

MODERN-DAY MONARCH

THIS SOUTHERN ROYALTY '57
BALANCES MODERN POWER AND
CLASSIC LOOKS

STORY BY PHIL SCHWARTZE | PHOTOS BY BETO MENDOZA





It's been called a lot of things: "Baby Cadillac," "King of the Short Tracks," and the two-door 150 model version that came with a fuel-injected 283 even earned the nickname "Black Widow," as it proved to be unbeatable and was eventually outlawed on the NASCAR circuit. No matter what you call it, the 1957 Chevy was a car that looked good in its day, went fast, and still shows no signs of going out of style. Chuy Barrera didn't overlook this fact when he picked up this Bel Air Sport Coupe on Craigslist.

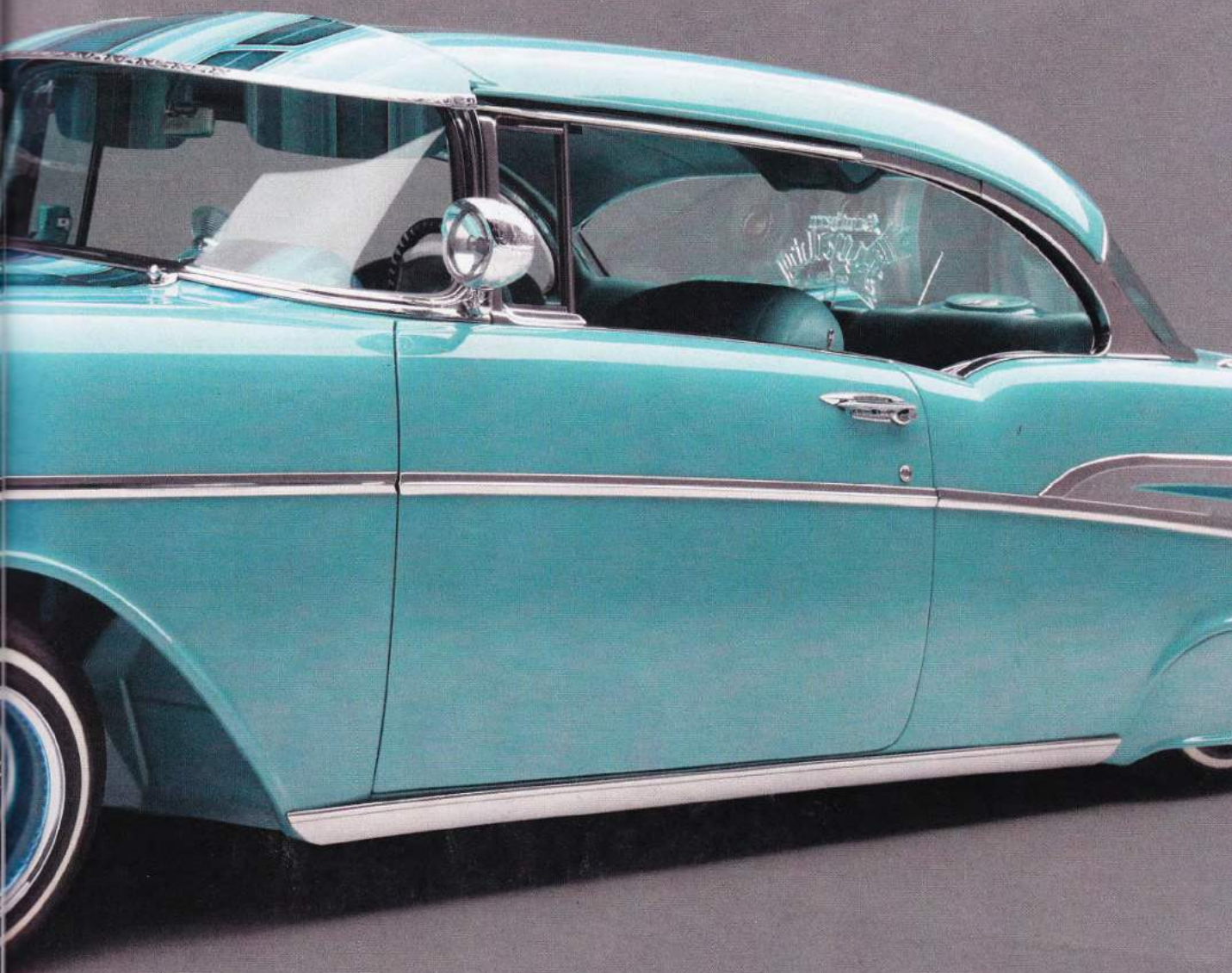
What Chuy bought was just a

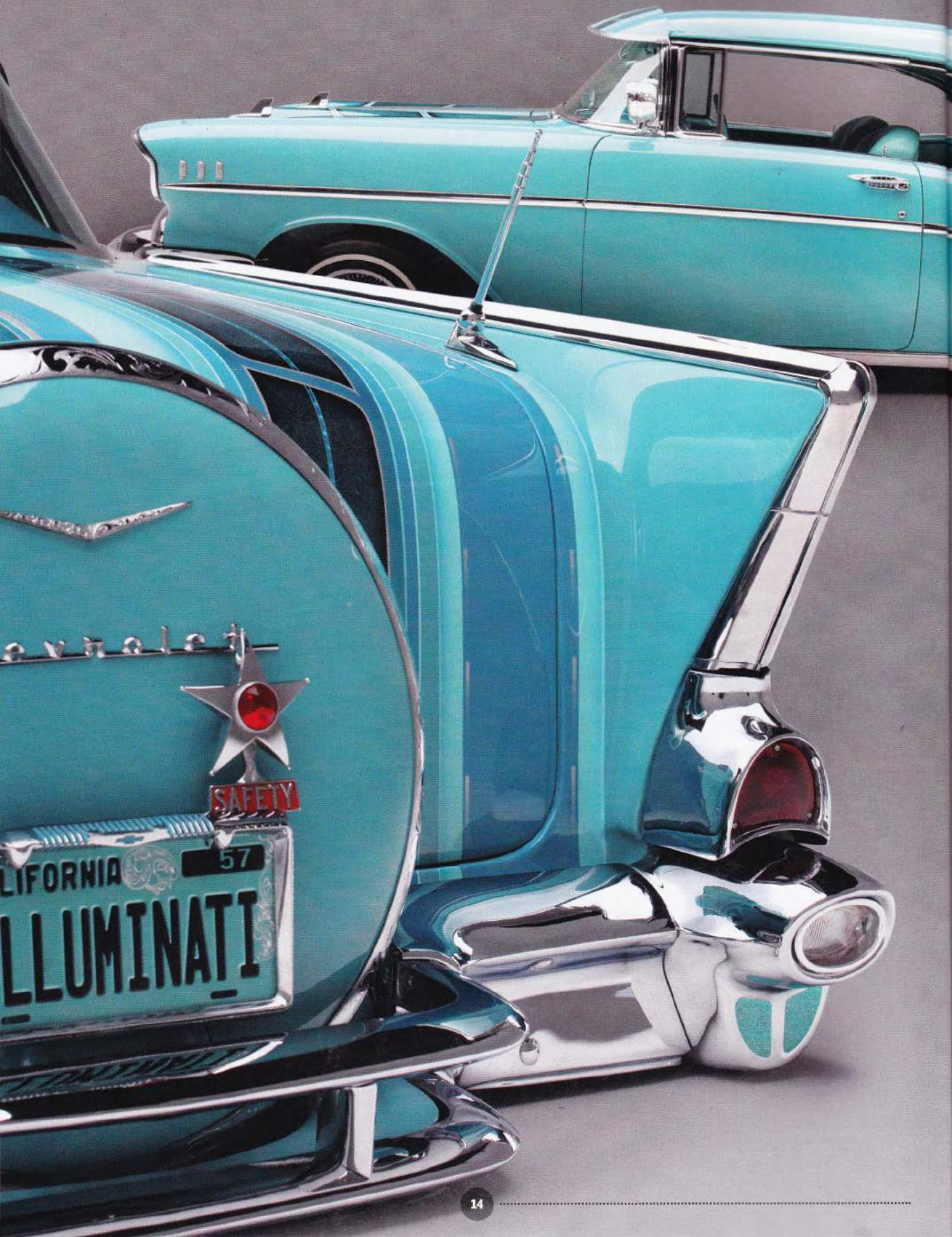
shell of a car. No interior, glass, or trim. So that situation, and the fact that the frame was reinforced, motivated him to go custom instead of a stock resto. One needs to be careful, though, when giving a '57 a bit of a new look. The end result definitely doesn't lose those atomic-age aesthetics, old-school lowrider traditions, and modern accouterments that don't detract from the car. So let's have a look at what's going on here.

