



JULY 2011 VOLUME 8 NUMBER 6

CAMARO PERFORMERS



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PROTOTYPE



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feature

When referring to rare performance Camaros, most of us instantly think back to the first-gen "go-to's." Most notably, ones with names that end in "O." Names like COPO and Yenko quickly come to mind. Of course, there were others that had a horse in the supercar derby. Nickey, Dana, Baldwin-Motion, and Fred Gibb, to name a few. And if you were to bring up Berger, you'd be talking about another serious "player" of the late-sixties Supercar wars.



PERFORMANCE PROTOTYPE

by **Nick Licata** | photographs by **Steven Rupp**

The First Berger/**GMMG SS**

So would a '99 Berger/GMMG Camaro be considered a historical piece of muscle car history? If it's the first car — the prototype, if you will — then the answer is absolutely "yes." Just ask Chris Light, the owner of this Berger/GMMG Camaro. "One of the things that makes this car interesting is that it's a true Hugger Orange Berger and the only '99 in existence. All the other Bergeries were black cars that were later painted orange," said Chris. "Dennis Barker, of Berger Chevrolet, decided in July of 1999 to build 25 specialty Camaros to celebrate Berger's 75th Anniversary."

In the fall of 2000, this Camaro was built as a Phase I car, then a year later was beefed up as a Phase II hot rod.

A genuine Berger calling card, it was used as a promotional piece at a number of car shows including a stint on the '01 Hot Rod Power Tour.

In 2004, Dennis sold the car to John Fullerton, who was sales manager of Jacky Jones Chevrolet in Murphy, North Carolina. Not long after, Chris got wind that it was for sale and traded in his '01 LE car for John's 89,000-mile Berger prototype.

Although the car was in really good shape when he bought it, Chris knew it was special, so a minor restoration was on tap. He replaced the center console, some minor trim pieces,

and installed a 1LE sway bar out back to match the one up front.

To keep the car in show-quality condition, Chris has been gradually picking away at replacing worn parts as needed. At this point most all the "little stuff" has been updated or upgraded to Chris' high-brow taste.

Being the first Berger fourth-gen, and the only '99 ever built, has gotten the car some added attention and invitations to some pretty high-end car shows.

"One of the coolest things I've been able to do with the car is show it at the '07 Forge Show held at the Chattanooga Convention Center," mentioned Chris. "This is an invitation-only show where the rarest,

most collectible muscle cars on the planet are displayed. I was so excited that I spent five weeks detailing the car to have it ready for that show. I was absolutely honored to display my car next to some super rare muscle cars."

The car was also in the Camaro display last winter at the Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, Kentucky, for a few months holding court with other high-profile Camaros including Bumblebee, the Papa Johns second-gen, a few early 1LE cars, and a ZL1. Pretty stout company, for sure.

So with the Berger name firmly associated to this Camaro, performance plays a major part of the act, so Chris jumps at most every opportunity to get the car

some track time. In 2010, he brought the car on two legs of the Hot Rod Power Tour, the LXS Fest in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and entered it in the Run to the Hills in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.

With a tick over 400 hp to the rear wheels to play with, BMR tubular A-arms reside up front while Eibach springs front and rear lower the car 1 1/2 inches. The collaboration of Fikse five-spoke Profil 17x9.5-inch wheels take residence on all four corners, while Riken Raptor rubber (275/40-R17) ride up front and Nitto 555 (275/40-17) provide extra grip out back.

Except for the white leather houndstooth seat covers, and white-face dash signed by Helen Gibb, Matt Murphy, Valerie Harrell, Dennis Barker, Matt Berger, Dale Berger, Scott Settlemire, and John Moss, the interior plays host to mostly stock trim. Besides some additional Berger badges and striping, the exterior relied on GM's competent paint department.

Chris' '99 is one rare fourth-gen, and to any fan of late-model muscle, this is definitely a super collectible piece. Even so, that valuable Berger Chevrolet pedigree doesn't hinder Chris' appetite for hammering it on the drag strip, road course, or autocross. And that's exactly what this car was built to do. Besides, it's exactly the way Chris likes it. ☺



1999 BERGER/ GMMG PACKAGE

- ▶ Hugger Orange exterior
- ▶ Dual hood and deck lid stripes
- ▶ Black billet grille with SS emblem
- ▶ Black taillight panel
- ▶ Berger "Prescribed Power" fender emblems
- ▶ Chrome "By Berger" rear emblem
- ▶ Phase II LS1 motor
- ▶ 435 hp/ 410 tq LS1 package
- ▶ 1 3/4-inch headers
- ▶ After-cat GMMG chambered exhaust
- ▶ LS7 flywheel
- ▶ LS7 clutch
- ▶ B&M short-throw shifter
- ▶ High-flow air box lid w/ "Powered by Berger" decal
- ▶ 3.73 gears
- ▶ 1.5-inch Eibach lowering springs
- ▶ Dimpled rotors
- ▶ Black powdercoated calipers
- ▶ Hurst line lock
- ▶ 1LE sway bars
- ▶ FM 5 Fikse Wheels (17x9.5)
- ▶ White Hurst shifter ball
- ▶ Horsepower and torque dash plaque
- ▶ Black and white houndstooth seat covers
- ▶ White face gauges with "By Berger" logo

