

PROJECT

Skeletal Upgrade

A LOOK AT CHRIS ALSTON'S BOLT-ON CLIP



Common Mistakes?

One thing that stood out about the NoFab clip is the very detailed instructions. It features many photos and detailed text on how exactly to bolt up the kit, saving loads of frustration and potential guesswork. However, we know no matter how complete the instructions are, people still make mistakes. We asked Chassisworks' Jim Wright what are some common mistakes people make when bolting up a complete front clip. He explained, "For most guys it goes pretty smooth, but one of the things that has happened a couple times is they don't put the transmission crossmember in before they try to bolt it up, and that's critical to get the correct spacing. The crossmember should go in before the frame gets bolted to keep the correct width in the back." Believe it or not, that was the extent of things to watch out for, the instructions are that good. If you run into a problem, chances are you're overlooking a step that's shown. In the picture shown above, we attempted to fit the aluminum body mounts the way the factory rubber ones are mounted, and as you can see, they didn't fit. Further investigation of the instructions showed that you do not "sandwich" the solid mounts the way you do with the polyurethane or rubber pieces, the solid mounts simply sit between the frame and body mount provision with no need for a bushing on top.

Last month we dissected our project "Godzilla" Nova and even tracked down the car's original options via the cowl tag. In this episode we investigate the components that make up Chris Alston Chassisworks' NoFab bolt-on clip, the key part that will ultimately save DeeDub's (David Wong, the guy that owns it) Nova from the crusher. Since the car had previously been a wreck, the front subframe was unsalvageable. This was a problem since the frame was even too far bent to

straighten it on a frame puller. Luckily for us (and you Chevy guys), we found that Chris Alston's Chassisworks offers what they call a NoFab front end setup that could fix our problem in one fell swoop. Unlike some subframes, Chassisworks' clip installs easily at home with common hand tools and doesn't require a whole lot of mechanical background to accomplish. We've even heard that some have able to install it without having to remove the engine. Although these bolt-on clips have been around for a



According to Chassisworks' Jim Wright, it's about 60 pounds lighter than the factory. For all-out drag racing, they offer a version that features a lighter spindle and brake setup that saves about 130 lbs.!



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► The NoFab setup comes with spindles that are specifically designed to work with the Chassisworks' suspension. They do lower the front end compared to the factory spindle. According to Wright, they can lower the car 1-1/2 to 2-inches depending on application and what size tire you use.

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couple of years now, they are becoming more and more popular with gearheads that own early cars, but who want late model suspension technology. Besides featuring ideal suspension geometry and trick steering, the NoFab clip will also help you shed some pounds of the nose of the car. Since our Nova will see some fair amount of street duty, we went with the street brakes and spindle setup and according to Chassisworks' Jim Wright, turns out to be about 60 pounds lighter than the factory. For all-out drag racing, they offer a version that features a lighter spindle and brake setup that saves about 130 lbs!



Crossmember

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► The clip comes with a tubular transmission **crossmember** that should be installed prior to installation. This helps keep the rear rails lined up with the factory body mount provisions.

► You can order the kit with either single or double adjustable **shocks**. We went with the double adjustables so we can tune the way the car launches once we get the car to the track.

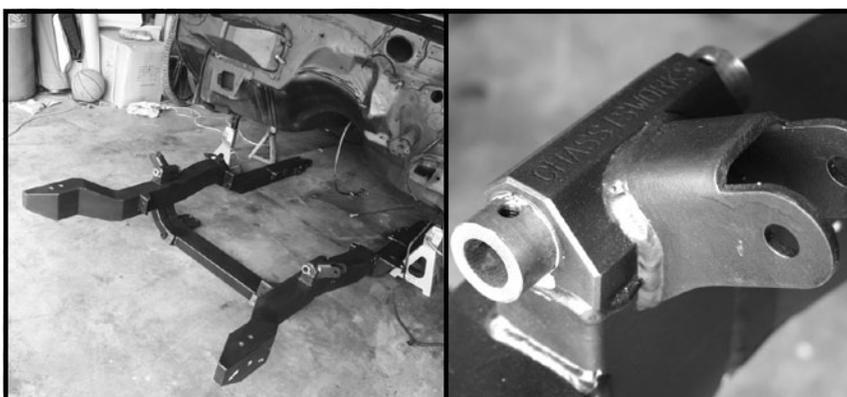


Shocks



NoFab Billet Steering Rack

Like we mentioned in the intro, the NoFab setup comes with a unique billet steering rack that features quite a few benefits for those looking to not only get more responsive steering, but also who may have some header clearance issues. Chassisworks' Jim Wright explained, "The first benefit is that this is a billet aluminum rack so it's lighter and stays cooler. Also, the big advantage is that you can rotate it. Because the way it's mounted, you can rotate the pinion up and down for more header clearance, u-joint angle, etc." Unlike most adapted Mustang II racks, this one is geometrically correct for the width of the Nova.



The Frame

The frame itself is made of 7-gauge mild steel, much like the same material the factory piece was constructed with, except this one is lighter without sacrificing strength. Wright explained, "The way it's designed, is it's actually laser cut, bent, and then welded together to make the structure. That's what also makes it a little lighter than your stock subframe, while making it stronger as well." The frame also features provisions that allow for subframe connectors, which Chassisworks offers as an option.

