



► This 427-Powered 1966 Chevelle Turns Heads

TEXT ROD SHORT PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



► ***“Now the car is tight. I can **drive it comfortably** and know it’s going to go where I want it to.”***

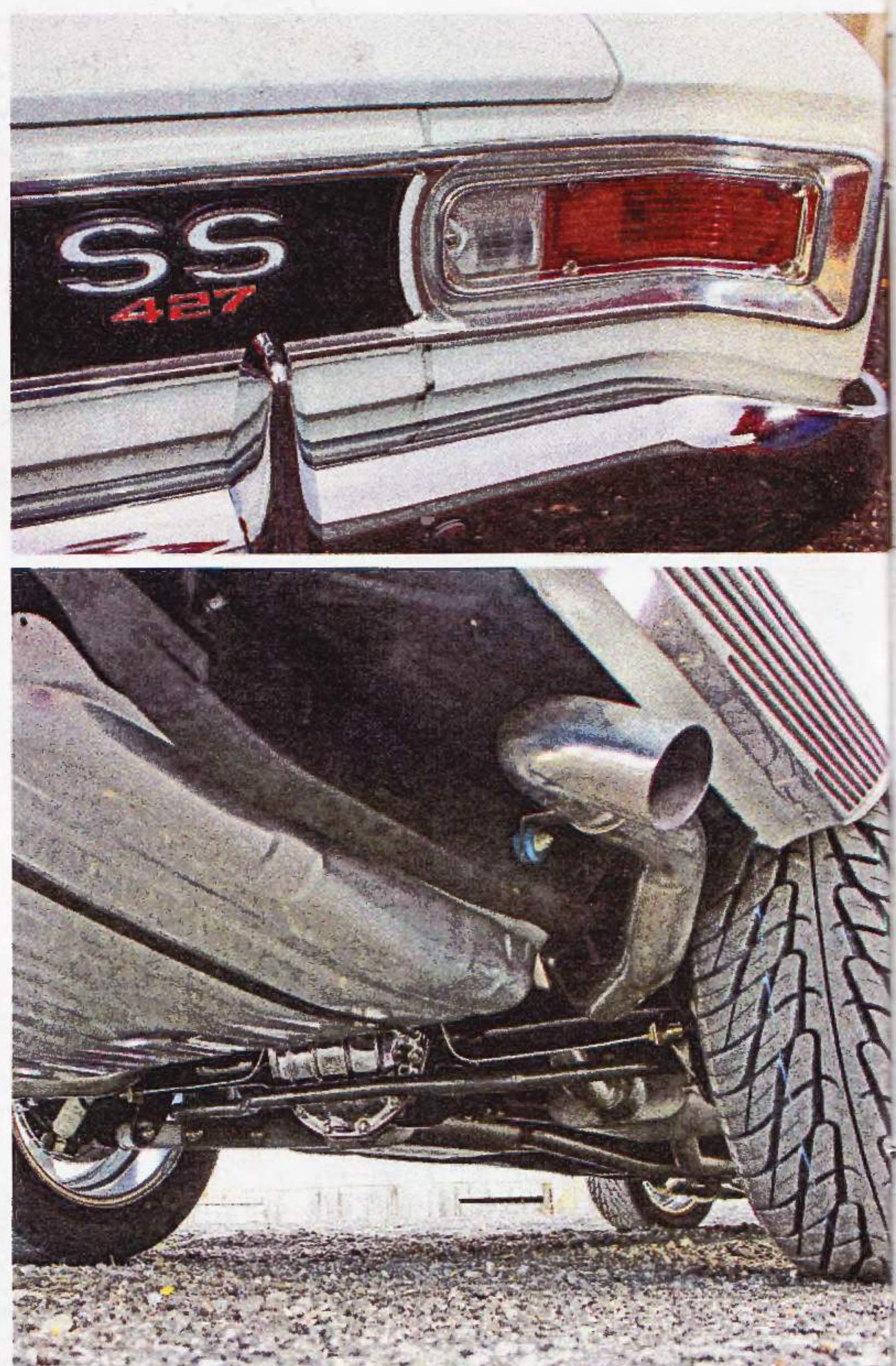
Ancient folklore in many ocean-going cultures tell of the siren’s song that charmed mariners with its hypnotic powers. During the golden age of muscle cars, the moan of a four-barrel carb in the evening’s distance had much the same effect. Danny Roddenberry remembered a similar call when he ran across this immaculate Super Sport Chevelle—and he’s been smiling ever since!

