

FOUR TO FIVE



PERFORMANCE SUSPENSION & NEW ROLLERS ON OUR '63 NOVA

There's nothing high performance about the early Nova's stock front suspension, and after driving our well-worn '63 to work for a few months, we could see why people have famously cursed the front ends of these cars for years. The aftermarket, however, offers solutions to these antiquated front suspension designs with some bolt-on kits that can drastically improve your Nova's braking and handling. There are basically two types of frontend conversions for the '62-65 and '66-67 Novas: a full clip that gets rid of the shock towers and bolts in place of the stock subframe (the front half of the factory frame can unbolt on early Novas); and the type we installed, which uses a large bracket that attaches to the stock frame and allows you to bolt up a more conventional lower control arm and coilover assembly under the car.

We opted for Classic Performance Products Mini Subframe Kit (PN 6267PTK-2) and a Complete Front and Rear Disc Brake Kit (PN 6264FRBK-D) for our hardtop Hellion Nova, which includes CPP's 11-inch disc brakes, 2-inch forged drop spindles, and all necessary hardware. Our goal was to not only improve performance, but we also liked the ride height adjustability of the coilover. New disc brakes for all four corners not only meant

better braking, we'd be able to eliminate the four-lug hubs for the proper 5x4.75-lug pattern we'll need for the wheels we're running. The zinc-plated, drilled discs measure 11 inches so we can fit popular drag tire sizes.

Rocket Racing sent us a set of 15x6 rollers from their Fuel line (PN R23-566135), which features a classic five-spoke design that adds a nice touch of nostalgia to the car. The Rockets are wrapped in a set of Nitto's Neo Gen tires (205/50). Unfortunately, tire size is severely limited on early Novas, so unlike a lot of the cars you see in this magazine that have extra-wide meats on all four corners, the Hellion Nova will have to settle for a smaller set of rollers. The wheelwells on these early X-bodies simply don't have the real estate to allow anything larger than a 215, and some say even that's pushing it. If we were to remove the stock frame and shock towers with a whole front clip upgrade we could run larger fronts, but since this will be a street/strip drag car, we're only concerned with fitting a wider tire out back.

Installing the CPP Mini Subframe Kit and Big Brake Kit was something we'd do in our garage at home. Although we had the luxury of using a lift in the Source Interlink Tech Center, the whole installation was very doable, even for a hobbyist.



A combination of these two kits from CPP will transform our scary-stopping, rickety ride into a performance-minded muscle machine. Increasing safety is also a benefit to consider when upgrading to a kit like this.



Installation of the Mini Subframe setup starts with the removal of the cotter pin and castle nut that attaches tie-rod ends to the spindle.



Once the shock is unbolted from the tower (under the hood) and the control arm bolts are removed, the stock assembly literally falls out with some coaxing from a mallet.



This kit eliminates the stock strut rods and stock lower control arms. This old design was fine for '60s standards, but today we have better options.

Before you can install CPP's lower control arm bracket (which bolts using factory holes), it was necessary to clean up the holes with a drill.



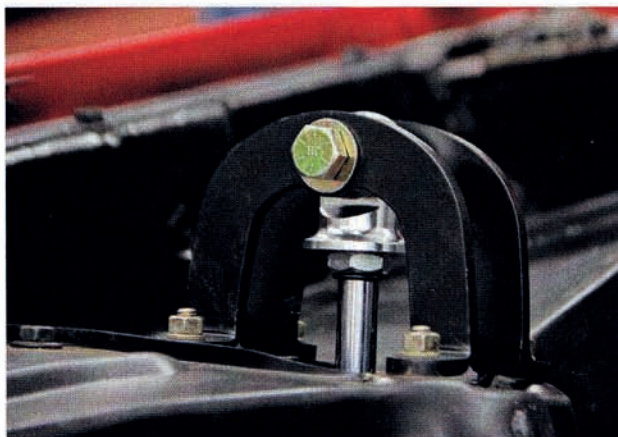
FROM FOUR TO FIVE



The bracket that mounts under the car has the provisions needed to use a more conventional A-arm, which is worlds better than the single bolt, stock control arm. The four empty holes in the front get bolted to the radiator support, but we had previously removed ours to make removal of the inline-six engine easier and in preparation for an aluminum support.



