



# THE FULL MONTY

Story and pics by Karl Burnett

**Hot rodding is a hobby that is often passed down through the generations; more often than not from father to son. But once in a while someone comes along who likes to buck the trend. Enter Chris 'Monty Jnr' Montague, who taught his dad everything he knows about cars. And together, they built one hell of a cool Camaro...**

Chris says the pair didn't so much share a passion for cars, but found themselves working a lot together on dad Alan's 1973 Triumph Stag due to the well-known British reliability. The Stag was eventually replaced with farm equipment, thanks to Monty Snr's part time gig of growing avocados and olives in the Coromandel (he promises it really is just avocados and olives). However Chris had his interest in cars piqued, and since that time he's taught himself a whole lot about the internal combustion engine. So much so in fact, that he has built one injected 304 and two other Chevy V8s from the ground up in his home garage.

Monty Jnr and Monty Snr both had fond memories of working on the old Triumph, so a few years back it was decided a project car was in order. So the hunt was on, and in 2014 Chris and Alan procured a 1973 Camaro rolling body with which to work their magic.

For the next year more research than physical labour would go into the project. If Chris and Alan were going to build a car, they were going to build it right. "We practically



interviewed several car painters and panel guys before we settled on Kayton Coughy and the guys at Real Rides," Chris says. "They had done a lot of feature cars for magazines, and talked us through the process."

It was paramount that whoever was tackling the panel work knew what they were doing as the donor car wasn't exactly in concours condition. "The doors were stacked in, the front quarters had had impacts and the subframe had been chopped to bits," Chris explains, "And it wasn't until Autoblast painstakingly stripped it back to bare steel that we saw how much bog there was in the front and in the doors." Fortunately the car hadn't succumbed to rust, so the original metal was pulled back out and straightened. The front fenders and valance were beyond repair so they were replaced with brand new OEM panels.

The original subframe was twisted beyond the point of salvage and Chris says someone had "hacked into it" to remove the suspension, so a new unit was purchased from Chuck's Restoration Supplies in Swanson. The subframe, along with the wheels, was blasted by C. A. Levien in Henderson and returned to Chris and Alan who painted it up on the avocado farm, along with all the applicable components.

The Camaro was also converted from automatic to manual, so Greg Riach from GR Engineering was set the task of modifying the crossmember and making sure the new cog-swapper mated up to the 350 perfectly.

Meanwhile Kayton and his team at Real Rides in Silverdale were working feverishly on the body. A new floor section of flooring was welded in to rectify the Fred Flintstone foot hole and the entire body was immaculately prepped and painted in what Chris has named 'balls to the wall orange'. No expense was spared when it came to the finish. Kayton spent more than eight hours intricately masking up the racing stripes which were laid down in gloss black before the entire car received several coats of clear.

Chris' third V8 build was to be the heart of the lion. At one stage he had three different engines in various states of construction in the garage. "It was like a mini V8 production line," he laughs. The first build found its way back into his VT Clubsport and the



