

Impala SS *SS* SCENE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE IMPALA SS CLUB OF AMERICA

Six Speeds? We got 'em!

Gary Grant's **FAST SS**

Rick Garza's **6 SSPEED**



HOW TO: Fabricating Stainless Steel Hose and AN Fittings!

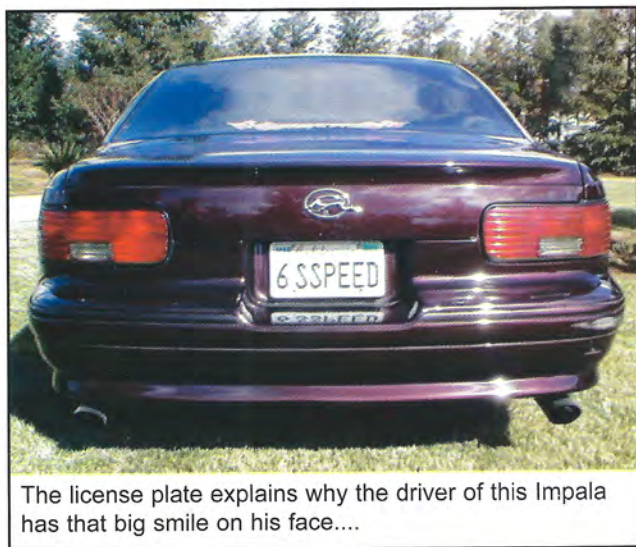
A FASST Six **SS**peed Story

By Rick Garza

Photos by Donna Harris



An Impala SS with a six speed manual transmission? That's right, it's one of the hottest and most popular mods around for our cars, although it may also be one of the lesser known mods. You may be asking yourself, "Now, how can it be that the *hottest and most popular* mod is lesser known?" It's actually rather simple. Just take your average Impala SS owner who doesn't know about the six speed conversion, give them a ride in a six speed SS and by the time you hit fourth gear you have the *hottest and most popular mod around!*



The license plate explains why the driver of this Impala has that big smile on his face....

So why is this mod so popular? I'm convinced it's the big grin you get on your face every time you drive the car. How about cruising down the street at 40 MPH in third and blipping the throttle, instantly throwing you into your seat and thrusting the car forward. Or maybe cruising down the highway at 60 MPH and only turning about 1500 RPM in

sixth gear. Or downshifting in a car that puts out nearly 300HP. Basically it comes down to the "fun" factor. I would say that the Impala with a six speed is about a thousand times more fun to drive than an automatic.

Another reason that the six speed is so popular is that it is a very do-able and low maintenance modification. It seems especially do-able when you compare it to a 383 or 396 motor swap, which could run easily into the \$10,000 price range, not to mention that ugly four-letter word...



The B-Body High Performance Six Speed conversion kit includes a personalized throttle body plate and shift knob, identifying you as a member of a very select group...

SMOG. The six speed also is very low maintenance when compared to adding a super-charger or blower, which can be a pain to tune as well as to maintain. However, you will not see significant performance gains from the six speed as you would with either of these other modifications; it's mostly a "fun" factor.

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Mixed messages? Naw, the kids haven't learned how to read backwards yet...

A FASST SSix Speed Story

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Of course there is a certain amount of prestige that goes with it, since there are so few around: just four in California that I know of and probably no more than fifty altogether. That is partly what made me decide to do the conversion; I wanted to do something big, something that would really set my car apart from others, yet still keep my car daily-driver friendly and not require me to take a loan out to do.

Interested in what exactly it takes to do this? I'll outline the process I went through to give you a better idea of what you'll be getting into. I don't want to turn this into a list of parts, prices and shameless brand name plugs, so I will just mention generally what it took.

At the core of this project is the six speed manual transmission itself, a T-56 transmission from a 1994-1997 "F-body" (Camaro or Firebird), and no, a Corvette transmission, although called a T-56 as well, will not work. To go with the new transmission you will need a flywheel and clutch/pressure plate. There are several choices when it comes to choosing a clutch/pressure plate setup and it is an important choice because this is what will determine how your car drives; if you over-do it here, you will lose "streetability/drivability" very quickly. Next, I think you need new gears for the rear end of your car. Although technically the car is drivable with the six speed and the factory 3.08 gears, you may find it hard to beat those mopeds off the line! 4.10s seem to be the best match with the six speed, with 3.73s being not quite enough and 4.56s being slightly aggressive for daily driving. You should take note that with the 4.10 or 4.56 gears you will need a custom reluctor to maintain your ABS, and it is likely you will need an aftermarket drive shaft to reduce vibration. Another thing to consider will be custom PCM programming which will be necessary to correct your speedometer and get rid of the nasty Check Engine Light that you will get when your car can't find the automatic transmission! One little "extra" I decided to do was to install an aftermarket short throw shifter. Also, those with 1994 and 1995 Impalas might want to consider the Z28 cluster modification, to gain a tachometer.

