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All Fired Up: Shawn Gibson's Tall-Ridin', Orb-Scorchin' Heavy-Duty Bow Tie

BY JOEL MOLLIS

Photography: Wesley Allison

THIS MONTH'S COVER TRUCK LITERALLY DEFINES THE TERM IN YOUR FACE. HOWEVER, THERE'S MUCH MORE TO SHAWN GIBSON'S RADICALLY MODIFIED CHEVY THAN APPEARANCE; THE '01 HEAVY DUTY CREW CAB IS THOROUGHLY EQUIPPED WITH UNDERPINNINGS THAT DELIVER A LEVEL OF ON-DIRT PROWESS THAT PERFECTLY COMPLEMENT THE BIG BOW TIE'S CUSTOMIZED BODY.

Obviously, Shawn's tricked 4x4 is no low-buck effort: from top to bottom, the Corona, California-based behemoth sports high-dollar and scratch-built components chosen and fabricated as much for function as for their style and visual impact.

Let's first examine the truck's suspension. To achieve the nosebleed ride height Shawn desired, the OE IFS front suspension was scrapped in favor of the off-road-proven straight axle design, which was provided by Off Road Unlimited. Although accurately described as a kit, installing the ORU system requires extensive chassis surgery, as the HD's control arms and most of the steering system are summarily removed before the solid axle swap can proceed. Compounding the degree of difficulty in creating this wild 3500-Series truck is the fact that Shawn's ride rolled off the GM assembly line not as a 4x4 but as a 2WD dualie. Nonetheless, Feurst Engineering in Ramona, California, went on the attack, positioning the new ORU leaf spring hangers and subsequently installing ORU-spec 16-inch lifted spring packs from National Spring. With the truck sufficiently sky'd, Feurst installed a hell-for-strong Dana 60 axle. Next, ORU's trick crossover steering linkage was installed because Shawn's ultimate plan called for the use of 44-inch-tall tires, and the ORU steering system is the only reliable manner by which to ensure accurate steering when running such huge meats.

While Feurst Engineering was getting the



Towering Inferno



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steering and front drivetrain dialed, it found time to fab a set of shock hoops, which were then filled with Sway-A-Way Race Runner dampers equipped with remote reservoirs. Moving to the rear of the truck's chassis, Feurst Engineering again took on a series of extensive upgrades, starting with the removal of the dual rear wheels and tires and the installation of the parts required to run a single, albeit massive, tire and wheel at each end of the 1-ton axle. The stout 14-bolt GM rear axle supports 16-inch-lift National Spring spring packs, which are controlled by Sway-A-Way dampers with piggyback reservoirs and are attached to custom mounts fabbed by Feurst. To control axle wrap on both the front and rear axles, Feurst whipped up a functional set of traction links, which use massive non-binding spherical bearings at the front and rear mounting points. To complete the series of extensive mods, Feurst Engineering swapped in a 4x4 crossmember and installed a NP 205 T-case (divorced style) behind the lightly modified 6.6L Duramax Diesel V-8 engine.

With a majority of the functional aspects of the chassis complete, Shawn turned his focus to the cosmetic factor of his HD. Most of the drivetrain and suspension components were removed and sent out for specialized coating. Electro Tech Powder Coating in San Marcos, California, handled the red powdercoat on the spring packs and the axle housings, while Foss



Feurst Engineering scratch-built the front shock hoops, which were chrome-plated by Foss Plating Company, while the spring packs were powdercoated by Electro Tech Powder Coating. For maximum traction, the wheel and tire combination is way large: 16.5x12-inch Weld Stone Crusher forged aluminum wheels wrapped with 44x18.50x16.5-inch Super Swamper tires.



Extreme-duty rear axle assembly is the General's 14-bolt, 1-ton unit. As shown, it's equipped with a 4.10:1 gear set, a clean gasket, and the stellar combination of chrome plate and powdercoat. A single Sway-A-Way Race Runner damper (with piggyback reservoir) at each wheel keeps the springs' joance and rebound in complete control.



The Chevy's front suspension is a radical departure from what the General originally installed under the HD. The OE IFS 2WD control arms, steering, and related hardware were scrapped in favor of an Off Road Unlimited solid axle conversion system. Feurst Engineering installed the ORU kit, then went about bolting in a pair of National Springs with 16 inches of lift, followed by the inclusion of Sway-A-Way Race Runner remote reservoir dampers. The well-detailed front axle is a Dana 60, stuffed with 4.10 cogs.