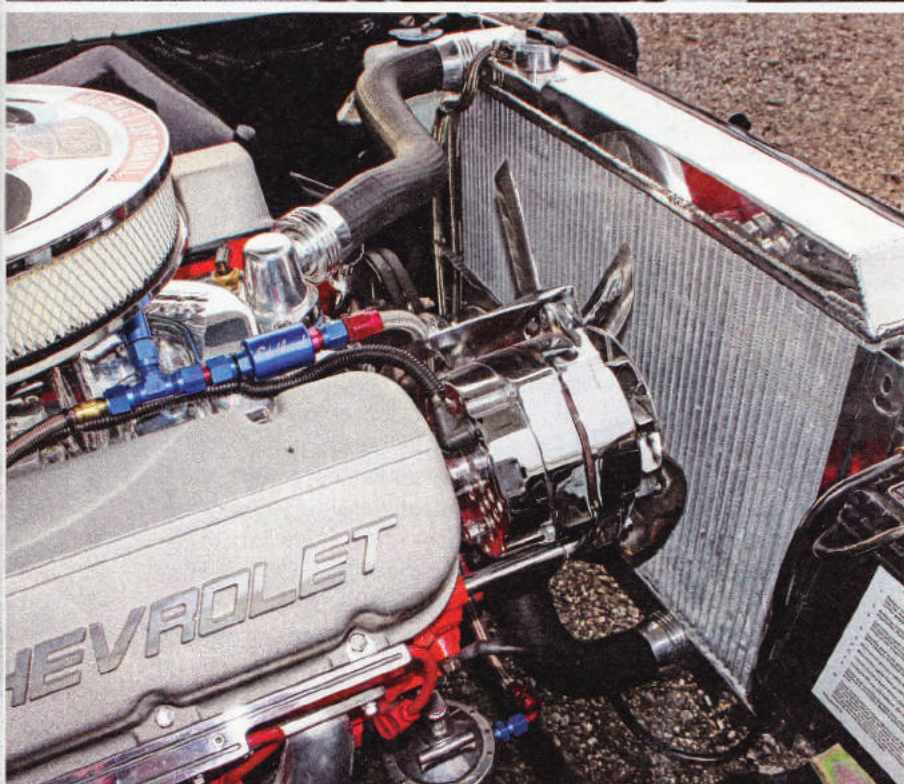
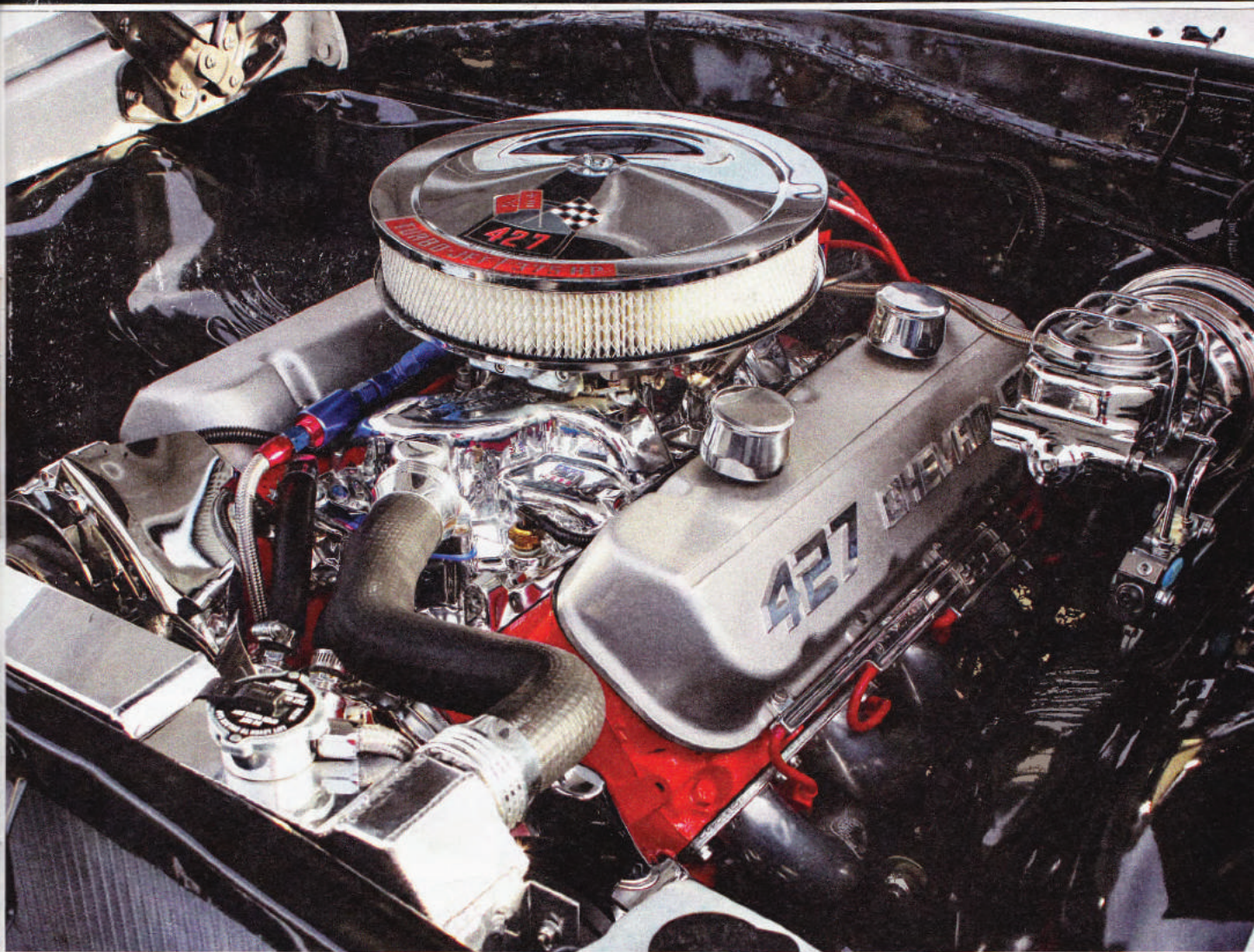
“I’ve been involved in cars for 42 years,” Roddenberry recalled. “Ever since I was 16. I bought a 1957 Chevy when I was 18 and still have it, but I really wanted a ’66-’67 Chevelle when I was in high school. I couldn’t afford it. In fact, none of us could back then. When I was 53, I saw this at the Charlotte Auto Fair in 2007 and it really struck me. It just really struck me. It’s just a car that I’ve always admired.”

