PROJECT

Attacking Godzilla

CHASSISWORKS' NOFAB CLIP

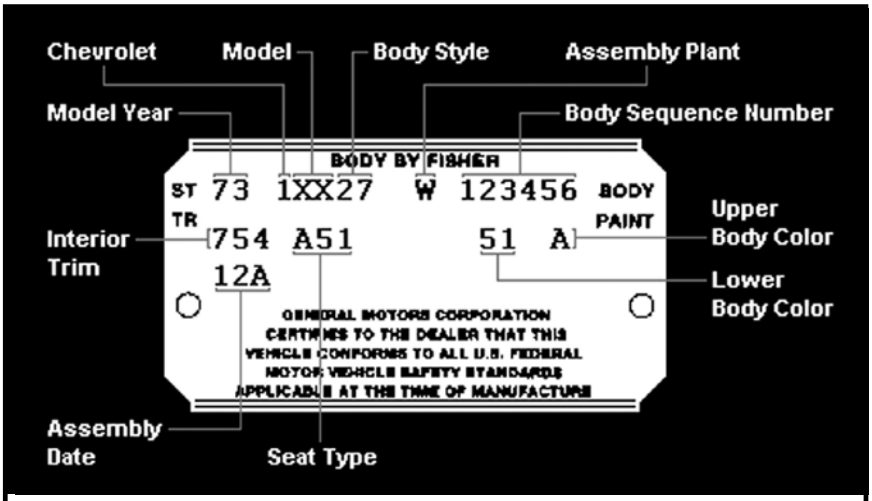
Before we could tear the old car's skeleton out, we had to remove the filthy small-block from it's frame rails.

In the last installment of Project Godzilla, our potentially badass '69 Nova, we talked about how we rescued the wrecked beast from the crusher for $800. This month it's time for disassembly. With the car safely stored in the owner David Wong's (Dee-Dub for short) garage, it was ready to be transformed. As we mentioned in the first article, the Nova's frame was pretty bent from the previous owner's run-in with a Suburban, so this obviously had to go. It just so happens that Chris Alston's Chassisworks offers the ultimate solution to this problem: A complete bolt-on from sub-frame assembly, and by "complete" we mean brakes, suspension, steering, and even a motor plate. But before we could tear the old car's skeleton out, we had to remove the filthy small-block from it's frame rails. The engine that the Nova came with, a seemingly stout GM Goodwrench 350, was definitely not the most glamorous magazine engine (especially compared to a 640 big-block), and although the thought crossed our minds to hit it with spray until it goes "pop," Publisher Aaron Hahn had other plans for it, so that idea was out (see sidebar). When we got the car home it was a matter of simply prying the crumpled fender away from the wheel and removing the hood and core support to reveal the engine. To be honest, the Nova "teardown" was really just a matter of removing some wrecked sheetmetal and pulling the engine. Once the engine was out, we noticed the previous owner ditched the cast exhaust manifolds for some tri-y headers. This upgrade also made us wonder what other mystery performance parts were installed in the engine, in other words this car could've easily been a sleeper in its previous life.

Before we started with the teardown, we drained all the fluid from the radiator and removed the damaged battery to give us access to the bumper and core support. Wong explained, "We were very careful in disposing of the battery since it had a puncture in its side from the collision." As we've learned in the past, battery acid burns are no fun." Wong continued, "The condition of both fenders were too mashed up to even allow us to work on the engine, so we had to bring out the handy Porta-Power hydraulic tool to pry the fender wells

the 411

▸ Here's a shot of Godzilla before we started the disassembly. Notice the spaghetti ball of wires? That will all be redone in another installment of Godzilla's resurrection. The driver's side is the car's good side, as the quarter panel suffered some damage. We'll have to kiss that windshield goodbye as well.



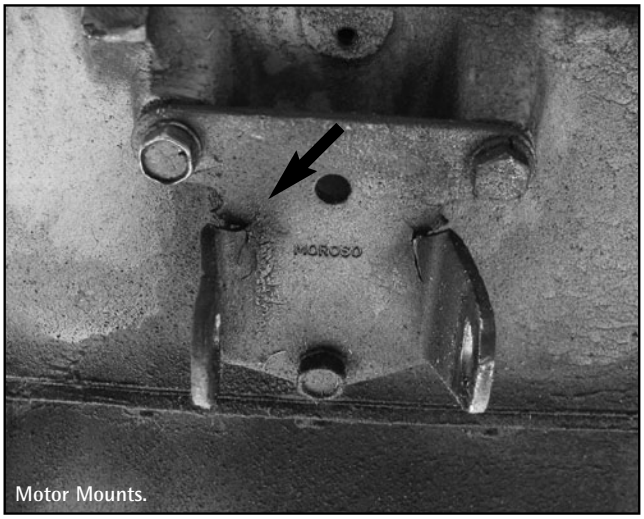
The Nova's Cowl Tag

The cowl tag is the small metal plate attached to the firewall of Novas that is stamped with information about how each Nova was originally built. Other older GM cars have the same thing. Sometimes the cowl tag is referred to as body tag, trim tag, firewall tag, body plate, data plate, or number plate. 1962 thru 1967 Nova cowl tags are found on the passenger side of the cowl, next to the heater blower motor. 1968 thru 1979 Nova cowl tags are found on the driver's side of the cowl, above the master cylinder.

