had a vision though, wanting to "base the build on trends that are current in the US today".

Big-block built Stateside

One of the plusses of the Del Ray deal is that it came with a built Chevy 454 big block. The previous owner had totally rebuilt the engine, the plan being to end up with a staunch street car that would see some quarter-mile duty. Bored 30 thou over to 460 ground-pounding cubes, it develops just over 550hp. The cam has a mild street grind, the heads have titanium valves and roller rockers, a brand new 850 double pump sits on a Pro Coated Edelbrock intake, and a Pro Com high volume fuel pump feeds fuel through a chrome

Pro Com fuel filter mounted half way down the chassis, with braided lines. A gear drive makes all the right noises. Dress-up, and there's plenty of it, includes Merlin polished aluminum rocker covers, and Lokar kick down and accelerator cables, and brackets. Bill Brinsden (Brinsden Automatics) rebuilt the Turbo 400 trans using heavy duty bearings, and while he was at it in went a shift kit. The trans' entire outer case has been fully Pro Coated silver. The drive shaft is brand new, balanced right, and given the Pro Coat treatment.



The aluminum radiator's a four-core Griffin, and there's a polished overflow container.



The combination of 210 (Chevy's mid-range spec for '55) and Bel Air trim works well with the two-tone paint treatment, and that trunk lid badge off a '55 Impala really looks the part.

Stitched up in style

Scott wanted an understated yet stylish quality interior for his Del Ray, one that was a modern take on the classic '55 design. He turned to Stitches Upholstery in Manukau City, where Kelly and the boys created a tan leather interior, with narrowed rear seat in a two-seater style, and the front bench seat being customised into a two seater to match. As there were no interior panels in the car when it arrived from the US, Stitches made new door and rear quarter panels, trimming them in an angled pleat design. The same theme is carried through to the seats, and into the trunk. Stitches installed a new headlining, and made a good-looking leather parcel tray with molded-in speakers. Light tan/brown carpet covers the floor and the trunk, with the dash and side window moldings painted in a light tan colour to complement the interior, rather than the usual chrome finish. All the glass is brand new, and has a light tint. The tilt steering column's a Flaming River painted tan and it's topped off with a Colorado Custom leather and chrome wheel. The car was fully rewired by Chris Harrison, a Sony head unit that's USB and iPod (or should that be iPod?) compatible is concealed in the glove box, and a Fusion amp lives in the trunk.



Right > Ross, a good mate from Scott's from Tauranga, managed to source the leather and made the right colour choice. Scott's stepson Kane built the narrowed rear seat.

Left > Kelly at Stitches suggested a matching Impala badge for the inside the trunk.

Below > Battery has been relocated to the trunk behind a custom panel that's covered in tan leather.

On-Wheel combination

Colorado Custom 'Alcatraz' five-spoke polished aluminium wheels really look the part on this stunning Del Ray. The front ends are 18 x 8" with a five-inch backspacing with 235 x 40 Michlins. The rears are big by huge 20 x 12s with a ginormous dish and a 3-1/2" backspacing, shod with 335x35 Michlins.



A chassis that's too good to cover up

Why did the possum cross the road? It wanted to see its flatmate. The sad thing about the detail that's gone into the '55's chassis is that it's only potential road kill that'll get to see it. Fortunately, Scott took plenty of pics when he was bolting it all together, and when it recently went up on a hoist. The frame is standard issue 1955 Chevy that was sandblasted by Hamilton Sandblasters. Once the modifications were done and chassis mocked up, Scott blew it all apart then Pro Coat primed and powdercoated it in 'Silver Eye'. While still in its original configuration, there's not much of the factory suspension left. Scott's quite right in saying that if you want your '55 to look fat, it's gotta be low. To achieve the required stance without air bags Scott fitted two-inch drop spindles with QA1 polished aluminum coil-over adjustable shocks. Front brakes are Classic Performance discs, with same brand master cylinder and booster. Steering is a brand new 605 power steering with a Pro Coated pump, and braided lines. A heavy duty sway bar keeps things stable, as do all new suspension bushes throughout. Steve Bartrum (Rod Workz) installed a four-bar suspended drum brake nine-inch rear end that runs cruisy 2.75 gears. It uses coil-overs, and is five-inches lower than stock. The diff housing's lime green, the diff head's Pro Coated, and pretty well everything else is coated, chromed or painted silver.



