

THE CAMARO AND THE CYCLONE





RIDES

How Rex and Patti Van Dyke's Camaro outran a certain fate ... twice

✦ TEXT: **Chris Shelton** | PHOTOS: **Grant Cox**

➤ **We're all used to** close calls in one form or another, but this one takes the cake. Rex and Patti Van Dyke found a 1969 Camaro in a Tulsa, Oklahoma, field. They tracked down the owner, and not a moment too soon as the car already had a date with the crusher penciled in. In hindsight, scrapping doesn't seem so extreme; though the car looked solid from the initial inspection, the teardown revealed extensive damage. "It needed a total restoration," Patti says.

What remained of the carcass went to CJ's Hot Rods and Auto Body in Shawnee, Oklahoma, for mediablasting and new sheetmetal. Though rod builders at heart, "Mike Johnson and D.T. Tarrant took on the job as a means to broaden their horizons and build upon their skills," Rex reveals.

They replaced the floorpans and, in anticipation of greater power, mini-tubbed the rear wheelwells. In the meantime, Rex, co-owner of R&P Machine Shop with his wife, Patti, rebuilt the 12-bolt axle with 4.11:1 gears and a limited-slip gear carrier.



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He paired the axle with a set of Detroit Speed Inc. 3-inch dropped springs and, for tire clearance, offset shackles. The front subframe went together with stock-height steering knuckles, CPP control arms, Hotchkis 3-inch springs. A pair of KYB Gas-a-just monotube dampers control the motion up front; Koni adjustables lend the rear a touch of tuning capability.

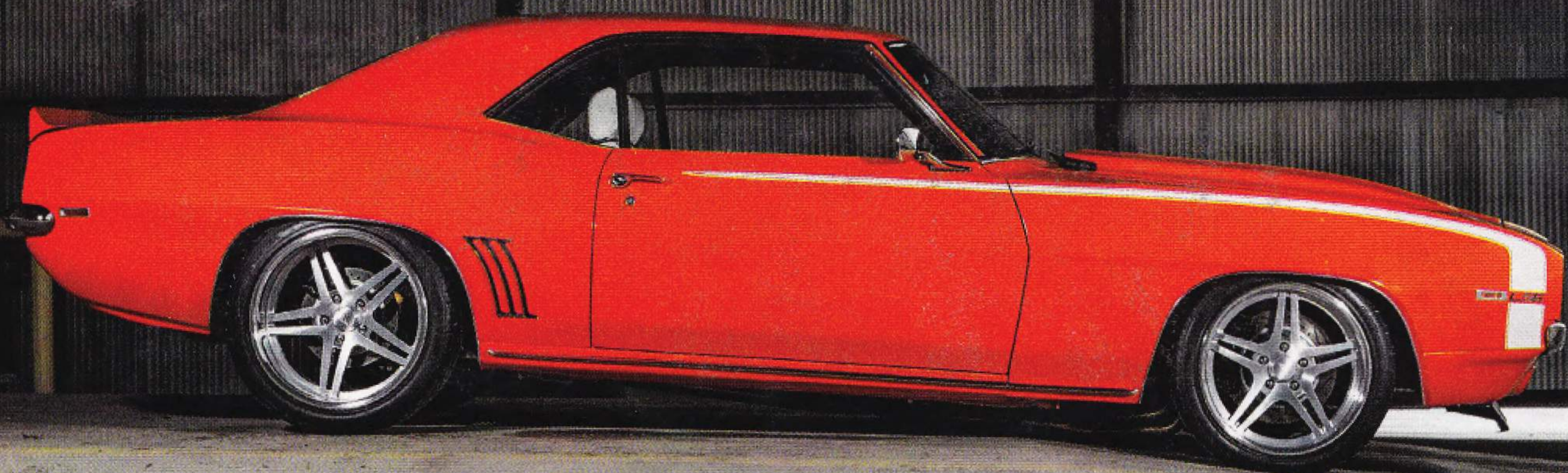
The car wears a set of Rushforth Livewire wheels, 18x8

front and 19x10 rear. Rushforth assembled them with 5.25- and 5-inch backspace, respectively, to ensure an interference-free fit. They wear BFGoodrich KDW2 hides, 235/40 front and 285/35 rear. Classic Performance Products front 13-inch drilled/slotted rotors with two-piston PBR calipers and rear 12-inch drilled/slotted rotors with single-piston PBR calipers peek through the spokes.

