



Track Tested!

PUTTING ALSTON'S VARISHOCKS TO THE PAVEMENT

It's easy for a magazine to take a product, install it, and then rave about how great it is. But outside of trusting the magazine's reporting, how is the reader to know if the product is really that great? We realize that sometimes there's more to "proof's in the pudding" than simply putting it in print. With this in mind, we made an effort to actually test the products we install (most recently the Early Classic suspension components), getting the real-world numbers on increased performance benefits. While there's really nothing stopping us from fudging the results, "trust" us when we say we take pride in seeing the honest-to-goodness results firsthand without wasting any time relaying them to you.



These aren't your average everyday shock absorbers, that's for sure. Once tuned, Alston's VariShocks are meant to perform specifically for your truck's application. Dual adjustability ensures you get the best bounce (and bounce-back) for your buck.

Our recent installments with the C10 Air Ride Technologies suspension wrapped up last month with the electronic programming...but it didn't stop there. We still had one last step to accomplish, which involved taking the truck out to California Speedway in Fontana, California. We went to put the airbags with provided gas shocks to the test, as well as to see how we could turn the old work truck into a real road racer with a set of Alston's VariShock QuickSet2 dual-adjustable shock absorbers. Before diving into the installation and subsequent results, let's first talk a little about the shocks themselves.

While there are factory-set (non-adjustable) VariShocks available, Alston also offers a single-adjustable version, the QuickSet1. Both versions of the QuickSets offer the user adjustability for compression and rebound. The QuickSet1 does both with

With the supplied gas shocks from Air Ride Technologies on the truck, the slalom course was tackled with a best time of 7.42 sec. at 40 mph. As you can see in the sequence, the truck leans somewhat through the tight cornering, but not nearly as much had it been equipped with standard coils and leafs.

a single knob; the QuickSet2 individually adjusts compression and rebound with separate knobs. For the average enthusiast with a traditional coil and leaf suspension, the dual-adjustables might be a bit over the top. But, the person who wants the ability to fine-tune the ride characteristics, the QuickSets are the way to go. For a full insight on VariShocks, refer back to the "Shock Treatments" story in our October '05 issue.

While the basics of performance are usually focused toward use with coil springs, our installment is obviously set up for an airspring suspension front and rear. The difference? In a nutshell, wound coils have a determined spring rate based on the wire size, amount of coils, etc. An airbag, on the other hand, has a progressive spring rate, which is, of course, determined by air pressure settings. For typical coils, basic dampening settings of the shock usually start with more rebound pressure and less compression; for airbags it's the opposite. With the progressive spring, you want to control the extension more, not so much the compression, as the 'bag does a good enough job on its own. Basically, a soft-

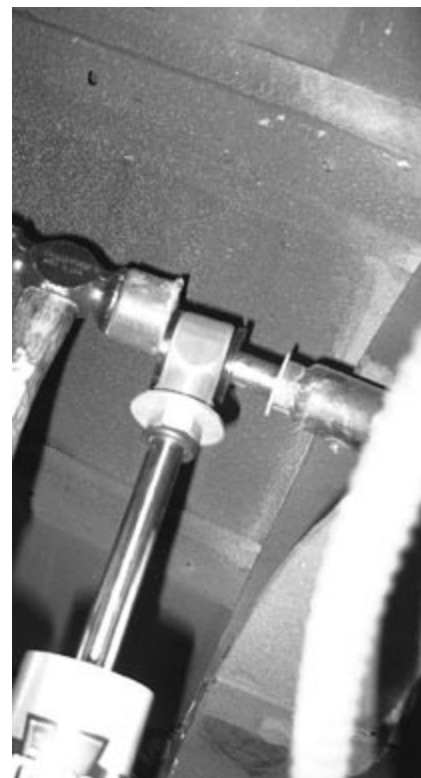
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Once our baseline tests were complete, we headed over to a shaded area below California Speedway's huge bleachers for a quick shock-swapping session. With matching bushings, the R&R wouldn't take long. Here you can see the physical difference between the standard tube shocks and the VariShocks.



Thanks to the airbags, accessing the rear shocks was made much easier. The new upper mounting studs fab'd by GO-EZ have held up perfectly, which made us feel more comfortable about installing the new shocks on them.



GO-EZ had previously welded mounting studs on the top brackets, so the new shocks were simply mounted with the slight aid of a rubber hammer (metal installation tool not recommended!).



While Alston offers both set and single-adjustable VariShocks, we went with the duals. Because we're dealing with an airbag suspension, we needed independent control of the rebound settings, which neither of the other versions offers. The adjustment knobs are clearly marked and, in our case, easy to access and adjust on the vehicle.



VariShocks are available in all popular mounting applications (post, eyelet, or T-bar style) and studs are included. For the rear, the stud bolts weren't needed, as you will see.



For the front shocks, the C10's stock mounting studs were used, as they have a different size thread on the frame end than the ones supplied.

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er shock with stiffer rebound qualities.

With little experience under our belts, we jumped in the Chevy and headed out to Fontana for a little time between the cones—the slalom. Our resident Web guru, Nick



Our use of the truck prior to using bumpstops apparently did a number on the lower portion of the front shocks! No fault of the manufacturer or installer (pure user error!); these would have been toast in no time if left on much longer.



As mentioned, access to the adjustment knobs is easy, especially with the aid of the Air Ride. While we mentioned the settings used for testing, your final combination will probably differ greatly—it all depends on your driving style and ride quality preferences.

Licata, is also the chief track-testing authority as well, having been to Bondurant racing school to get the basic ins and outs of road course racing, testing, and data recording. Over the last year, he's put everything from



With the VariShocks installed and adjusted (3 clicks compression; 6 rebound), our slalom intervals dropped down to the low 6-second range with an average speed of 43 mph! May not seem like much to you, but in a real-world application, that's a huge difference.



The End.

427 Cobras to '69 Camaros to zillion-dollar street rods to the test...but never a '75 C10. Surprisingly, the pickup performed better than anticipated, even with the non-adjustable gas shocks. Of course, the fact that the suspension was all new (Air Ride Strong Arms and four-link) and the tread was BFGoodrich's new g-Force T/A KDWs didn't hurt, but it was still nice to see a seeming beater fair quite well.

Basically, the 420-foot slalom course is set up with six cones in 70-foot intervals (we like to call them "holes"). Performance is evaluated on elapsed time through the cones, or the average speed through the course (times recorded only when no cones are hit). After getting comfortable with the slalom, the Chevy managed fairly consistent times in the mid 7-second range, or right around 40 mph. With the VariShocks installed, and subsequently adjusted to about 5 clicks (starting from zero) on compression and 8 on rebound, our times were reduced by at least a second, down in the low 6s, with an average speed of 43 mph. For the street, however, going off of Air Ride Technologies' recommendations, we dropped the settings down to 3 on compression and 6 on rebound to allow the truck to respond better to varying road conditions and not be so stiff. The ride now is unbelievable—solid, responsive handling with a smooth ride that won't jar your dentures loose.

If you've made it this far, you may be wondering how all this applies to your classic truck. While the extreme track testing may be a bit far-fetched for your application, the aspects of the suspension—more importantly of the shocks—can be of great benefit to you, as long as you like a good quality ride. Old trucks weren't meant to handle like a full-size passenger car...until now. With a good adjustable shock, whether of single or dual nature, you can dial in your pickup's ride to handle, well, not like a truck. Granted you've got decent components, as well as a sway bar, your truck can start handling the corners rather than nearly tipping over through them. **CT**

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SOURCES

VARISHOCK

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