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Body Mounts

The name "NoFab" says it all, no fabrication needed. Years ago the damage done to our Nova would require many hours in a body shop and even after that, it probably would never be the same. The Chassisworks clip, however, is better than stock. Not only does the frame bolt up using the stock mounting provisions, it is laser cut, formed and welded out of 7-gauge steel. The clip also keeps the tire in the stock location, providing ample room for up to a 17"x8" front wheel with 4-3/4" back space and P225/45-17" tires. It uses the factory radiator core support and it bolts to the front clip just like your stocker. The front bumper, radiator, and grille will bolt back in the original location with the weld-nuts fabricated into the frame. It comes with all the suspension components to set the car in the ground, including the brakes. But one of the coolest options of the whole setup is Chassisworks' exclusive rack and pinion steering assembly. Unlike most aftermarket frontend systems, the NoFab clip can be purchased with an exclusive rack and pinion system, not a Mustang II rack. Years ago, guys would have to adapt a Mustang II rack to their early k-frames, but that isn't the right way to go since the steering geometry of the Mustang rack isn't correct for the wider early muscle cars. This billet rack, according to Chassisworks, is manufactured to match the suspension crossmember width, assuring you will have exact suspension geometry.

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► The NoFab setup comes with either polyurethane or solid aluminum **body mounts**. Since our engine should make tons of torque, we opted to go with the solid mounts to increase our Nova's rigidity.

► The upper and lower **control arms** of the NoFab clip feature tubular construction for lighter weight, and are fastened to the frame using trick rod ends. These are loads lighter than the heavy cast stockers.

VariShock Double Adjustables

When you buy the whole NoFab package you have a couple different choices in shock design; single and double adjustable. The double adjustable shock, which is adjustable for extension and compression, is designed for mostly for those looking to race in some form, where as the single is designed for more street driving. According to Wright, the single adjustable is, of course, adjustable and you can tune the characteristics, but not as infinitely as the double adjustables. They are constructed from aluminum, are powder-coated for corrosion resistance, and utilize polyurethane mounts. They also feature a threaded body to incorporate the coil over perch. This also allows you to adjust ride height.

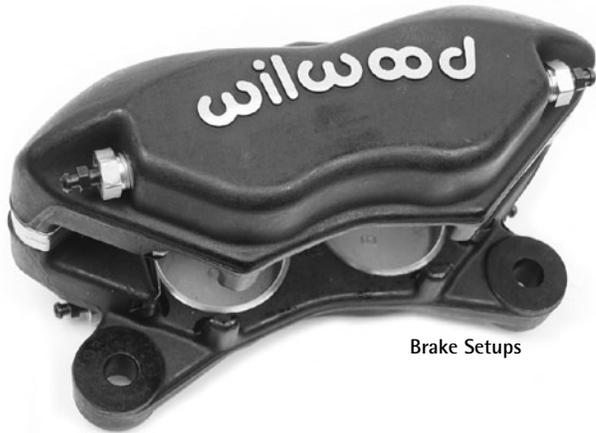


Control Arms

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Brake Setups



Mid-Plate and a Motor-Plate

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► Since we plan on driving the car on the street, we went with a set of Chassisworks' standard **brake setups**. It comes with Wilwood calipers and vented rotors to keep heat to a minimum.

You can also order all-out drag brakes that feature a lighter caliper and rotor assembly.

► Since our engine will possibly make a mountain's worth of torque, the folks at Chassisworks recommended that we use a **mid-plate and a motor-plate**. Stock style motor mounts wouldn't live very long under a big block with the kind of power we plan on making.

In this stage of our Godzilla buildup we will be exploring the individual components of the Chris Alston's Chassisworks NoFab front clip, including the brakes, control arms, steering rack, springs and shocks, and spindles. Also, the heart of our Monster, a 632ci big-block is currently at Pacific Performance as we type this, getting the necessary machine work done to house the massive rotating assembly. *FSC's* Godzilla project is underway. ■



The Brakes

There are a few options in brakes with the NoFab clip, everything for drag cars to g-machines, but we opted to go with the standard "Street Machine" setup. The system features polished billet-aluminum hubs with screw-on dust covers and have a dual pattern, both 4-1/2" and 4-3/4" bolt circles. Since these brakes are designed of for the street, the rotors are vented to keep heat to a minimum with 11.75-inch in diameter rotors that are .810" thick. Chassisworks also includes 2-1/2"-long studs with 3-inch studs as an option. All necessary bearings, seals and hardware needed for installation are supplied. The rotors feature curved gas-relief slots, which aid in braking. You have a choice of two popular, four-piston Wilwood calipers, which will fit most 15"-diameter wheels. The calipers come in a matte black or polished finish.



A Sneak Peak

Here's a shot of Godzilla's wicked Merlin III block getting dropped of at Pacific Performance. Plans are to stuff this thing with the internals to support crazy amounts of horsepower and torque and start "cruising." We've decided to go with a set of AFR's killer BBC heads, and although we are still undecided about what type of camshaft to go with, we really are starting to lean towards a hydraulic roller cam to keep maintenance down, and the power up. Whatever we end up with, you can bet it's going make a ton of torque and horsepower. Our guess is somewhere in the 750-800 horsepower range.