Finally, what I consider absolutely necessary to get this done right is to buy the B-Body High Performance Inc. conversion kit created by Josh Korsower at www.bigfastcar.com (there, my one plug, but hardly shameless). His kit is very complete, right down to the 4 quarts of transmission fluid, and the clutch pedal assembly is top-notch quality, to say the least. On top of all the hardware for the install, you get a custom shift-ball and throttle body plate with your kit's number engraved on them. The kit is also backed by Josh's incredible customer service. He has done several conversions himself and really wants nothing but complete satisfaction for his customers. Now I can't say it's impossible without this kit, because several people have done it, but I would say it's kind of like drilling for

your own oil and refining your own gas rather than filling up at the gas station!

Now that you have everything, you are ready to convert your wimpy automatic to a six speed. I recommend installing the new gears before the swap, so you won't have to worry about it after the transmission install. Under the car, it's basically a straightforward transmission swap, with a little cutting of the floor pan (hey, when is anything really bolt on?) and some wiring for the new sensors. Inside the car, the job includes installing the clutch pedal assembly, "modifying" the brake pedal and running the hoses for the slave cylinder. Of course this sounds a lot easier than it really is; after all, this is a pretty big modification. I had a ton of help from fellow ROD members, Andy Badertscher (who is now offering complete install service for a modest fee), Tully Gould, and Ed Runion. I would probably still be trying to finish my car if it were not for these guys! If anyone would like more specific information about my car or the six speed conversion, you can email me at fasst_rick@hotmail.com. I'm always willing to answer questions.





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FAST SS

by Dan Johnsen

Photos by Dan Johnsen and Gary Grant

Gary Grant always knew what he wanted, the problem was just that he couldn't find an Impala SS. After a long search, he had given up and had decided to purchase a new, '95 Z28 from Reliable Chevrolet in Richardson, Texas, instead. Gary explains, "I met with the sales manager, picked out the car, and was awaiting final sign off on all the paperwork. While standing in the showroom, the doors at the end opened and a brand new, freshly received and detailed BBB SS rolled onto the showroom floor. I immediately asked the sales manager if the car was available, and we changed cars and purchased the car on the spot. The first time I actually drove it was on the way home after paying for it."



How does Gary get so many MBA and Billet Specialties pieces under the hood without looking gaudy? That's the trick, isn't it? Somehow all this shiny stuff looks... just right!

Gary must have driven the Impala once in a while, because the odometer now shows 20,000 miles. But that is all in the past, as he explains that the FAST SS is strictly a show car, spending its days tucked safely in the garage (see bottom right...) and traveling to competitions on a trailer. Gary says he really only drives the car about 500 miles a year now.

But shows are where the FAST SS shines (pardon the pun). A consistent first place winner, a consistent People's Choice winner, a consistent Best-In-Show, Gary picked up the highest accolades yet at ImpalaFest 2000, when Jon Moss picked this



The lowered stance, the clear great Borla tips and yards of s to the classic look of the FAST

car as his favorite in the entire event. Moss complimented the competition highly, but he explained that the FAST SS, "just got it right." And beside, Jon said, he always thought these cars looked best in black.

From the Stull billet grill and T84 headlamps up front, to the Blink-Blink sequential turn signals and Borla exhaust tips at the back, the black paint on this SS is flawless. The exterior is cleaned up a bit with molding and emblem deletion, dressed up with classy classic Impala crossed flags and dropped two inches over a brand new set of Budnik rims (see the newest picture, to the right). Nothing outrageous, nothing outlandish, he just got it right...

We asked Gary, as we do everyone else, what their five favorite things are about their car. Of those five, Gary picked three that were in the interior; well maybe three and a half, since the stereo is in there, too.

First on Gary's list is is the BBHP six speed kit; the FAST SS was conversion number 20. But take another look at the cover photo again, and check out the Vette Essentials shift boot, the Momo shift knob and the custom console; this is a very nice installation!

Gary is also rightfully proud of the very sharp Momo steering wheel installation, as well as the Corvette C5 seats; now that's something you don't see transplanted into an Impala every day!

Gary may not have purchased that Z28 at Reliable Chevrolet, but we sure couldn't help but notice that he ended up with its instrument cluster in the FAST SS dash! Throw in the carbon fiber trim, add some more bil-

let pieces and the Sony ES electronics and you have one exceptional interior, and somehow... it's just right.

