



SWAPPING DRUMS FOR DISCS ON A HIGH-TECH NOMAD

By Chris Fesler

If you have ever owned a car from the '50s, then you are probably aware of its need for better acceleration and inherent lack of braking prowess. Most, if not all, cars from the '50s were equipped with bulky drum braking systems. They provided only the most basic function, to stop.

Today, however, with more companies creating disc brake upgrades, the old drum system is neither popular or safe. Classic Performance Products is one of the companies which specializes in drum-to-disc brake conversions. We called on them to help us with 12-volt leader Audiobahn's '55 Chevy Nomad, which was weighed down with a couple thousand pounds worth of stereo equipment.

These cars are already heavy, but the extra weight made the drum braking system a safety hazard.

We took the car to Ballistic Motorsports in Mission Viejo, California, for the installation. Having feared that the install would be time consuming and confusing, we were delighted when, after only two hours, we were on our way.



The front braking system looked exactly like the rear. a big drum. This system is not exactly up to today's standards for braking power and safety.





The first step was to remove the drum cover. This piece is what protects the components responsible for your braking.



Next, the retaining clips which hold the drum pads in place needed to be removed as well. Using a set of needle nose pliers, we carefully removed the clips and discarded them. We would not require these items with the new components.



Once the retaining clips had been removed, the shoes were taken off and discarded. The cotterpin was slipped off, and the wheel adapter was pulled. All of these components need to be removed all the way down to the bare spindle.



The backing plate was held on with four Bolts along with the attached steering arm. both of these parts needed to be removed.



The new bearings did not come pregreased. Therefore we had to use a high-temperature grease to ensure every piece was lubricated. If this step were avoided, the bearings would seize up and fall apart.



Since we were dealing with a 16-year-old braking system, there was a bit of cleaning to do. Standard brake cleaner was used to clean away any



Our new brakes came from the factory with a coating on them that would not benefit our braking performance. We used a brake cleaner to help remove this coating.

old grease along with old brake residue that collects in the crevices.



To keep things looking nice and new, black spray paint was used to improve the look of the stock spindle.



To keep things turning smoothly, an extra coat of grease was applied to the spindle shaft.



The next step was to install the grease-packed wheel bearings into the rotor. After the bearings were placed, they were followed by the grease seal. The seal prevents any dust or debris from getting into the bearing.



Next, the caliper bracket was mounted to the spindle. We used the supplied spacer and hop to secure it. At this point we did not tighten the bolt, only snug fit it.



With the installation just about finished, the rotor was attached to the spindle with the bearing retaining washer and spindle out. With the



Since the Brake lines were at least 20 years old, we took the liberty of replacing them with new ones.



Finished rotor, caliper and lines.



The capacity of the old master cylinder wasn't big enough to supply the proper amount of pressure for the new disc brakes. Classis Performance Products supplied a new, larger volume master cylinder.

rotor in place we checked for proper clearance between the rotor and the mounting hardware. With everything in check fire rotor was tightened, and the caliper was installed on the new bracket.



The original master cylinder was removed and replaced with the new, larger unit. Once everything was installed properly, the entire system had to be bled to ensure that there were no air bubbles. With the new master cylinder in place, we called it a day and packed up.



It's always best to have shop and assembly manuals on hand to make sure your installation is correct and to make the project as easy as possible. We recommend factory manuals, available at [Greg's Automotive](#)

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