Under the hood resides the heart of a Cadillac with a 2004 Escalade 6.0L V-8 with CPP headers,

Magnaflow mufflers, and a 4L65E transmission. It's all churning power to a four-linked Grand National rearend. CPP front and rear disc brakes bring the 100-spoke Daytonos to a stop. Two Hoppo pumps, three dumps, four solenoids, and four batteries manage all the juice with 8-inch front, and 14-inch rear cylinders. The car was tunneled and trunk cut out to make a bridge to bring everything down to terra firma. Chuy's friend Manny handled the suspension work.

The inside was another California Upholstery masterpiece with







1957 CHEVY BEL AIR

VEHICLE NICKNAME
Illuminati 57

OWNER
Chuy Barrera

CITY/STATE
Anaheim, CA

CLUB
Southern Royalty

ENGINE
Cadillac 6.0L V-8

INTERIOR
Lexus front seats with custom console and backseats by California Upholstery

SUSPENSION

Two Hoppos pumps, three dumps, four solenoids, and four batteries with 8-inch front, and 14-inch rear cylinders

BODY/PAINT

Bodywork and teal paint by Pollo. Engraving by Casteñeda Engraving. Patterns and pinstripping by Toker and Mike Lamberson.

SOUND SYSTEM

Pioneer double din, Polk 5.5-inch speakers

WHEELS/TIRES

100-spoke Dayton's / Premium Sportway 5.20s

NO MATTER WHAT YOU CALL IT, THE 1957 CHEVY WAS A CAR THAT LOOKED GOOD IN ITS DAY, WENT FAST, AND STILL SHOWS NO SIGNS OF GOING OUT OF STYLE.

Lexus electric seats, two custom backseats, and a custom center console done up in retro-inspired material. A Pioneer double din head unit keeps all the 5.5-inch Polk speakers loud and clear. Engraved chrome metal visors bring the outside ac-

cents by Casteñeda Engraving into the interior, along with the patterns laid down by Toker and Mike Lamberson. The Dakota Digital dash and billet steering wheel are also nice modern touches that help bring this Bow Tie into the modern age.

LOWRIDER DELUXE





LAST TRI-FIVE

Many consider the Tri-Fives to be the best era in Chevrolet's history. The '57 marked the final year for the trio and has since become one of the most iconic classic cars to ever exist. Believe it or not, Ford actually outsold Chevrolet for the 1957 model year in part because Chevrolet had tubeless tires, a new innovation that made many buyers wary of this break from tradition. Chevrolet introduced the 283 V-8, which began a 10-year production run, and in 1957 was offered in six versions, ranging from 185 to 283 hp. The Ramjet fuel injection was another introduction for the '57 model year and was offered as standard on the Corvette, but could also be opted for on passenger cars. A two-door Bel Air Sport Coupe like this weighed around 3,278 pounds, had a sticker price of approximately \$2,299, and was one of 166,426 built. A very rare El Morocco version was built in both 1956 and 1957 as a "poor man's Cadillac," but only a handful were made and command huge numbers from collectors.



Pollo got the body back into shape and laid down the traditional teal green paint. Chuy hunted down accessories to get it looking even better, such as the safety star, exterior visor, continental kit, color bar, compass, and spotlights that are also engraved. The brightwork done by Crown Polishing in Huntington Beach, California, gives this '57 the bling it had back when it rolled off

the assembly line.

Although Chuy wants to do a little more work to the hydros and trunk, the car is essentially done. Special thanks go out to Chuy's family, the Toma Brothers, Mike Dominguez, Southern Royalty Car Club, and everyone else who had a hand in putting the crown back on this automotive aristocrat. We're happy to see it back on the road.