The '55 had to be mini-tubbed to house these big rear meats.



It's time time

Fifty-five Chevy aficionados are probably looking at these photos and wondering what's going on with the side trim. The Del Ray used side trim that was different to the Bel Air's, so Scott used some of the more stylish Bel Air chrome, including the trim that runs along under the side glass, to lend the car a somewhat custom look. "I also got rid of the hood badge, using only the hood bird," says Scott. "On the trunk I used a 1963 Impala trunk badge, again just to be different, and I think it works very well." Other than a number of drill holes in the floor and a small amount of rust in the firewall, the Del Ray's sheetmetal was in remarkably good condition, due in no small part to the car being in dry storage for the last thirty years. The only biggie was the rear guards, which had been rounded when the car was used as a gasser in L.A. during the '70s, and the hood which was damaged beyond repair (Scott found a replacement locally). Once Scott had dismantled the Chevy and separated the body from the chassis, the body was sent to Kwi Metal Polishers in Rotorua. New Zealand's largest dip, strippers, Kwi Metal Polishers had no difficulty dealing with the '55 and Scott was rapt with the result. Back to virgin steel, the '55's shell was sent to Rowan Marshall and Tony Skinner at Marshall Panelbeaters in Morrinsville. During late 2005 and 2006 they fitted brand new inner and

outer rocker panels (sills), and resurrected lower rear quarters. The firewall was smoothed out, and the car was semi-tubbed by 3-1/2" to house the huge rear wheels. In 2007 the car was moved to Paul Knight and Neil Buckley's Classic Auto Restorations in Lower Hutt. "More than 800 hours were put in by both these guys, and the end result speaks for itself," says Scott. "I know Neil wore down the skin on the ends of his fingers!" Originally the '55 was going to be lime green and ivory, then all lime green, then Scott came up with lime green and silver - a combination that didn't sit well with a couple of his mates. Nonetheless Scott was convinced, and Classic Auto Refinishers laid on the two hues using paint and other materials that were sponsored by PPG Automotive in Auckland. "I think we managed to get such a straight clean car just through confining to fit and refit the body to the chassis," explains Scott. "Roy Rawson came to the party, along with another mate Steve Bartrum, who helped me to trailer the car to Wellington and then return to uplift the chassis, then back again to put the finished body back on the finished chassis. This was well worth the trouble, I can tell you." Bumper Replacements in Onehunga



stripped and rechromed the bumpers and overriders; one bumper was so banana-shaped that Scott was going to take it to the dump, but the guys at Bumper Replacements asked to be given a shot at straightening it. They did an outstanding job, and Scott says that the price was surprisingly reasonable. The grille, which looks like brand new repro, is the original rechromed, and chroming was also carried out on numerous other components. Chuck's Restoration Supplies sourced numerous parts during the build, including new headlights, taillights, indicators and registration plate lights.



Scott copped (get it?) a bit of flak over his colour choice, but the result speaks for itself.

Thanks go to...

Scott's the first to admit that he's not a mechanically-minded person, and wouldn't have got the car done if it hadn't been for the help of friends, and competent businesses. Scott thanks his wife Theresa and daughter Mallory for all their support, and being able to see the vision. Steve Bartrum at Rod Workz did an awesome job and "had to put up with me on his back to help gets things done, and it is guys like Steve that epitomise what hot rod hobby is all about," says Scott. "He was a huge help and I thank you Steve, as I could have given up on a number of occasions. "Tim and Lee Kerr from Pro Coat in Auckland coated so many parts, Tim being a '55 Chevy lover (he also now owns a '55 two-door sedan) could not do enough for me and went out of his way to help. Awesome job guys, thanks so much." Scott's neighbour, Grant Robson, had no real interest in cars but was always ready and willing to help out with this and that, and lift stuff. Darrell Bone at Chuck's Restorations Supplies was an incredible help, taking many phone calls about various little problems. Kerry Wood, the helpful manager at BNT in Tauranga, supplied brake and transmission parts, and more recently John and Raewyn at Goodyear Tyres, Kahikatea Drive, Hamilton, have helped get the car ready for the Beach Hop. "A lot more people have been involved in helping, there are too many names to mention, but thanks," says Scott.