In case it didn't come across earlier, Rex and Patti are



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the namesakes in their business, R&P Machine Shop. Rex brought an LS6 block and heads back to spec and assembled them with a Texas Speed camshaft, LS7 lifters, hardened COMP Cams pushrods, and a PRC spring kit. The Magic Stick 3's 238/242-degree duration at 0.050-inch combo measures fairly conservative given the radical profiles popular in the go-fast community today. In light of the extreme, often-speculated power ratings bandied about, 386 hp and 350 lb-ft of torque at the wheels doesn't sound

wild, but bear in mind the engine achieved those numbers between 3,800 and 5,100 rpm, meaning plenty of fun in the real-time range—a claim that most big-number engines can't make.

A pair of 1 7/8-inch full-length stainless headers feed a 2 1/2-inch stainless exhaust with an X-pipe and MagnaFlow mufflers. They pass a six-speed Tremec T-56 on the way back, although, in retrospect, the couple admits a five-speed transmission may have been a better choice.



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While the drivetrain went together, Mike Johnson at CJ's Hot Rods applied the Huger Orange Axalta ChromaBase. Rex and Patti installed an interior with a restomod motif, a pair of white Scat ProCar seats with houndstooth inserts standing (or is that sitting) as the most obvious change. Visible between the Lecarra steering wheel spokes are Dakota Digital VHX gauges. In fact, the Hurst shifter sprouting from the console stands as the only real indication that a special drivetrain lurks below. A Vintage Air Gen IV SureFit makes those sweltering Oklahoma summers just a bit more bearable.

Remember that thing about close calls? May 2013, goes down in infamy as one of Oklahoma's worst

catastrophes. For three consecutive days deadly tornadoes tore a swath across Oklahoma. An F4—the second-most intense category—passed within a quarter-mile of CJ's Hot Rods and damaged the Camaro mere days before it was supposed to come home.

As the resilient Oklahomans they are, Rex, Patti, and Kody picked themselves up, dusted themselves off, and set the car straight again. In support of their fellow countrymen, they debuted it at an August benefit for tornado victims.

The daily peril it risked on the streets over its lifetime withstanding, Rex and Patti's Camaro has come perilously close to meeting its maker at least twice. Those are pretty exceptional events—basically the

TECH CHECK

Owner: Rex and Patti Van Dyke, Tecumseh, Oklahoma
Vehicle: 1969 Camaro

Engine

- Type:** LS6
- Displacement:** 346 ci
- Compression Ratio:** 10.0:1
- Bore:** 3.905
- Stroke:** 3.622
- Valvetrain:** LS7 tappets, COMP Cams hardened pushrods, PRC valvesprings
- Camshaft:** Texas Speed Magic Stick 3
- Induction:** LS6
- Ancillaries:** Spectre air filter, 140-amp Delco alternator, PRC aluminum radiator, Cloys timing chain, Eddie Motorsports hood hinges
- HVAC:** Vintage Air Gen IV
- Exhaust:** 1 7/8-inch full-length stainless headers; 2 1/2-inch exhaust with X-pipe and MagnaFlow mufflers
- Output (at the wheels):** 386 hp at 5,100 rpm, 350 lb-ft at 3,800 rpm

Drivetrain

- Transmission:** Tremec T-56, Hays clutch
- Rear Axle:** GM 12-bolt with limited-slip carrier and 4.11:1 gears, Driveshaft Specialists driveshaft

Chassis

- Front Suspension:** Stock height steering knuckles, Classic Performance Products (CPP) control arms, Hotchkis 3-inch drop springs, KYB Gas-a-just dampers, aftermarket antiroll bar
- Rear Suspension:** Detroit Speed Inc. 3-inch drop leaves and offset shackles, Koni adjustable dampers
- Brakes:** CPP 13- and 12-inch drilled/slotted rotors and PBR calipers

Wheels & Tires

- Wheels:** Rushforth Livewire 18x8, 5.25-inch backspace, front; 19x10, 5-inch backspace, rear
- Tires:** BFGoodrich KDW2 235/40 front, 285/35 rear

Interior

- Seats:** Scat ProCar with houndstooth inserts
- Carpet:** Trim Parts nylon loop
- Audio:** Alpine head unit with 3.5-inch and 6x9-inch coaxial drivers
- Upholstery:** Rex and Patti Van Dyke
- Gauges:** Dakota Digital VHX
- Steering:** Lecarra wheel
- Shifter:** Hurst
- Built by:** Rex, Patti, and Kody Van Dyke and CJ's Hot Rods (Mike Johnson and D.T. Tarrant)

Exterior

- Bodywork/Paint:** Mike Johnson, CJ's Hot Rods
- Paint:** Axalta ChromaBase, Huger Orange
- Hood:** GM 2-inch cowl induction

same chance as one person surviving a shark attack and a lightning strike. So by those odds alone we're pretty confident that it's going to live a nice, long, and healthy life from this point on.

Now, as for the rear tires it wears ... well, we have bad news for them.