The kit comes with these very trick, single-adjustable shocks from QA1. The adjusters (the black, slotted rings) in this photo are actually upside down; we flipped them prior to the install.



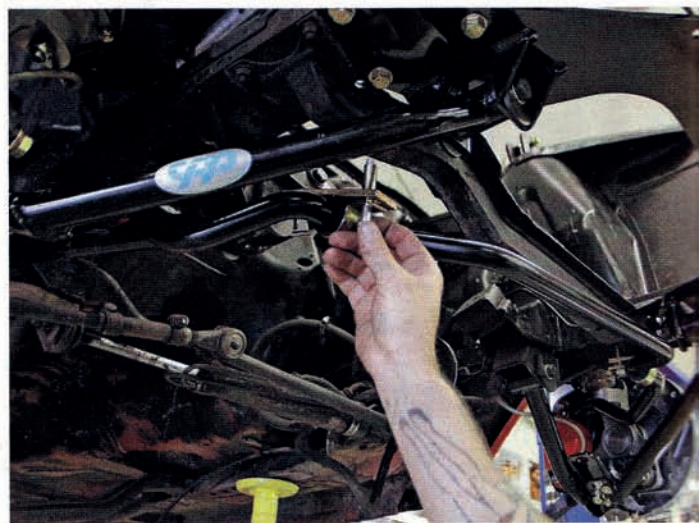
The factory shock tower mounts get totally removed to make way for billet steel pieces that hold the QA1 shocks.



With both the new shock tower brackets and lower control arm bracket in place, our Tech Center manager, Jason Scudellari, positioned the CPP control arms into the appropriate slots.



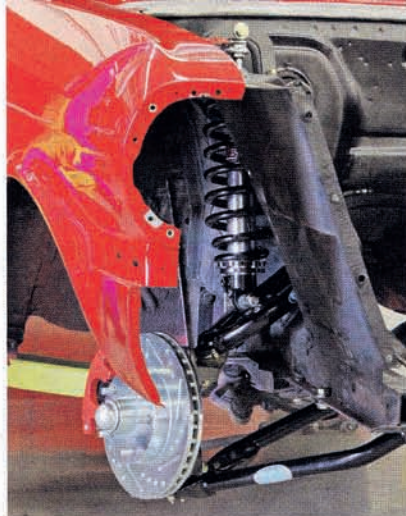
The 11-inch, zinc-plated, slotted and drilled disc assembly came ready to be dropped onto the ball joints. We went with CPP's dropped spindles and big-bore caliper brakes for this project.



The sway bar was also an easy install and uses the factory boltholes for mounting.

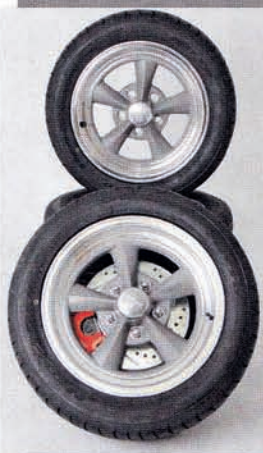


Here's a shot with the Mini Subframe kit fully installed. You can also order this in a gray powder-coating, but we opted for shiny black. You'll notice we didn't address the steering components on this project yet, that will be coming up in another article.



Although the coil spring and shock is still on top of the control arm (not the best design for performance), the added rigidity and overall increase in sturdiness of this setup is much better than the squishy rubber and flexible stamped stock stuff. **CHP**

NITTO'S WRAPPED 'ROUND ROCKETS



It was pointed out to us that our wheel and tire selection for this project is a little unique since we're running a nostalgic-looking wheel with a modern tire that's generally seen on imports: the NeoGen. Whether that's the case or not, we really like this combination.



Another reason we like the NeoGen tire is its tread design. This is an all-season, high-performance radial with a 280 treadwear that's designed to have a comfortable ride in all weather conditions, making it perfect for our street-driven Chevy II.

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With the front suspension and brakes bolted on, we could finally lose the rusty steel wheels and worn-out radials. In an upcoming story we'll address the rear suspension and brakes when we hoist up a beefy rear axle.