

# RETURN



## AFTER YEARS OF BEING A RELIABLE DAILY DRIVER, THIS NOVA GOT THE RESTORATION IT DESERVED

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**O**ur love with the automobile has always been filled with certain degrees of passion. And, while that passion tips the scales of love and hate, it is what drives us. After all, we're car guys, right?

From late-night bloody knuckles, which seemingly always end in a volley of expletives, to those early sunlit weekend mornings where it's just you and your machine driving – somewhere

– it all seems worth it as you look at your tach and pull another gear.

Granted, there is a select group of car enthusiasts who'd rather build their car with a checkbook instead of their hands, but then there are the rest of us. It's this group who spent a majority of their youth watching others build their cars, slowly amassing a knowledge base sufficient enough to understand what it takes to restore, modify, or build something with your hands – and then there's Damien Jackson.

People like Jackson are a breed all their own. They share the passion, but have never put a hand on a wrench, yet one day decide it's time to take the hook, line, and sinker, blindly entering into a relationship with something they had no knowledge about other than it caught their eye. In the case of Jackson, what caught his eye was the 1964 Nova you see on these pages.

"My love for cars began in elementary school. I've always been into classic cars – the lines, the shapes. The guys who de-



# FAVOR



signed these cars from the '50s into the '70s were the greatest designers ever. What you see from this era is passion. More importantly, for me, are the lines of the cars, the beauty of the simplicity, is timeless."

While Jackson acknowledges his love-at-first-sight approach isn't too conventional, most can relate to the feeling. "I saw that car and it just set on me. I knew it was there and I couldn't get it out of my mind. I admired it from the very beginning. Even though I had no idea of where I would end up with the car, I knew I wanted it," he said.

After driving past the car for several days in West Los Angeles, the Hawthorne, California, resident decided to investigate further. "There was no 'for sale' sign on the car so on a whim I decided to leave a note on it asking if the car was for sale and see what happened," Jackson said.

A few weeks passed without a call. By this time, Jackson figured the car was a lost cause – then the phone rang. "I spoke to the gentleman and he asked me what kind of offer I'd make, but I didn't want to insult him so I asked him to tell me what he wanted. When he said \$1,200 I had a hard time containing

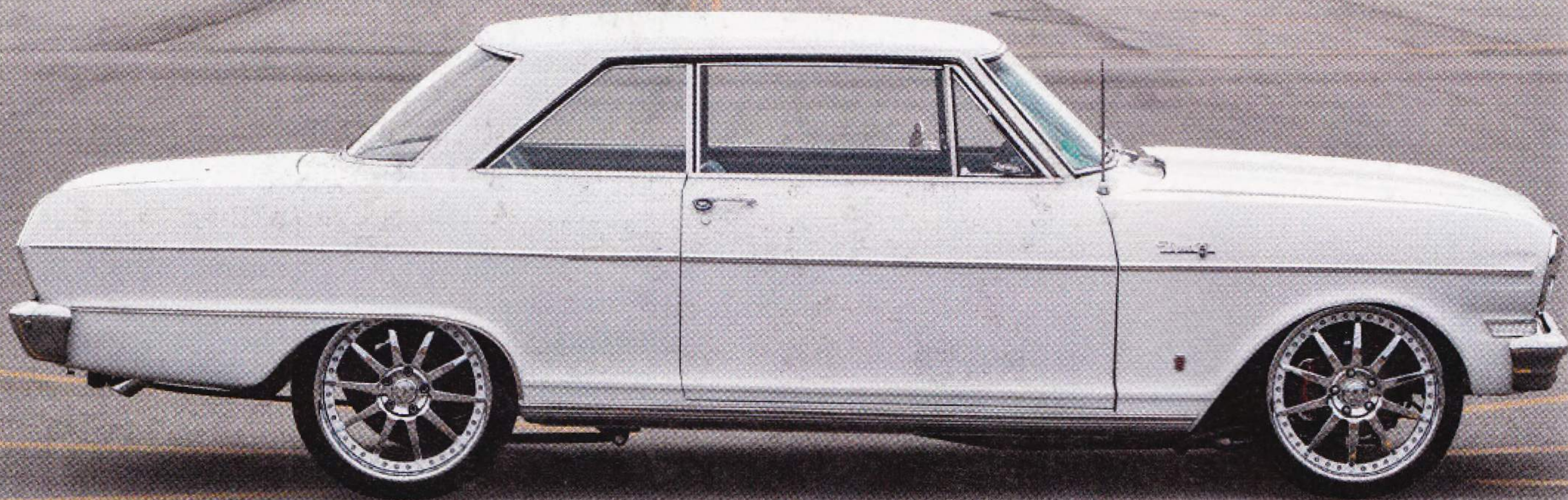


myself," a jubilant Jackson added.