Front and rear traction links were custom-made for this 3500 HD and thoroughly control front and rear axle housing wrap without inducing unwanted suspension bleed, thanks to the trio of spherical bushing fitted to the pivot points of each link. Non-functional but good-looking chrome plating from Foss Plating draws the eye to the slick Feurst Engineering fabrication. Look close and you'll see a stainless Gibson exhaust system tucked away just above the traction links.



Plating Company in Santa Fe Springs, California, applied a shiny coating to the traction links and assorted undercarriage goodies.

By now, you're aware that Shawn went all out on the Chevy's sheetmetal. New Image Auto Body in Temecula, California, was chosen to perform most of the base mods, including the shaving of the body trim and molding, which was followed by the spraying of the fire engine-red paint. With the HD's basecoat in place, the truck was hauled to Anaheim, California, where Steve Vandemon of Absolutely Custom Paint laid down the fiery graphics using House of Color Pearl Orange and Yellow point highlighted by Silver Metallic pinstripes.

With such radically extensive modifications showcased on the Chevy's undercarriage and body, it would be a shame to leave the OE interior intact. Shawn didn't disappoint, directing that a full array of comfort and

Shawn Gibson's Corona, California-based Heavy Duty is a standout in every sense of the word. The famed '91 Crew Cab has it all: a killer stance, orb-scorching graphics, and enough scratch-built suspension goodies to keep onlookers thoroughly entertained. Best of all, Shawn uses the 2WD turned 4x4 in the arenas it was so ideally designed: show 'n' shine from time-to-time and dirt-roosting the following weekend.

entertainment accessories be installed inside the cabin. Mike Cox of Professional Auto Sound in Westlake Village, California, was responsible for the custom upgrades to the Bow Tie's interior seats and panels. The seats were covered in charcoal-colored leather that's accented with hand-stitched red flames, while the door panels and headliner received tweed covering in a graphite hue, replete with matching flames.

For kickin' sounds, the audio pros at Goins Automotive



The cockpit of this red ripper is, as expected, totally outfitted with style and performance upgrades. Mike Cox of Professional Auto Sound stitched the leather seat covers as well as the tweed-covered door panels and headliner. Goins Automotive Group was responsible for the ultra-clean install of the Blaupunkt head unit and multiple Blaupunkt amplifiers as well as the triangle-shaped Bazzoka subs and the Santeca headrest monitors.



Group were called in. The Tempe, Arizona-based sound experts assembled and installed a premium entertainment system featuring a Blaupunkt head unit, multiple Blaupunkt amplifiers, a quartet of triangle-shaped Bazzoka subwoofers, and multiple mid-woofers and tweeters strategically placed in the door panels and dash. For visual entertainment, and to keep an eye on tailgaters, Goins installed Santeca video monitors in the back of the headrests and a rearview monitor in place of the interior rearview mirror.

With the truck complete, Shawn set off for the HD's first major show, the '02 SEMA Show in Las Vegas, where onlookers were stunned at the 4x4's level of build quality and detail. What they didn't see was Shawn throttling the showy Chevy for the lens of Wes Allison during our cover shoot, slithering the HD through the mud during a rare, rainy SoCal day, and apparently loving every minute of it. As we watched Shawn get the HD buried, we remarked what a refreshing change it was to see a show-worthy truck actually being used for 'wheeling in a manner that threw caution to the wind. We'd further observe that this truck proves beyond a doubt that Shawn's blueprint for a 4x4, which would exhibit equal parts show and go, was solid. Moreover, this 4x4 drives home the fact that stylish looks and true off-road performance are certainly not mutually exclusive concepts, at least not on a vehicle modified by a dedicated and clever enthusiast like Shawn Gibson.

SPECIFICATIONS

Owner/hometown:

Shawn Gibson/Corona, California

Vehicle:

'01 Chevrolet Heavy Duty 2WD dualie converted to 4WD with single rear wheels

Suspension:

Off Road Unlimited solid axle conversion, 16-inch lift National Spring leaf packs, two Sway-A-Way Race Runner dampers per wheel on custom shock hoops (front); 16-inch lift National Spring leaf packs with one Sway-A-Way Race Runner damper per wheel on custom mounts.

Transmission/transfer case:

Allison five-speed automatic/New Process 205

Axes:

Dana 60 (front); GM Corporate 14-bolt (rear), both with 4.10:1 gear ratio

Wheels:

16.5x12-inch Weld Stone Crusher

Tires:

44x18.50x16.5-inch Super Swamper

Engine:

6.6L Duramax Diesel with BD Power Chip and Gibson stainless steel exhaust

Other modifications:

Custom front valance with '00 Silverado headlights by Pro-Design; Stull Industries billet grille inserts; Kodiak Slide Winder steps (extended); Line-X bed liner.



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