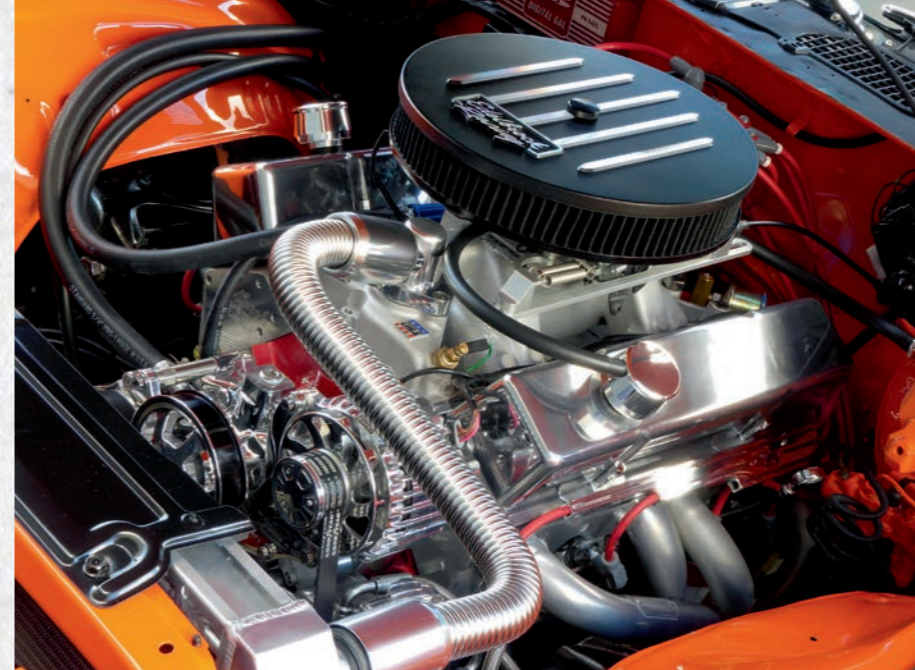
The rust-free California made Camaro arrives home for the first time to 'show Mum'. Originally the car left the factory with a black vinyl roof, deluxe interior and AC. The rolling body only had hints of the deluxe interior.



Above > March/April 2015. The original colour can be seen on some of the panels.

Left > A proud moment for the boys - the subframe was assembled to make sure everything fit, which it did. Chris and Alan then spent a weekend individually painting every component.

Right > Finally, a hint of what the final colour would look like. It took a while to convince Monty Snr that painting the engine bay orange would make the 350 stand out.



## NZR FEATURE: 1973 CHEVROLET CAMARO

Chris and Alan Montague, Auckland

### CHASSIS

**Frame:** Original Camaro subframe sourced from Chuck's Restoration Supplies. Modified crossmember for manual transmission conversion, no other structural modifications.

**Suspension:** KYB shocks with Lovell springs up front, Monroe gas struts and factory leaf springs in the rear. All adjusted and set up by Petermark Automotive.

**Brakes:** Slotted and drilled discs up front with Wilwood two-pot calipers. Hind end retains factory drums - rear discs are being considered as an upgrade.

**Steering:** Original factory-spec power steering.

**Wheels:** Steel Chevy Rallye rims front and rear, 16x8 and 16x10 respectively.

**Tyres:** BF Goodrich rubber - 205/55 up front, 255/50 out back.

### DRIVETRAIN

**Engine:** Owner-built Chevy 350. Bored 30 thou, crank standard, polished. Race cam and main bearings, flat top pistons with Hastings rings, retrofitted Edelbrock Rollin' Thunder hydraulic roller cam, COMP Cams hardened chromoly pushrods, COMP Cams Ultra Gold roller rockers, Edelbrock E210 64cc aluminium cylinder heads. Milodon high pressure, high volume oil pump. Edelbrock Thunder Series 800cfm carb sits on top of Edelbrock RPM Air Gap manifold. MSD electronic ignition. Summit Racing sourced Hedman headers flow into 2.5" dual exhaust system with balance pipe and Flowmaster mufflers; fabricated and fitted by Woolf Mufflers. Billet Specialties pulley kit to quench Chris' thirst for shiny things. Engine balanced to NASCAR specs by Peter at Auckland Balance Ltd.

**Gearbox:** Rebuilt five-speed T5 World Class cog-swapper.

**Rear end:** Factory Camaro 10-bolt diff.

### INSIDE AND OUT

**Body and paint:** Blasted back to bare steel by Autoblast, panel and paint carried out by Real Rides. Paint is pure colour with no pearl or tints and is lovingly labelled 'balls to the wall orange' by Chris. Gloss black racing stripes.

**Interior:** Fully restored to original showroom condition by Grant at Grant's Auto Upholstery with OEM black vinyl upholstery kit shipped from the US. Custom AutoMeter gauge cluster. Grant steering wheel with rosewood rim. All new carpets, headliner and upper dash.

