

Legendary



Performance

muscle car performance in a high powered truck

Proud Hemi Ram owners treat their 5.7-liter Hemi V-8 truck as though it had a vintage 426 Hemi under the hood. Although the 5.7-does share some design elements, the power output is not quite up to what the original 426 had, unless your Ram belongs to Jim Bell of Kenne Bell. This 2003 Ram definitely has enough power under the hood that might make the truck's muscle car ancestors very proud.

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Dodge owners are very nostalgic and when they start a love affair with their Dodge Rams, especially ones with a 5.7-liter Hemi engine in it, they lean towards giving the truck an old muscle-car theme. Such is the case with Jim Bell and his 2003 Dodge Ram. The truck features a version of vintage Mopar graphics and has the bright orange paint scheme to match. Both were applied by Mike Face Custom Paint, and include a large center stripe that extends over the hood and top of the cab.

But aside from the visual muscle-car theme, the most important aspect of this truck's retro-look is the power under the hood. Kenne Bell manufactured a bolt-on supercharger system for the 5.7-liter Hemi that turns the 300-horsepower V-8 into a 500-horsepower monster that will make its 426 Hemi grandfather very proud. The system uses an intercooler and engine computer Optimizer to control power output and engine timing functions. Any time a supercharger is used, additional fuel requirements are a major factor. Kenne Bell uses a Boost-A-Pump system that allows the engine's fuel system to regulate pressure and fuel enrichment according to boost levels.

Since the truck's intake of air and fuel has been improved, the exhaust system also had to be less restrictive. In this case, a Gibson dual exhaust system was used and provides a healthy exhaust tone as well as additional performance gains. The Ram also uses a ram-air system and Denso spark plugs to light up the highly-compressed air and fuel mixture.

With all of the talk regarding muscle-car performance and horsepower, we forgot that we are actually describing a truck. But Bell and his crew didn't want everyone to simply focus on the engine. So they decided to customize the Ram in a sport-truck fashion, adding many aftermarket parts to create a unique vehicle. One of the most noticeable is the addition of 24-inch diameter wheels and tires. You can't help but notice the huge Oasis XS wheels that are brightly chromed and are mounted on a set of Yokohama 305/25ZR24 tires. Just by their looks, the tires are like rubber bands on the wheels and don't have much rubber to fill the wheel wells.

To cure this problem, Bell and crew needed to lower the truck a couple of inches and asked Advantage Performance to find an appropriate set of coil springs to bring the Ram down to a level that fit nicely with the 24-inch tires. Since the wheel and tire package is also wide as well as large in diameter, a set of Xenon fender flares were added as they are slightly wider than the factory flares and visually tuck the rubber under the truck's wheel wells.

In addition to the wheel and suspension system, Bell added some traditional truck enhancements. These included smoothing out the truck's rear with a Sir Michael's roll pan and adding a Gaylord fiberglass tonneau. In the front, the truck's factory grille was replaced with a B-Cool billet grille and a Mopar front air dam.

You can't help but notice the huge Oasis XS wheels mounted on a set of Yokohama 305/25ZR24 tires



1 One of the most noticeable enhancements to the truck is the use of 24-inch Oasis wheels and Yokohama tires.

2 The interior was upgraded to a Katzkin leather seat cover that has exterior color matching inserts.



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The factory fuel door was also replaced with an AMP Research billet unit to add to the truck's muscular theme.

Although there were many subtle changes to the exterior of the truck, Bell also added a hint of the truck's color cues to the interior. The factory seats were reupholstered in matching gray and orange leather from Katzkin, and the factory dash was also enhanced with additional dash trim from Mopar Accessories.

The overall appearance and performance of the truck would definitely make any 'Cuda, GTX, or Charger owner want to duplicate the Ram and add it to their stable of Mopars. Nevertheless, the Kenne Bell Ram is a great example of the potential of the Ram and the Hemi V-8 with the right combination of parts. **TEN**

By Dan Sanchez

Photos: Steve Temple & Dan Sanchez



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3 The Kenne Bell team had a great chance that incorporated a few cool steps. To close up the rear end, they used a St. Michael's roll pan and a Gagliardi's tonneau cover.

4 The factory 9.7-liter head was modified with the company's turbo-screw type supercharger system.

5 The AMP Research billet fuel door resembles the quad-tilt doors on the old Dodge muscle cars.

6 Although it's never a good idea to bare up a set of 24-inch tires, it's easy with 500 horsepower under the hood.

7 Despite the power under the hood, the Kenne Bell Ram still drives and acts like a regular truck.

The nostalgic Hemi Ram stripes run along side the body of the Ram