Roddenberry wasn’t alone. Looking long, low, and mean, the 1966 Chevelle had all the right curves in all the right places with a slight coke-bottle shape—and the public liked it. When this all-new body style debuted in 1966, it sold almost 440,000 units in the United States alone, of which 75 percent were V-8 powered. That was the peak in cars sold to date until the next facelift, which happened in 1968.

Yet, as is the case with many classic car purchases, Roddenberry found there was still work to be done. While the bodywork and engine were great, he found that driving the car at speed down the interstate left a lot to be desired. As it turned out, the entire 40-plus-year-old stock suspension needed replacement, right down to the bushings and body mounts.

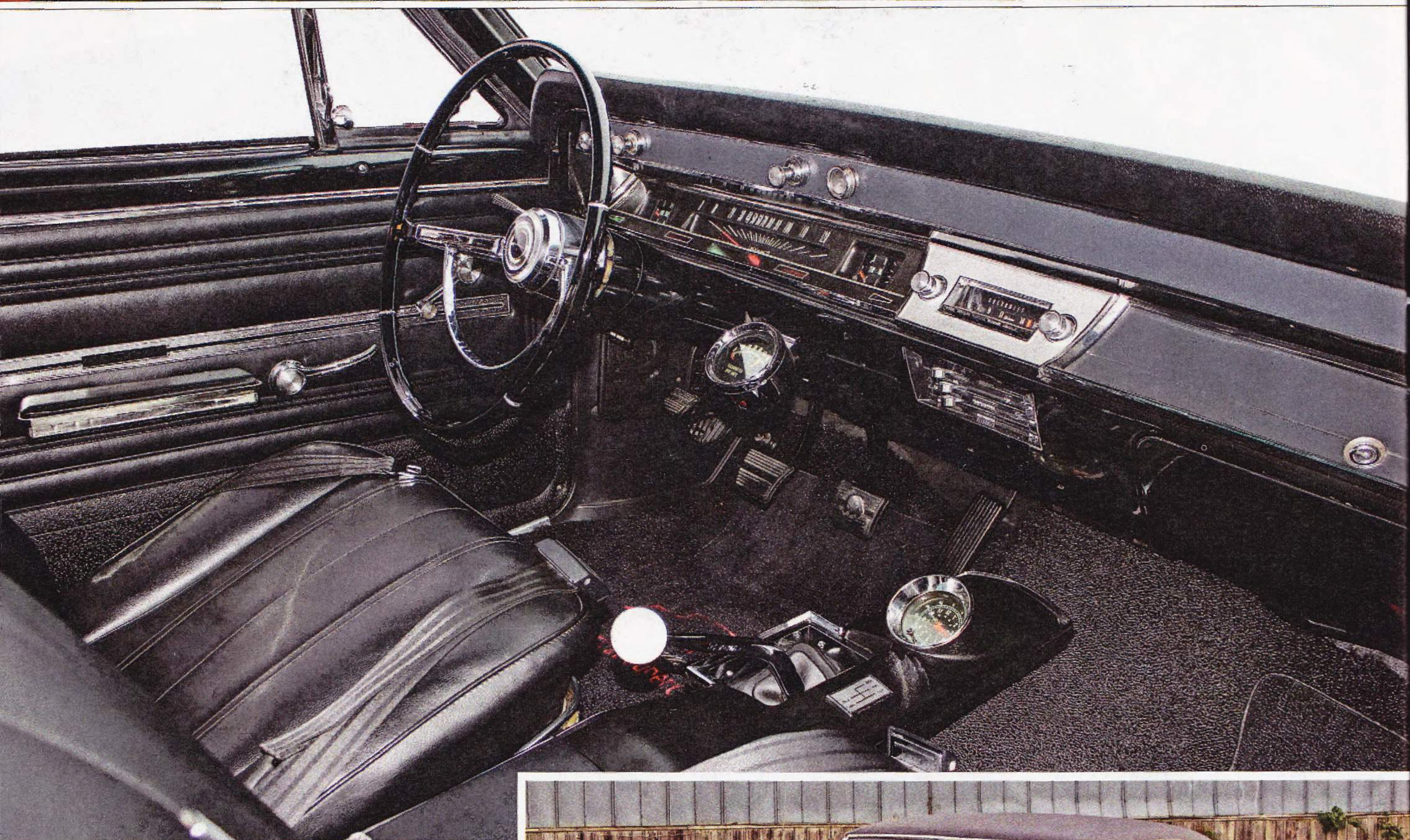
That, however, provided the op-





portunity to go with a Hotchkis Total Vehicle Big-Block suspension system. The combination of Hotchkis upper and lower control arms, sport coils, sway bar, tie rods, and all of the other assorted pieces resulted in a slightly lowered car that actually handles just as good as it looks. Roddenberry replaced the 10-bolt differential with a 12-bolt Posi-Traction rear with 3.73 gears and he also yanked the stock manual transmission for a new TREMEC five-speed. Classic Performance Products supplied the oversized disc brakes on all four corners of the car. Seventeen-inch Billet Specialties wheels wrapped in Nitto rubber provide just the right modern look for these classic body lines.

"It took me a long time to transform the car so it handles and drives the way I wanted it to," Roddenberry



said. "Now the car is tight. I can drive it comfortably and know it's going to go where I want it to."