The next day, Jackson and his brother picked up the car and the planning began. Suddenly though, Jackson was faced with the reality of having the car, without a clue of what to do with it. What do you do when faced with that situation? You drive it.

"I drove that car to work every day," Jackson said. At the time, he was a Los





to buy it back. This time though, he had a plan. What he didn't have, was experience. "Oh sure, I customized some stuff before, but wheels, window tint, and a stereo is nothing compared to the journey I was about to take," Jackson said. "Once I got into this, it was a whole new ballgame. When I stated to rebuild this car, all I had was a plastic toolbox with about 20 pieces in it. I was lost. There were times when I just wanted to give up, sell it ... whatever, to just get away from it," he said.

Like a lot of first-time builds, there were multiple times the wheels feel off Jackson's bus, but thankfully, like a lot of us, he had enough friends to help him through. "They kept telling me to get some tools," Jackson laughed. Over time he did, and soon the long nights out in the garage got a bit shorter as Jackson headed to the crest of a steep learning curve. He, along with the helping hands of the more experienced Erik Odem and Freddy Steger worked on the car for the next six years. "They laughed at me a lot, but in the end, they were the guys that really pushed me through this project. I know they let me make a few mistakes on my own, but saved me from a lot of other ones," Jackson said.

On the upside, Jackson says if someone were to ask him about a '64 Chevy Nova he can pretty much answer any question thrown at him. While he may not have had a clue on how to build the car, he knew what he wanted, and despite resistance for some of the choices he made, he stayed true to his vision. The first question he's often asked is

about his choice of colors – red, white, and blue. He says, the idea actually wasn't born from his patriotism.

"The car was white to begin with, the interior was roughly the same color you see now and I liked it. All I did was jazz it up a bit. The red is all about power. It's associated with sports and performance. As the car moves, the spokes on the wheels are far enough apart they almost become invisible. What you see while it's in motion are the calipers, the brake rotors, the upper and lower control arms, and the springs. All of the things under the hood can be seen through the wheels while the car is in motion. It would have been a shame to not see those parts – the car would be bland. I wanted the car to have some life and expression as it was being driven, by doing what I did, it isn't bland," Jackson said.

The mission of the finished product was to blend many different car culture elements together into one ride, and Jackson feels he was successful in doing that.

"There's a little bit of lowrider, street car, and drag car in this. If you look closely to the car, you'll see them," he added.

Like any project, Jackson still sees room for improvement, but considering where this build started and where it stopped, he surely can be proud of his efforts. "Sure, there are a few things I would do different, but all in all, I think the car represents what my vision was – especially for a freshman build," Jackson said.

## WHAT MAKES IT GO

### ENGINE

Builder: Erik Odem  
Type: SBC  
Displacement: 406 ci  
Compression: 10:1  
Block: Factory 400 casting  
Rotating Assembly: Eagle crank and rods, JE pistons  
Cylinder Heads: AFR 195  
Camshaft: Custom roller cam  
Machine Work: Vellios Machine Shop  
Induction: Edelbrock Air-Gap intake manifold and Demon 750-cfm carburetor  
Ignition: MSD  
Exhaust: TCI headers, custom 2.5-inch exhaust, Borla mufflers  
Horsepower: 500 [estimate]

### DRIVETRAIN

Transmission: TH400  
Differential: Rebuilt 10-bolt with Detroit Locker and 3.08 gears

### CHASSIS/SUSPENSION

Front Suspension: TCI front clip with tubular control arms, antiroll bar, 2-inch drop spindles  
Rear Suspension: CalTracs bars and springs  
Steering: Flaming River steering column, rack-and-pinion conversion  
Brakes: CPP 10.5-inch disc brakes with master cylinder and booster  
Wheels: SAF forged-aluminum wheels, 19x8.5 front and 19x10 rear

### INTERIOR & EXTERIOR

Interior: Suede and vinyl interior by Amadeus Upholstery  
Gauges: Dakota Digital dash  
Air Conditioning: Vintage Air  
Wiring: Painless Wiring kit installed by BMP  
Wiring  
Bodywork: George Gray  
Paint: GMC White sprayed by Freddy Steger