The extremely clean stereo installation in the trunk continues the theme. Mostly hidden under the false floor, tucked in behind the carpet, and generally out of sight, you'll find the business end of 900 watts worth of Kicker amps along with four Kicker 10 inch sub-woofers. Back up in the passenger compartment there are Boston Acoustic separates, a Sony ES head

unit, Sony ten disc changer and Sony time delay unit.



Sweet, sweet black and gray interior featuring C5 Corvette seats, six speed transmission, Momo steering wheel and Momo shift knob, Z28 instrument cluster, carbon fiber and billet trim. Yeah, that'll do!

Since we shot the first group of pictures this spring, Gary has replaced the "old" Fikse 17 inch rims with 245/35/19 and 285/30/20 Yokohama AVS Sports mounted on 19x8 and 20x10.5 Budnik "Tiller FL" wheels.



From the "old" Fikse rims, those smooth black paint, all contribute to the FAST SS exterior.



Look closely and you may catch a glimpse of the sub-woofers, on either side of the spare tire. The amps, the wiring and all the rest of the stereo installation are tucked away in one of the cleanest installs you'll find!



Same car, but a little different look now with new 19 inch Budnik "Tiller FL" wheels up front and 20 inchers in the back. Those are Yokohama AVS sport tires all around.

The changes and improvements, it seems, never really stop. Catch up with Gary at ImpalaFest or the HOTSS cruise and see what he's done to the FAST SS recently. Whatever that new modification is, you can be sure that... it's just right.



2000 C5 and 1995 Impala, safely tucked in for the night...

Handling The Heat

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The combi-valve can be modified to correct this oversight. The mod will remove the delay and increase the proportion of brake fluid pressure to the rear calipers. This is accomplished by removing 2 parts, a spring and a red aluminum valve, from the brake combination valve and replacing the vented cap with a solid cap (see "Bolt Mod"). The authoritative write-up of this subject can be found on the web at:

<http://www.b-body.net/Technical/Brakes/ComboValveMod/index.html>

Brake Deflectors:

The mods so far have been intended to generate more friction and to tolerate more heat. A simple mod that will help dissipate some of the extra heat is to swap 9C1 brake deflectors in place of the stock Impala deflectors. Just below the front bumper is an air dam. The air dam is made from 3" black plastic, it spans the full width of the car and consists of three pieces; a center section and two end deflectors. The stock deflectors shroud the front tires and limit air that would otherwise be able to cool the front brakes. The 9C1 deflectors do not shroud the front tires, which lets more cool air get to the brakes. The GM part numbers are 10220593 and 10220594. The cost should be less than \$10.00 each.

Karl's Ins and Outs

In honor of his second favorite car magazine, "Car Craft", we present: **Karl Ellwein's Drag Racing In and Out List**

- In** The pleasing rumble from your LT1 small block as it idles in the staging lanes
- Out** The annoying buzz from the "sport compact" idling in the other lane.
- In** The pleasing roar from you LT1 small block at 6000 rpm as it crosses the finish line in the 12's
- Out** The annoying racket from the "sport compact" engine at 7500 rpm as it crosses the finish line in the 16's
- In** Driving to the track and racing with your street tires.
- In** Driving to the track and racing with your BFG Drag Radials.
- In** Driving to the track and racing with your Mickey Thompson ET Streets
- Out** Having to change from street to drag tires when you get to the track.
- In** Reducing race weight by taking the spare and jack out of your trunk
- Out** Reducing race weight by taking your interior out.
- In** Adding a little style as well as function by installing a Langness rear spoiler
- Out** Adding additional gaudiness as well as adding 50lb to your race weight by installing a rear spoiler to your "sport compact", which just so happens to look like your mama's book shelf.
- In** Driving through the water box and doing a big smoky burnout with your rear slicks
- Out** Driving through the water box and doing a big smoky burnout with your front slicks
- In** Passing tech inspection with a firmly secured battery, a functional master cut-off switch, and a drive shaft safety loop.
- Out** Sneaking past tech with a loose battery, non-functional cut-off switch, and no drive shaft safety loop.
- In** The fact that the tech guys know you and your car and therefore give you a tech sticker without even looking.
- In** Muffled street car bracket racing at the local drag strip.
- Out** Ear splitting loud race cars at the muffled street car bracket races.
- In** A Five Oh reaction time.
- Out** The fact that a Five Oh Mustang beat you to the finish line and took the win light.
- In** Heads up racing at Impala SS Drag Days
- In** Bracket racing at Impala SS Drag Days
- In** A starting line so well maintained that you could launch on street tires
- Out** A starting line so poorly maintained that you have to straddle the grease and anti-freeze.
- In** Cold, dry air
- Out** Hot, humid air

big fast car



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