

## Netcong auto shop's custom Camaro gets national showcase

By TEHANI SCHNEIDER • STAFF WRITER • June 1, 2010

NETCONG---It was delivered quietly last September to the auto restoration shop owned by Phil and Dana Brazer on Allen Street. Solid black, the stock [2010 Chevrolet](#) Camaro 1SS sported no bells and whistles.

Eight months later, it will roll out of Netcong Auto Restorations to much fanfare, every inch of chrome customized and detailed, ready to be shown at the Pocono 500 next weekend.

For the Brazers, whose shop was handpicked by Popular Mechanics to make over the Camaro for the magazine's annual [Car](#) Makeover feature, the extensive project was a tribute to teamwork and a true test for their small shop.

"We're a young shop," said Phil Brazer, 47, of Hillsborough, who opened his business just two years ago. "We didn't think of all the shops out there, that they'd pick us ... We're thrilled."

Project Camaro began last July when more than 200 auto restoration shops [nationwide](#) were asked by Popular Mechanics to send in proposals for designing the ultimate, high-performance muscle car, said Bruce Mitnick, project general manager for the magazine.

"Some of the shops were very well established, major players in the field," Mitnick said. "But we had a very good feeling when we went out (to Netcong). ... When we met them--Dana, Phil and their crew--their personalities just meshed."

In Netcong, Popular Mechanics also found a shop that matched the criteria it was looking for--the ability to design and implement a custom Camaro that incorporated the advertising needs of the magazine's clients, Mitnick said. The finished car also had to include a wide range of state-of-the-art [technology](#) integrated into the interior.

"We asked them to give us an idea of what they'd do mechanically and to the exterior and interior," Mitnick said. "They came back with ideas that were interesting, things they wanted to do to the body work. We had them completely modify and customize the car."

The end result? A sleek, supercharged ride with 600 [horsepower](#) that boasts a black-and-white checkerboard pattern painted on the sides, punctuated with the same pattern in marina blue and violet on the hood. Quad halogen "halo" headlights shine under a custom grille with billet aluminum mesh--"to increase the airflow to the supercharger", explained Netcong team member Hal Haley.

Along the sides, the quarter vents are cut in "to enhance the airflow to the brakes and tires" and extra taillights were added in the back of the modified trunk, Haley said. The interior, done by Creative Auto Interiors of Butler, features black and blue leather with custom stitching, accent lighting and a black-and-white houndstooth pattern to upholster the seats.

The houndstooth--a fixture of Camaros in 1968 and 1969--brings some touches of a bygone era into the finished car, said Rodger Pisani, owner of Creative Auto Interiors. On the other hand, the blue microsuede gives it a "really modern and wild and crazy look," he said.

As far as technology, the Camaro offers a computer with Wi-Fi in the glove compartment, a printer and PlayStation in the back, a [Bluetooth](#) unit, night vision and a back-up camera, Pisani said. Four subwoofers fill the trunk and six additional speakers are mounted above the back seat.

For Mitnick, the finished Camaro exceeded the expectations of Popular Mechanics and GM executives. He praised the custom body work and interior work as "phenomenal" and specifically pointed out the fusion of the quad headlights and taillights as "very unique."

"We're not sure it's been done before," Mitnick said. "All in all, you see this car coming down the road, you stop and look."

The project, which was chronicled in a two-part advertorial feature for the magazine's combination May/June issue, focused on the camaraderie of the small shop and the team members who put countless hours of labor into the Camaro.

"We had two guys (working) on (the car) for seven days a week for four months," Haley said.

The Brazers, both classic car enthusiasts by nature, are high school sweethearts who each left behind the corporate world in 2008 to pursue their dream of opening an auto restoration shop together.

Brazer said they were able to keep business flowing during the duration of the project and received a groundswell of support from customers.

"They were excited for it. They were eager to see the work being done," said Brazer. "This has caused a stir in the town."

The Camaro will stay at the Netcong shop until June 4, when it will be loaded for the trip west to the Poconos for popular annual NASCAR race. The [vehicle](#) will also be showcased at Route 66 Car Show in San Bernadino, Calif., and at the 2010 SEMA Show in November in Las Vegas.

**Tehani Schneider: 973-428-6631;**

[tschneider@gannett.com](mailto:tschneider@gannett.com)