**Audio:** Chris says there's no point as you wouldn't hear it.

### THANKS TO

Chris says he's extremely grateful to cousin Rob Pickup for teaching him everything he knows about cars. Rob also stored parts during the build and helped with many varied tasks. The Montys would also like to thank their 'WAGS' Virginia and Brittany for their support. Lastly, Chris and Alan can't say enough good words about Kayton and the team from Real Rides. "They're a professional bunch and they really back their work."





second was sold to fund the Billet Specialties pulley kit for the Camaro's freshly painted powerplant. "They call me Chris the Magpie," he says, "because I like shiny things". The engine doesn't just look good, either. Chris packed the donk with more hop-up options than a racing parts catalogue, including an Edelbrock Rollin' Thunder hydraulic roller cam, Comp Cams hardened chromoly pushrods and Ultra Gold roller rockers, flat top pistons and high compression 64cc heads. All things considered compression is around 10.4:1. Before the engine was put together the reciprocating assembly was sent to Peter at Auckland Balance Ltd who balanced it from the pulleys to the pressure plate, to NASCAR specifications. Chris is quick to admit he's not exactly sure what that entails but he does know the result is a thumping box of pistons that can comfortably scream to seven grand. Chris estimates the power output to be somewhere between 450 and 500 whinnies. "I'd really like to chuck it on a dyno and get it tuned properly. Then I'd know for sure," he says. Of course since the exterior of the car was so nice and shiny, the cabin required a bit of a spruce up too. The Montys ordered a new OEM interior from the 'States which included carpets, hood lining, seat foams and vinyl covers. Interior parts were all meticulously wrapped by Grant at Grant's Auto Upholstery in Glenfield, Auckland, and then sent back to Kayton for fitting. A new dash pad was also installed. Chris says that rather than explain what is new on the Camaro, it's easier to describe what isn't. "The only original parts on the car are the metal body from the firewall back, the hood and some of the lower dash trim," he says. Chris and Alan had originally fitted QA1 shocks that came over from the 'States with everything else. However, it soon became apparent that the lowered front springs were that little bit too low and the car was riding on the bump stops. Unfortunately the lowered stance resulted in the inside of the springs wearing away at the shock walls. Chris was hoping the shocks could be salvaged and took the car off to Petermark



Real Rides spent over eight hours masking the stripes. You can't even feel where the orange meets the black.

Automotive in Glenfield to be set up properly. Sadly the dampers had to be put out of their misery. A new set of KYB shocks were mounted up front and a pair of Monroe gas struts made their way into the rear. The guys at Petermark also fitted some new springs from Lovells, bringing the nose back up to a less suspension damaging level, but still retaining that aggressive 'crouching tiger' stance. After a 12-month build, Chris and Alan can finally enjoy the fruits of their labour (the Camaro, not the avocados) and both are totally smitten with the new ride. "I couldn't have done it without Dad," Chris says, "And my fiancé Brittany is happy to have me back, too. She's been a bit of a car widow." Chris says he drags his dad out to as many hot rodding events as possible and that they both drive the car whenever the sun is out on the weekend. He also entered the Camaro into the Teng Tools Grand National Rod & Custom Show and walked away with People's Choice and second place in Classic Coupe, netting a gigantic chest full of tools. "I had no idea there were prizes, I'd have been happy to just get a certificate!" Chris says. He had to call on his cousin Rob Pickup to come all the way from Dairy Flat to collect the prize from the ASB Showgrounds in Greenlane. And yes, that's Rob's real surname – how apt! Chris and Alan frequent the Caffeine & Classics event every month in Smales Farm, Takapuna and they're looking forward to hitting the Kumeu festival and the Beach Hop next year. The main event, however, will be Chris and Brittany's wedding, where the Camaro, Chris' VT Clubsport and Brittany's dad's '67 Mustang will all carry out wedding car duty. Here's to the happy couple.



Left > Another milestone was the final fitment of the 350 to the painted body. This meant the assembly of all the front panels could be finished and the stripes could then be masked and painted.