Of course, handling alone isn't as much fun unless there's some power behind it. When these cars were new on the showroom floor, buyers had the choice of seven different engines and an assortment of different transmissions that provided over 20 different drivetrain combinations. While the L30 327 rated at 275 hp was a nice option for run-of-the-mill A-bodies, the Super Sport option with the L78 396, which pushed 375 hp, was the top of the food chain for production Chevelles then. With a forged steel crank, 11.0:1 compression, a Holley 4-barrel carb, and dual-exhaust backed by a four-speed, SS 396 Chevelles were serious muscle cars to be reckoned with.

Of course, Roddenberry's Chevelle sports an even more serious 427. Unlike the extremely limited production Z11 427 that debuted in 1963, the Mark IV 427 came out in 1966 Corvettes and fullsize Chevys, which made it period-correct for



this car. Available in either L36 or L72 configurations that year, the 427 would go on to become the stuff of legend culminating with the aluminum block ZL1 in 1969. However in 1966, the L72 was rated at a rather satisfying 425 hp, without any of the typical hot rodding parts and tricks that you know found their way under the hoods of many of these cars.

Roddenberry doesn't have much information on the 427 Turbo-Jet mill that came with the car when he bought it other than it's been tweaked with ancillary items such as a Demon 850-cfm carb, Hooker competition long-tube headers, and

a stainless 2.5-inch exhaust. Dress-up items such as a polished intake, ZZ427-style valve covers, Be Cool radiator, and chromed accessories provide an attractive competition look.

With its '60's vintage color combination and stock interior with the optional center floor console and instrumentation, Roddenberry's car has a look that harkens back to another place and time. On top of that, the noise that this big-block A-body creates has been known to travel far on some warm summer evenings. It's a siren song that still calls back a lot of really good memories.