

**W**e've all seen the various makeover shows where someone or something gets remodeled, repaired, or modified throughout the program until the last three minutes or so when they finally show the result. Well, we don't have any quick-cut video with dramatic music under it as we flip between the before and after views. If you've been following this story from the beginning, you've already seen all of the before stuff. No, this is the good part and the reward for not quitting. This is proof that an enormous pile of sometimes mismatched parts can be rescued from utter failure and turned into something to be admired.

After all this, you've either decided that you can't wait to get started on a basket case project or you're completely cured from any desire to buy one. But don't forget, as we learned back at the beginning, a basket case project doesn't (and in fact

shouldn't) be a do-it-all-yourself venture. No one person has all of the skills necessary to expertly restore one of these all by himself or herself. The key to successfully pulling off a basket case resto is to know what you can do and what you need to farm out to an established expert. Even Muscle Car Restorations, which has its own team of paint, body, upholstery, and mechanical experts, knows when to utilize the expertise of others, for the frame powdercoating or the stainless trim repair, for example.

Chris Argentieri's Chevelle likely started out as a driving older restoration that was starting to show its age. Someone began what was intended to be a complete expert resto, and even got a great deal of the metal and bodywork completed (if incorrectly). Unfortunately, for whatever reason, that prior owner was unable to finish it, and, as you've seen in each installment, what was left was quite a mess.

The first thing Muscle Car Restorations

did when it came into the picture was to inventory all the parts (never believe a seller who says, "I have everything you need to finish the car") and determine what could be salvaged. This led to a list of items that were needed and a list of parts that would be restored. The next essential step was to plan all the steps that would be taken and in what order. That was followed very closely by a plan to both locate and finance all the parts that were needed and the processes that had to be sent out.

The plan Chris had in mind was to return his SS to factory stock but with a bit more power, improved handling, and whatever could be done to help it live longer on the street, because Chris wants to drive it as often as he can. That plan started with powdercoating the frame and most of the chassis components, since powdercoating is much more resistant to chips, rust, and other damage and is also much easier to keep clean from road debris. PST chassis

**"An enormous pile of mismatched parts can be rescued from utter failure"**





bushings and parts keep the handling tight, but the ride remains very comfortable. Muscle Car Restorations' two-stage base/clearcoat paint is already much tougher than the factory single-stage colors, so no change needed there.

Under the hood, the 396 needed a new crank anyway, so a 4.00-inch stroker was used to up the cubes to 434. A little head porting, bigger valves, a custom roller cam, and custom pistons help to get the power up over 500 hp in a package that looks like a stock rebuild with a set of headers. It has lots of big-block torque, yet the mild idle keeps it very easy to drive.

It is rare to get the chance to follow a complete resto this closely for this long, but now you have the insight to bring your muscle car dream to fruition. Yes, it's the end of the road for our Basket Case Chevelle, but now this is the beginning of a lot of road time for Chris and his now-new 1970 Chevelle SS.



## Basket Case Chevelle, Part 12: The Finale

# Basket No More

By Mark Ehlen  
Photos by Wes Allison





## "No one person has all of the skills



■ Because the 396 that came with the car was its own basket case of worn-out and incorrect parts, we sourced a block with the correct casting number, bored and stroked it to 434 ci, and fitted it with parts that would make the engine powerful but still drivable on the street.

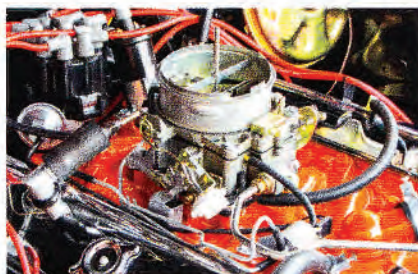
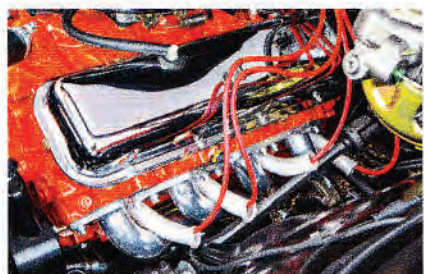
■ The factory oval-port heads were retained for the sake of originality but realized a substantial flow increase with some mild porting and 2.19/1.88-inch valves over their original 2.06/1.72 versions. A set of headers from Doug's Headers provided a big improvement over the stock cast-iron exhaust manifolds.

■ The original Q-Jet and iron manifold were also kept for originality, but they didn't stop this 10.5-1 big-block from grunting out 518 hp and 550 lb-ft of torque.

■ The Chevelle's interior was originally red and mostly there, though outside of the seat frames, almost none of it was reusable. So the decision was made to switch to black, which goes much better with the black vinyl top. Legendary and NPD were invaluable in helping to get it all right.

■ After the frame, rearend, and control arms were all powdercoated, Muscle Car Restorations relied heavily on the chassis experts at PST to provide the correct springs, linkage, and factory type bushings to tighten up the handling while maintaining a comfortable ride. Brakes are factory-style replacements also from PST.

