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Street Smarts Part 1

With Only Bolt-on Suspension Parts, Heidts Offers Modern Handling for Your Classic Camaro

•To us there's nothing cooler than a finding an untouched classic Camaro. Unfortunately, the nostalgia we feel while gazing upon all the original goodness can get squashed once we jump behind the wheel and hit the open road. Yeah, we know that people drove these cars cross-country with no problem back in the day, but the driving characteristics of today's modern cars have spoiled us. Vague steering that's way over assisted, mushy suspension that darts about the road, and brakes that pucker you up every time they're



needed in a hurry are all aspects of the classics that we would rather ditch. Thankfully, the aftermarket is thick with parts designed to make our old Camaros as much fun to drive as they are to look at.

Heidts is one such company churning out suspension widgets for our Camaros, and they even offer kits that boast completely bolt-in installation. But how a Camaro drives down the highway is more than just the sum of its suspension parts. It's also how well it steers and stops. For these, we grabbed a wallet-friendly steering kit from Classic Performance Products (CPP) and one of the new affordable brake kits from the guys over at Wilwood. But, before turning a wrench, we baselined the bone-stock '67 RS at our testing facility. And to make things fair, we tested the car on the stock rally wheels, and once again with aftermarket YearOne 17-inch wheels (wrapped in Mickey Thompson Street Comp rubber) we'll be eventually putting on the car. That way you'll know what the new suspension and steering parts really bring to the party.





Nothing remarkable here, just 45-year-old stock suspension parts along with some tired drum brakes. Before tearing the car apart, we baseline tested the Camaro's handling and stopping. We won't give away the gory details until part two, but let's just say it wasn't very good.

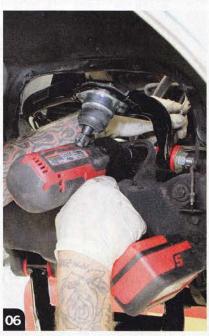
O2 No need to dwell on taking the old junk off the car. The toughest part was busting the upper and lower ball joints loose after removing the shocks. Since we didn't have a fork, we simply loosened up the nut and then applied a few hard whacks with a large hammer. Here's the area vacated of old parts.

HEGH



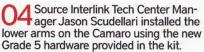












O5 Like the lower arms, the uppers (PN CA-301-N, \$415) came powdercoated, assembled, and ready to rock. We decided to try the narrowed version since it would be nice to run wider front tires in the future.

Of the upper arms were secured to the factory subframe using the existing knurled studs and new locknuts.



O7 The Heidts kit also came with a pair of 2-inch drop Pro-G tall spindles (PN SP-110, \$315). They're called tall because the upper ball joint is raised 1.5 inches. They are designed to yield better camber change during suspension travel and are steel for extra strength. They came in bare metal so we made sure to rattle can them to prevent rust.

As you can see, the new coilover spring is nothing like the old stocker we removed. Large at one end to fit in the frame's spring pocket, the conical design is the easiest way to get coilovers in a Camaro. These 11-inch springs (PN CQ-450-11, S150) have a rate of 450 lbs., which is what Heidts suggests for a car with a small-block engine.

O9 The single-adjustable billet shocks (CB-130, PN \$359) are fully adjustable for both compression and rebound.

















10 We could then install the new coilover shocks and connect the control arms to the painted spindles. To install the shocks, we had to remove the knobs, put the shocks into place, and then reinstall the knob assembly.

11 The only parts reused from our stock suspension and steering were the steering arms. A little scrubbing, some paint, and they were installed using the new Grade 8 hardware. We also made sure to dab some thread locker on the bolts before putting them in place.

12 The new, hollow front sway bar should help tame the excessive body roll our Camaro had through the slalom.

13 OK, we know the stated goal is to build a nice street machine on a workin' man's budget, but Wilwood really wanted us to try their new wallet-friendly Superlite 6R front big-brake kit (PN 140-12271, \$1,200). To keep the cost down, the hat and rotor are one piece and the design of their new forged six-piston caliper helps drop the cost as well. So, for just a few hundred bucks more than their previous "budget" front four-piston brake system you get the benefits of six-piston stopping power.

14 The first step in getting the Wilwood brakes on the car was to install the radial mount brackets onto the Heidts spindles. Again, a few drops of thread

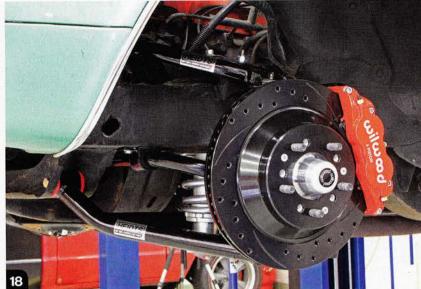
locker were used on the fasteners.

15 We then installed the ½-inch wheel studs into the billet Wilwood hubs. Before running them through, we hit the threads with a little anti-seize.

16 The slotted and drilled rotors were then secured to the hubs using three countersunk fasteners. With the rotors secured, we packed the wheel bearings with grease and installed them along with the Timken seals. The old castle nuts are reused to install the hub assemblies, so don't toss them out.

HEGI

















17 Using the supplied Wilwood shims, we got the radial-mount six-piston calipers centered on the rotors. We then used more shims (two per a mounting point) to get the edge of the pad lined up with the edge of the rotor. Once aligned perfectly, we secured the bridge bolts.

18 And with that our front suspension was done. Once the Camaro hits the road the black E-coat on the rotors will wear off where the pads sweep but will protect the other areas of the 12.88-inch rotors from rust.

19 There's more to handling than suspension so we decided to replace all the Camaro's tired steering components, including the centerlink, with a new Moog kit (PN 67SLK-CP, \$349) from Classic Performance Products (CPP). We also added a pair of their aluminum tie-rod sleeves (PN ES350SP-A, \$69).

20 Since we're running the narrowed Heidts control arms, we also needed to run their shorter outer tie-rod ends since the stockers would cause excessive toe-in. They were included in the kit from Heidts.

21 The Camaro's stock steering was crazy light and provided zero feedback. To tighten up the steering response,

we grabbed a CPP 500 series 14:1 closeratio box (PN CP50004, \$379). With the CPP rag joint (PN RJC-730R, \$49), it simply bolted up in place of the stocker.

22 We test-fit the 17-inch YearOne wheels and found they easily cleared the new six-piston Wilwood binders. This is also when we realized we needed new lug nuts since our wheels studs were now 1/2-inch.

23 The Camaro's poor braking performance certainly wasn't helped by the manual master cylinder. Besides, it wouldn't work right with our new four wheel discs.

24 The fix came in the form of this 11-inch booster and master cylinder assembly from CPP (PN 6769BB4-11, \$299) and a vacuum hose kit (PN VHK2-25, \$12). This came set up and ready to go for our drum-to-disc conversion. We also picked up a new brake line kit (PN 6769LK-OM, \$79) since it was way easier than bending up new line. With these parts installed, we were done with the front.

In the next issue we'll tackle the rear suspension and then hit the track to see how much improvement the new parts were worth.