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2007 N2A Motors 789

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By Don Sherman

Photography: Randy G



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Freezing temperatures, bleak skies, and two inches of fresh snow are sound reasons to evacuate Michigan in early March. That is, unless the coolest remix of the Motor City's greatest hits is in town with its top stowed. Then you slip on your mittens and wait for the plows to pass to see what this crazy-quilt convertible is all about.



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The 789 fender badge tells all: a 1957 Chevy's face artfully grafted to a '58 Impala's middle and a '59 Chevy's bat-wing tail. N2A Motors of Santa Ana, California, builds this \$135,000 FrankenChevy, although the concept behind it germinated on the opposite coast. Fred Kanter, N2A's chairman, recalls: "Three years ago, my friend George Kerbeck, owner of the Chevy dealership in Atlantic City, had a brainstorm. He was going to have his body shop cut and weld parts from 1957 through '59 Chevrolets to create the ultimate 1950s icon. Those three cars are striking, and this was the only time in history when three successive model year Chevys were each unique designs.



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"I asked George for thirty minutes to improve on his inspiration. A quick call to Terrence Robinson at the Kanter Concepts studio [now the home of N2A Motors] produced a sketch returned by fax. Kerbeck deemed our design better than what he had in mind, so we decided to build it. Using Corvette underpinnings was the logical approach, because it's the world's best performance value, and its spaceframe construction fits our needs perfectly."

Two years passed before Kanter's design shop was able to advance the 789 beyond a sketch. Its turn finally came with a coming-out party at last fall's SEMA show. Kanter's crew had peeled the body panels off a new Corvette. After filling voids with plywood, the exterior was plastered with modeling clay. The sculpting, smoothing, digitizing, and mold making consumed fourteen weeks. The resulting show car, which we drove around

Detroit's Belle Isle, wears the first carbon-fiber panels used to cast the production molds. The bright trim that sweeps down the sides and along the trailing edges of the bat wings is chrome-plated brass shaped by a CNC milling machine, although production models will use chrome-plated fiberglass moldings. The 789 is about 150 pounds heavier than a stock Corvette, since it's four inches wider and its back end is stretched by eleven inches. Kanter adds stiffer antiroll bars to help control the extra weight.

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The original doors are intact under the new skin to ensure that none of the factory's side-impact protection is lost in translation. The windshield, folding roof, tonneau cover, and mirrors also are stock Corvette parts. For now, the interior changes stop at the addition of tricolor inserts and N2A logos for the seats, but the Corvette script molded into the dash will be gone in production 789s.

The view forward bristles with gun-sight hood ornaments, and the rear view resembles Batman's cape, dispelling any residual Corvette illusions. A Borla center-outlet exhaust system adds bark to the stock 400-hp bite. Meaty BFGoodrich g-Force T/A rubber on nineteen- and twenty-inch rims complete the caricature. Since there's a \$2000 wheel and tire allowance built into the \$135,000 price, customers are encouraged to spec out their 789s as they like. In fact, the company name--N2A--is shorthand for "No Two Alike," so duplication is the only prohibition. Those who already own the core C6 Corvette can order Kanter's plastic surgery for \$75,000.

A half-dozen 789s already are under construction, and Kanter's dream is a run of fifty cars per year. Now that his first concept has advanced to the limited-production stage, other ideas have sprung from his fertile imagination. A removable hard top for the 789 that emulates the '58 Impala's roof is next. What might be christened the '67 Stinger will blend the nose of a '67 Corvette with the sides of a '65 and the tail of a '63 split-window Sting Ray. His WOW concept, code for Wildcat on Wheels, combines the Buick Y-Job's grille with a '53 Buick Skylark's

sidesweeps and the '54 Buick Wildcat II's aft section. Kanter's 5-to-1 combines the front of a '55 Chevy with a '61 tail. This idea is aimed at providing 789 customers relief from ennui; when they're in the mood for a face-lift, they can mix and match components from various model years as they deem fit.

Kanter's 789 exceeds the sum of its parts on several counts. The craftsmanship and aesthetics are both superb. The Corvette hidden within brings to the party a long wheelbase, a wide track, and a low beltline. The standard perils of cruising--electrical mishaps, overheating, popped ball joints, and leaky transmissions--should never be an issue with these modern mechanicals. We can imagine Harley Earl and Bill Mitchell in designer's heaven smiling down upon this salute to their enduring classics.

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