

# DROP, SWAP & GO

CLASSIC PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS "IMPROVED" THE  
TRI-FIVE FRONT SUSPENSION

STORY & PHOTOS BY ROB FORTIER



During the course of every lowrider build you come across aftermarket parts for your ride that are available but don't quite fit your vision or your budget. Tubular control arms provide great looks and performance, however they can come at a premium price.

Though known for their above-mentioned performance chassis

components, Classic Performance Products also caters to the "classic" classic Chevy lovers, as well as those on tighter budgets (or those who simply don't see the need to upgrade to such a high level of aftermarket componentry). Whether it's a Tri-Five, a '58 Impala, or a '64 Biscayne, CPP's stock-type control arms could just be the perfect solution you've

been looking for. They would be the perfect addition to any hydraulic or airbag setup with minimal adaptation required as well. At a fraction of the cost of tubular A-arms, the money saved can go elsewhere in your Chevy—say, replacing the spindles, steering linkage, and so on, all of which they carry as well.

Obviously, rebuilding a set of

worn-out cross shafts and replacing pivot bushings is an option—but why bother going to all the effort when CPP's already done the hard work for you? (Ultimately, how much is your time worth?) Furthermore, not only is it a drop-and-swap deal, you're not stuck with the tedious detailing chores when you go with a complete replacement control arm, as they come powdercoated as well as fully assembled.

It's an easy job, really—something you and a buddy could tackle in an afternoon—requiring little, if any, specialized tools other than a good quality spring compressor. Whether you're freshening up an old bomb or building an economical cruiser, you won't be steered wrong with CPP's new-and-improved OE-type suspension components. The following installation on a '57 Chevy hardtop might help illustrate that point. ●

**1.** Along with complete front-end kits (tie rods, idler arms, ball joints, and so on), Classic Performance Products' OE-style suspension parts are highlighted by their stamped-steel control arms and further complemented by original replacement spindles and steering arms.



**2.** Pre-installed, brand-new cross shafts, bushings, and ball joints are standard—why even bother hassling with rehabilitating your old, beat-up arms? No need to pull out the air chisel for surgery, just plug-and-play.



**3.** Additionally, CPP's upper control arms have 5 degrees of caster built in, not added—a for sure “plus” for power steering-equipped Tri-Fives. This will improve your lowrider driving experience with upgraded geometry.

## LOWRIDER GARAGE

ESTABLISHED 1977

[ SUSPENSION ]



**4.** We started off by removing the stock '57 front suspension already equipped with a standard-type disc brake kit. First, with the ball joints' nuts loosened up ("not" removed), the spindles are given a few good whacks with a heavy hammer to help ease separation—no pickle forks used in this process.



**7.** Note the amount of alignment shims that were used, if any, as you remove the upper control arm. Also, if the pressed-in crossmember studs are damaged, loose, or come out altogether, simply replace them with  $\frac{1}{16}$ -20 Grade 8 bolts (2- to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch length).



**10.** The use of a longer (Grade 8) bolt allows for more camber adjustment, if even necessary.



**5.** Since the coil is under extreme load, a spring compressor is securely installed with the spindle still attached. Once the coil is compressed, a floor jack is placed under the lower control arm and the upper ball joint nut is removed.



**8.** Instead of spending however much time pressing bushings and replacing ball joints, you could simply attach a whole new control arm and be done with it—as such.



**11.** Bolts can be installed pointing in either direction, but for increased header/engine bay clearance, facing outward, toward the fender, makes a big difference.



**6.** Very carefully, after the upper control arm is set free, tension on the jack is released and the collapsed coil spring is safely removed.



**9.** New Grade 8 hardware is used on both uppers and lowers.



**12.** Control arms installed and ready to be mated with new coils, spindles, and steering linkage. As you can see, adapting hydraulic cylinders and/or airbags with an outboard shock would be simple to do. Note the orientation of the upper control arm by the location of the ball joint in relation to the lower one—if it appears further forward, you've got the sides swapped.



"WHETHER IT'S A TRI-FIVE, A '58 IMPALA, OR A '64 BISCAYNE, CPP'S STOCK-TYPE CONTROL ARMS COULD JUST BE THE PERFECT SOLUTION YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR."

**13.** Even though we're installing a 1½-inch lowered coil, the spring still needs to be compressed for both safety and ease of installation.



**14.** Compressing a dropped spring may eliminate the need to use a floor jack to button up the spindle to the upper control arm—but if any resistance is experienced, don't risk it.



**15.** The coil won't seat properly unless it's positioned/clocked correctly in the lower spring pocket.

## SOURCE

Classic Performance Products  
(866) 593-2631  
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**16.** CPP's forged steel spindles and steering arms are designed and engineered as direct replacements. To the trained eye, the spindles incorporate the best of all three Tri-Five variants.



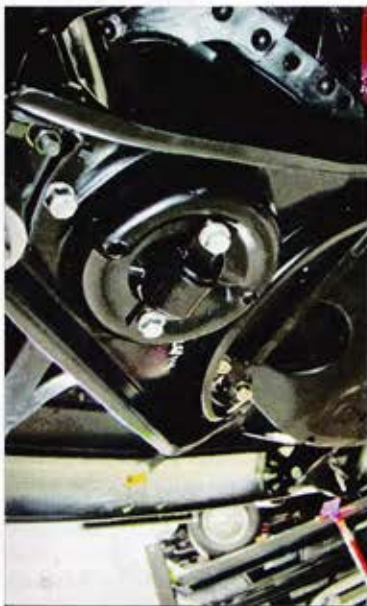
**17.** The only differences between the replacements and the originals in most cases is that the axle pins are perfect and the ball joint tapers are not worn out.



**20.** With the control arms "buttoned up," so to speak, the new steering arm is installed and either reconnected with the existing linkage or ...



**22.** If replacing the entire assembly as such, it is probably best to disassemble the old linkage as a whole, which will allow you to assemble the new parts with similar geometry. Note the addition of CPP billet aluminum tie-rod adjusters.



**18.** Once the ball joint nuts are securely fastened and cotter-pinned, new Black Magic nitrogen gas shocks are installed.



**19.** CPP builds these specifically for lowered vehicles, so there's no worry about blowing out a stock-length shock.



**21.** ... the job continues with the assembly of a new drag/centerlink and complete front end kit (which includes all-new tie rods, idler arm, adjuster sleeves, and related hardware).



**23.** The only thing left before putting the '57 Bel Air back on the road—and off to get professionally aligned—is installing a new brake system. Stay tuned.