The cowl tags provide the following information: Build Date (month and week the body was assembled), Model Year, Model Series and Style, Assembly Plant, Number (the model sequence number), Interior Trim (color, material and seat type), Exterior Paint (upper and lower paint and/or vinyl top), and Options (the Fisher Body codes).

According to Godzilla's cowl tag, the car is nothing special, just an original V8 car that was produced in Willow Run, Michigan on the first week of November in 1969. It came with a standard black vinyl bench and Frost Lime paint. We were hoping for it to be a genuine Yenko...


Front Sub-Frame



Motor Mounts.


NoFab Front Clip

enough to get to the bolts. With both fenders out of the way, we got our first clear look at the sub-frame. It was not a pretty sight since the front rails were thrashed, but it was something that we had anticipated when purchasing the car."

It was obvious at this point that we needed to begin our search for a full replacement for the sub-frame. With a few companies specializing in full bolt-on front ends, we knew that this would not be a major setback. Chris Alston's Chassisworks was one company that stood out, and we had heard that this sub-frame has been easily installed by at-home garage mechanics in the past. Did we mention we plan on building the entire car at Wong's house?

the 411

- Removal of an X-Body's (Chevy Novas, Olds Omegas, Pontiac Venturas) **front sub-frame** entails loosening of the steering column from the steering box, brake lines, and four large bolts under the body. With those out of the way you can easily roll the frame away from the car, just make sure to support the body with some jack stands.

- Once the engine was pulled, we noticed that the previous owner had upgraded to Moroso solid **motor mounts.** We also observed that they had started to crack, indication that the Nova hit the Suburban very hard.

- One thing we're happy to get rid of is the Nova's squishy body mounts. The Chris Alston Chassisworks **NoFab front clip** come with polyurethane versions that will add some rigidity to the Nova and reduce body-roll.

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The core support was the next major challenge with stripped and inaccessible bolts holding us back. We powered up the reciprocating saw to cut right through the un-salvageable core support like butter. Now we had cleared the way and all that remained was the frame and motor.

The next step was to clear the way to pull the 350 to be replaced by something a bit less lame. We made sure that all of the wiring had been cleared, the headers unbolted, and the oil drained from the motor and tranny. After yanking the motor from the Nova, we cleaning up the firewall and sprayed it with some semi-gloss engine enamel. We know, the firewall is not an engine, but it's thick, temperature proof, and doesn't scratch easily. With the firewall painted, we sat back and enjoyed the beauty of the bare frame and back half.

Since we plan on dropping in a massive big block and had finally converted our fellow sport compact rice burner-driving co-worker to a real power making car, the unanimous vote around the office was 'Godzilla.' Nothing sums up our goals of a serious power wielding street car than the big green monster himself. We plan to stomp around on the roads of Southern California in our new project, so stay tuned as we shoot to make some jaw-dropping power with this car.

Next month we're going to get down and dirty with the install of the new Chassisworks NoFab front clip, and begin transforming this car into something we all can smile about.■

Mystery Motor

Like we mentioned in the intro, the Nova came with a GM Goodwrench 350 small-block that looked pretty non-descript. Besides an Edelbrock Performer intake and carb, the motor looked plain. However, we've been duped by tame-looking small-blocks before, so there is a possibility that the engine was packing more than what it appeared. *FSC* Publisher Aaron Hahn pilfered the small-block and is currently putting it to use in his "lead sled", a '54 Chevy Bel Air. We jokingly brought up the question, "What if the 'stock 350' was packing 11:1 compression, a huge cam, and 383 cubes?" Well, guess we'll know once his heavy beast either bogs down or boils the tires.

Front End

the 411

▸ Over the handful of years building cars, we've found that **engine enamel** makes great firewall and engine compartment paint. It's heat-resistant and is very thick, so it takes a lot to scratch. Look how bald Jake is.

Engine Enamel

▸ Dee-Dub smiled with glee as his wrecked Nova's **front end** was wheeled out from under Godzilla. We would be happy too if we were on our way to ditching a lowered Acura for a big-block Nova.

S O U R C E

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