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BODY AND ELECTRICAL

Pro-Touring is about doing something different, but making body modifications are not required. Sometimes the stock GM body just won't work with what we want to do with our car, so some changes might be in order.

Stock Body

There are a few benefits to using stock body panels. If you have stock front fenders and damage one in an accident, you can simply locate another stock fender, bolt it into place, and add some paint. That is much easier than replacing a front fender that had a cus-

tom fender flare or bodywork. The job becomes a lot bigger when you have to replace a part and modify it again.

Steel body parts are stronger when they are bolted together as the factory intended. For instance, a '68 Camaro came from the factory with steel inner fenderwells that bolt to the steel front fenders, steel front fender extensions, steel radiator core support, and the firewall. The inner fenderwells tie the entire front sheetmetal together. The front subframe has six large bolts that hold it in place. Two of those are bolted to the radiator core support, which is bolted to front fenders and fenderwells. All these

connections create a strong integral structure that distributes load and stress from the subframe. Some Camaro owners choose to remove their inner fenderwells so they can run lowered stance and bigger front tires without having interference and scrubbing. This also eliminates a few pounds from the front end. With these benefits, some people don't pay attention to the major drawback to removing them. Without them, the front sheetmetal relies on ten 3/8-inch bolts that attach the front fenders to the firewall, and two larger bolts that attach the radiator core support to the frame. This leaves a lot to be desired in the structur-



The inner fenderwell has been removed from this car. There is a lot of flex without them, but with the support bars added to connect the frame to the bars located on the opposite side of the firewall will take care of that.



This is the body-bushing bracket for a reproduction radiator core support. When I went to install my Detroit Speed & Engineering solid body bushing, it would not fit. The bushing hole was 3/16-inch smaller diameter than my factory core support hole. Reproduction parts are rarely exact copies, so be aware.



If you want factory sheetmetal to repair your car, salvage yards have all kinds of parts available. With this extremely clean rear section, you could bring new meaning to "back-halving" your car.

al-integrity department. The subframe is able to flex more than it was designed for. Cracks can start forming in places you would never imagine. The inner fenderwells not only add integrity for hard driving stresses, they also add strength to the front end if you were to ever get into an accident, keep gravel thrown up by front tires from putting outward dents in your front fenders, and they help keep your engine compartment free of dirt and gravel.

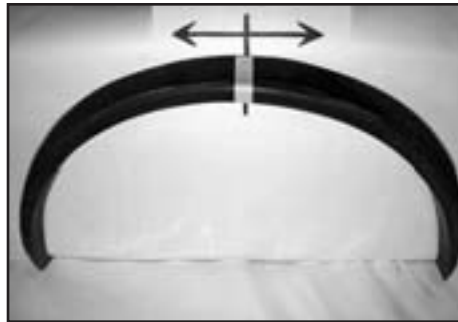
If you are going to remove a part from your car, take a good look at why it was there. If it adds strength, and you remove it, you will regret it sooner or later. Most people remove the steel inner fenderwells for tire clearance, but you can still keep them and modify them so you still have the strength and protection they provide. I've seen them trimmed in such a way as to leave a large hole at the top of the well that isn't visible from the engine compartment. You can also build your own panel to fit in the hole if you don't want to leave it open for rocks and dirt. If you still insist on removing them, at least add some support bars from the firewall that extend down to a point in front of the spindle centerline.

Custom Bodywork

Some Pro-Touring applications require modifying body parts to make your parts fit. Not all barriers can be broken by bolt-on parts. Sometimes you need to modify or fabricate parts to achieve a certain look or goal.

If you want to change your old stock door handles, you could use an old custom trick and shave (remove) the door handles. Then use electric solenoids with hidden pushbutton switches to actuate the latches. With new technology, you could even do away with the hidden pushbuttons and use an electronic remote opener on your key chain. Another custom door handle trick is to swap door handles from a newer model car or truck. If your door skin is fairly flat, you could swap in a set of door handles from a '90 Chevy truck. They fit completely flush for a clean look.

Some GM cars and trucks have fenderwell openings that hang too low or are too small for the size tire you would like to run. Without flaring the fender openings, you can modify them to look and function better for your application. For instance, if you lower the stance of your car and the fender lip hangs too low for your liking, you can cut the outer fender lip off, and reattach it a couple of inches higher to keep the factory look, but allow for better tire to fender clearance.



Here is what you need to do to stretch the front fender opening and retain somewhat of a stock appearance. Cut the outer edge off the fender, cut it in the center (as shown by tape on fender lip), reattach it with the necessary clearance for your tires, and then add material between the two sections of fender lip.

If you run a large tire in a front wheel opening that doesn't allow enough sweeping movement for turning and articulation while pulling in and out of driveways, you might decide you want to widen the front fender opening. You can keep the factory appearance of the wheelwell opening by cutting a couple of inches of the outer lip off the car. Cut the lip in half and reattach it to the fender with a gap between the two sections. If you need more room to turn the tires, you will need a bigger gap between the two pieces. After figuring out how much wider the opening is, you will need to fabricate another section to fill that gap.

GM and restoration parts companies don't make all the trim pieces we need to complete all of our cars. Sometimes you can't find good pieces at wrecking yards or swap meets to use on

your project. Or maybe you simply want to remove the trim for a cleaner look. Some people resort to custom making their own trim pieces at a high cost. Others simply remove the trim and spend countless hours welding in new sections of steel to take the place of the original trim.

Probably the largest job in the history of removing body trim is the job of removing window trim and flush mounting windows. If it's done right, they look awesome. This gives the clean appearance we all see on new production cars. It is necessary to fabricate all new sections of steel that fill in all the



If you want to spend endless hours fabricating new window openings, you can make your car's windows flush mounted like all the new cars. It's a great look that is subtle enough to have people know something is different, but not know what it is.



The ignition coil here has been relocated to the cowl, where it will be hidden by a cover. Some people hide components so well that it can take hours just to replace an ignition box. These parts fail, so keep that in mind when hiding them.