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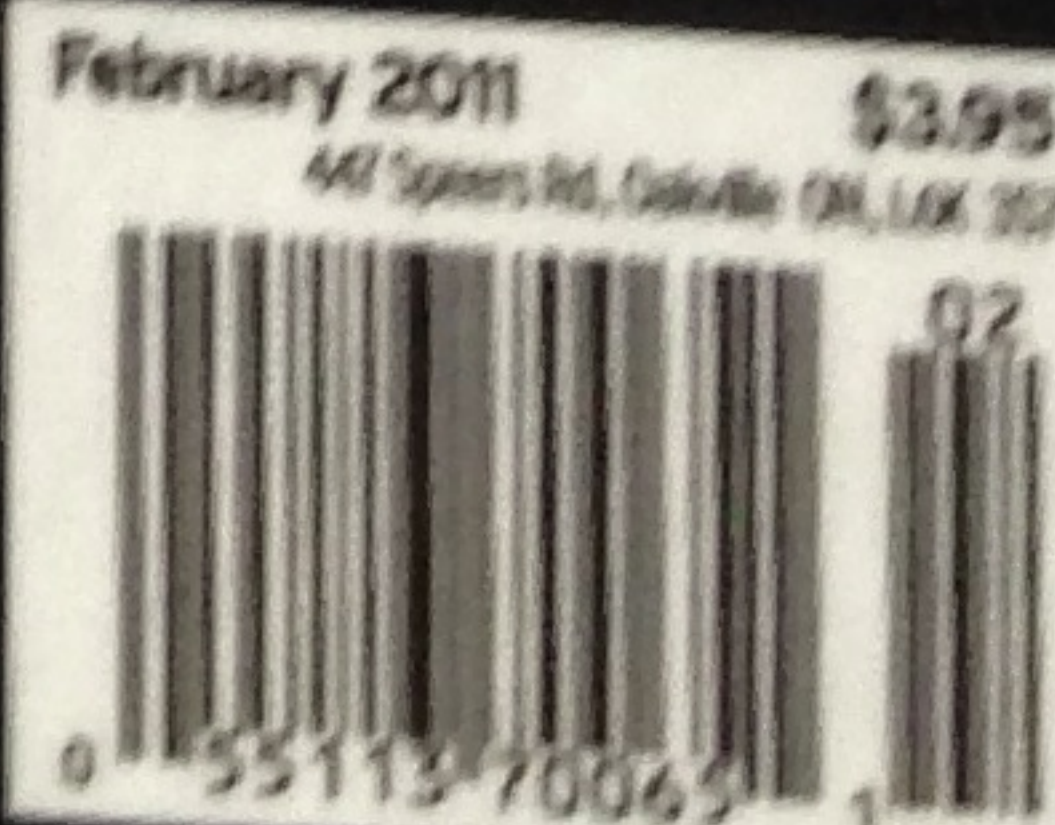


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By Michael Pistol

incomparable

This 1967 RS/SS Camaro gets an exceptional rebuild

When it comes to Camaros as a legend, the stories, passions and money involved run deep. With more than 4.5 million Camaros built since the car's introduction on September 29, 1966, many enthusiasts have fond memories of this vehicle.

As a kid, Tony D'Alessandro grew up watching a friend restore Camaros in his garage, and ever since, he always wanted one. When the opportunity arrived several years ago, the Newmarket, Ont. resident purchased an original RS/SS version of the most desirable Camaro of all time – the 1967 first generation. It didn't come cheap, but for about US\$18,000 he got a great, red-painted Colorado car.

The RS/SS version includes among other goodies, electrically operated headlight door covers, revised taillights, RS badging, non-functional air inlets on the hood, special striping and SS badging on the grille. Instead of tweaking with his new prized possession, he decided to look for a specialist.

The question quickly became how to find a shop that could handle

competently and completely a complex restoration process. Boot Hill Auto of Erin, Ont. was the choice.

Boot Hill Auto is far from your ordinary restoration business. The 26,000-square-foot operation has five different divisions and includes everything from panel and trim fabrication capabilities, on-site upholstery and paint station, a dedicated media-blasting booth and even a full dynamometer for performance analysis.



Yet again, this performance shop didn't happen overnight. Boot Hill Auto's president Blaine Schmidt is a determined man, perhaps hardened by his 12 years in the CFL where he played for the Edmonton Eskimos, Toronto Argonauts and Hamilton Tiger-Cats. For almost 20 years he also had the muscle car bug. He started collecting cars at his home, and when one thing lead to another, he decided to get involved full time in the muscle car business. Several years later, he and his team have become specialists for the Corvette, Mustang, Challenger, Impala, GTO, Chevelle and Camaro crowds. After a short visit at Schmidt's facilities, D'Alessandro's deal was sealed and the '67 Camaro was ready for resurrection.

As the metalwork goes, a new roof, firewall and rocker panels were installed, while the colour was brought back to the original Tahoe Turquoise metallic. It appears that only three per cent of that year's production (perhaps because this vehicle was built in December 1966 at the Van Nuys, California plant) was sporting that colour, which makes D'Alessandro's car a rare sight. As the bumblebee nose stripe was part of the SS package, it was only natural that it was included in the colour scheme.



The colour was brought back to the original Tahoe Turquoise metallic. Since only about three per cent of that year's production (built in December 1966 at the Van Nuys, California plant) that colour makes it a rare sight. The car was recently appraised at \$71,000.



The Camaro RS/SS came with a 350-cid (5.7L) V8 engine (displacement exclusive to the Camaro within the Chevrolet line that year), yet it was decided to upgrade to the ZZ4 350 crate engine, which was coupled to the existing three-speed Turbo Hydra-Matic 350 automatic transmission. The high performance ZZ4 350 crate engine comes with a forged steel crankshaft, hyper-eutectic pistons, hydraulic roller camshaft and lifters, and aluminum cylinder heads. A better stereo, wider tires, a conversion for the front brakes to disk (for safety) and a lightly tinted windshield were some of the few upgrades. The original upholstery was detailed and reinstalled, as well as a new headliner and carpets.



At the end of the process, the car was appraised to an astonishing \$71,000 – a relatively rare feat for such vehicle (220,906 Camaros were built for that production year). Not too bad for a car that sold originally for a mere \$2,572 U.S.



D'Alessandro, a property manager and knowledgeable stock market trader, stressed that the restoration process was, in fact, an all-inclusive family affair – his wife loves the car. "It was way, way over budget," he says laughing and a flexible budget was a requirement, of course. There are no plans to sell the Camaro, perhaps one day it will be passed to his son. No racing either – just cruising around.

"I wanted the car to stand out among against other '67 Camaros. I wanted an exceptional representation of what the car was supposed to be," he says.

Is he content? "I am thrilled with the work done. They treated me well, kept me informed and showed me where I could save when I wanted to. I'll definitely recommend this shop to other fellow enthusiasts," he says.

D'Alessandro plans to enter his '67 Camaro in some car shows and cruise in the Blue Mountain area of Ontario to see the changing of the leaves. "And maybe my wife and I will go down Route 66 for a ride with the local car clubs," he says. **W**