■ National Parts Depot and Ground Up contributed exterior trim, emblems, and lighting components to help finalize the Chevelle's body buildup. Getting these details right makes a huge difference in the car's ultimate presentation.



### AT A GLANCE

#### 1970 CHEVELLE SS396

**Owned by:** Chris Argentieri, Los Angeles, CA  
**Restored by:** Muscle Car Restorations, Chippewa Falls, WI  
**Engine:** 396ci (now 434)/518hp V-8  
**Transmission:** Muncie M21 4-speed manual  
**Rearend:** 12-bolt with 3.42 gears and Auburn Posi  
**Interior:** Black vinyl bench seat  
**Wheels:** 14-inch SS  
**Tires:** F70-14 Firestone Wide Oval





# necessary to expertly restore one of these all by himself"

**AA-Midwest**  
702/649-7776  
aamidwest.com  
Engine block

**American Autowire, Inc.**  
800/482-WIRE (9473)  
americanautowire.com  
Wiring for entire car, switches

**Anaheim Gear**  
714/778-1103  
anaheimgear.com  
Muncie rebuild

**Auto Vision Center**  
715/834-5277  
autovisioncenterrec.com  
Windshield and back window install

**California Car Cover**  
800/423-5525  
calcarcover.com  
Car cover

**Classic Performance Products**  
888/522-8306  
classicperform.com  
Power steering, steering box, brake master cylinder

**Coker Tire**  
800/251-6336  
cokertire.com  
Tires

**Competition Cams**  
800/999-0853  
compcams.com  
Camshaft, rockers, lifters, push-rods, timing set

**CP Pistons**  
949/567-9000  
cp-carrillo.com  
Pistons, rings

**Custom Autosound**  
800/888-8637  
customautosound.com  
Stereo, speakers

**Doug's Headers**  
dougshaders.com  
Headers

**Eagle Specialty Products**  
662/796-7373  
eaglerod.com  
Crankshaft, connecting rods

**Energy Suspension**  
949/361-3935

energysuspension.com  
Engine and trans mounts

**Extreme Metal Works**  
exmetalworks.com  
330/550-3638  
Trim restoration

**Federal Mogul; Fel-Pro**  
662/224-8972  
federal-mogul.com  
Head gaskets

**Flowmaster**  
707/544-4761  
flowmastermufflers.com  
Exhaust pipes, mufflers

**Ground Up**  
866/358-2277  
ss396.com  
Exterior trim and emblems; headlights, taillights, marker lights; parking and backup lamps

**Instrument Specialties**  
401/267-0055  
instrument-specialties.com  
Dash and gauge cluster resto

**Jet Performance**  
800/535-1161  
jetchip.com  
Q-jet rebuild

**Legendary Auto Interiors**  
800/363-8804  
legendaryautointeriors.com  
Seat covers, carpet, headliner, sun visors, package tray

**Mahle Aftermarket Inc.**  
mahle-aftermarket.com  
Clevite bearings

**McLeod Racing**  
714/630-2764  
mcleodracing.com  
Clutch parts, bellhousing

**Moser Engineering**  
260/726-6689  
moserengineering.com  
Rear end kit, carrier, axles, ring and pinion, Posi

**MSD Ignition**  
915/857-5200  
msdignition.com  
Starter, alternator

**Muscle Car Restorations**  
715/834-2223  
musclecarrestorations.com  
Project oversight and execution

**National Parts Depot**  
nationalpartsdepot.com  
Interior accessories, bumper fasteners, exterior mirrors, trim

**Original Parts Group, Inc.**  
800/243-8355  
opgi.com  
Windshield, back and window glass, interior small parts, fuel tank and hardware

**PerTronix**  
909/599-5955  
pertronix.com  
Distributor, coil

**Powerhouse Products**  
800/872-7223  
Engine assembly tools

**PPG**  
ppgrefinish.com  
Paint

**Premiere Powder Coating**  
608/525-5005  
premierpowdercoating.net  
Frame and chassis powder-coating

**PST**  
877/226-4101  
p-s-t.com  
Control arm bushings, steering linkage, brakes, springs, ball joints, tie rods

**SoffSeal Inc.**  
800/426-0902  
soffseal.com  
Door window seals, weather stripping, body mounts

**Thermo-Tec Automotive Products**  
800/274-8437  
thermotec.com  
Sound deadening, heat barrier

**Trans-Dapt**  
562/921-7515  
tdperformance.com  
Engine sheetmetal

**Wheel Vintiques**  
800/959-2100  
wheelvintiques.com  
Rally wheels and accessories



■ As is the case with virtually all basket cases, "ready for paint" is never true. Though there was new sheetmetal on the car, Muscle Car Restorations found a number of issues hiding under the primer that had to be fixed to make the body right again. In the end, the brilliant application of PPG Monza Red code 2089 speaks for itself.

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