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Knockout

Text by Paul Rachwal

Photos by Velocite

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As an experienced custom car builder, we expect only the best from 28-year-old Niagara Falls, ON native Keith Losier. Much like legendary boxing fight promoter Don King, Losier is known within the automotive scene as the man behind many memorable and exciting contenders. Unlike Don King, however, he didn't do it with funky hair or cheesy fight titles. Instead, Losier prefers to build his competitors out of metal, fibreglass and carbon fibre.

After earning a GM Design Award at SEMA in 2004 for his previous work on a Saturn Ion Quad Coupe, the impressed staff at General Motors promptly provided Losier with a Chevy Cobalt SS to start off this project.

Thanks to the dedicated crew at Desired Customs, including his father, Hector, and uncle Leo, the Cobalt underwent its complete transformation in a mere two and a half month timeframe.

Losier has been exciting crowds and delivering knockout punches to the custom car scene for some time now. His latest creation, this 2005 Chevrolet Cobalt SS, sports a unique right hand drive conversion, among other show-stopping modifications.

Although the supercharger system on the Cobalt SS is an OEM piece, it has been modified for more power via a smaller pulley from South Florida Pulley Headquarters. Losier went with a 2.8-inch diameter pulley, which ups the stock 12psi by about 6 points.

Losier will soon make another big upgrade to the engine bay, in the form of Hahn Racecraft's prototype turbocharger kit for the supercharged engine. That's right, this kit will effectively make the Cobalt twin-charged. Based on the principle of compound forced induction, where one compressor feeds the other, Hahn's kit should produce about 400hp according to the company's President, Bill Hahn Jr.

The intake is a custom K&N filter, while a prototype Vibrant 3-inch exhaust takes care of exhaust duties. Losier is either very confident in the Ecotec engine's



strength or is simply trying to blow it up, as there is also a Nitrous Express nitrous oxide system plumbed in.

But even the wild boost set-up wasn't enough and Losier stuffed the head with Crane Cams-ground GM Racing camshafts driven by GM Racing's gears. Channelling the boosted Ecotec's muscle to the wheels is done via a Fidanza flywheel and a Bully Performance clutch.

The carbon fibre hood opens away from the windshield, (similar to a Corvette's) thanks to a specially designed pivot (dubbed the Leo Hinge, after its maker). The operation of the two doors is likewise unconventional by daily driver standards, as Autoloc's automated upright door system was installed.

But before all that, the Desired Customs team stripped the body, shaved the door handles, moulded in the three-piece RKSport spoiler and removed the suspension pieces for powder-coating. It was then that those fat fender flares started taking shape, with Extreme Dimensions' universal carbon fibre units as a guide. Just aft of the front doors, in the quarter panels, Leo set to work on creating NSX-style brake-cooling vents, also from carbon fibre. These, as well as all other openings, get custom-made (by Hector) billet grilles inside them. The black weave was sourced from Hamilton, ON's CF-tech.

That BASF paint (hooked up by Brian Fox at Fox Marketing) is two-tone Candy Orange, offset with silver and red highlights. The paint was laid down at Desired Customs, which has recently moved to a bigger, 7,500sq. ft. facility. Jay Lundy of Lundy Custom Paint put down the spray and airbrushed in all of the details.

The 5-inch wide body meant the 20- by 10-inch Konig Beyond wheels needed to be pushed out to match, so one-inch spacers were installed on the hubs. The dubs are surrounded by BFGoodrich KDW rubber, sized at 225/30 all around.

Behind the spokes sit the upsized stoppers donated to the cause by the Stainless Steel Brake Corporation (SSBC). The 31-year-old company's Force 10 kit was bolted in up front, and sports 12- by 1-inch slotted rotors along with the SportTwin two-piston aluminum calliper. The rear makes do with 10.5-inch rotors with Sport R1 single piston SSBC callipers. Brake fluid travels inside braided stainless steel lines.

The Cobalt can bust a move on the show floor via its Easy Street digital air ride system which features a hidden six-gallon tank that's filled with a couple of Viair electric compressors. Losier tells us the beauty of the system is its ability to self-level and one-button down or up ease-of-use. And whether it's layin' low or strutting tall, the car is sparkling thanks to LiteGlow neon and strobe lights. Ignited's HID kit replaces the stock bulbs to give the Chevy a decidedly expensive flavour.

Moving inside, the coupe is absolutely stuffed with mobile entertainment gear. The two occupants are seated in tandem fashion and each gets a 19-inch LCD screen from Panasonic retrofitted with resistive touch screen panels from 3M to control the Gnet Canada computer system. The Gnet allows for internet connectivity and communicates with the Xbox gaming console which allows games or DVDs to stream to the Panasonic screens. The car's systems status is also displayed on the screens thanks to an AutoTap OBDII



scan tool, and that includes road and engine speeds, among other, more detailed data.

As for the rest of the interior, the HVAC controls are now on the ceiling, the factory radio is offset in the fiberglass console and the rearview mirror was replaced with a camera and a 7-inch Panasonic display. Dwayne Virag, Mobile Dynamics' Special Project Fabricator, was largely responsible for work inside, from the concept to the build. If you caught that the factory radio is still in the car, let us explain. Losier wanted to show great, aftermarket-quality sound while can be done while retaining your factory-issued radio, and he did it thanks to Audiocontrol's LC6 line output converter.

There is no dashboard to speak of, but instead a plethora of Faze gauges moulded into a custom fiberglass dash ahead of the factory steering wheel. Moulded in elsewhere is an Ignited push-button starter, the drive for the Gnet computer and an army of toggle switches. Vito at Toronto-based SeamLine, another of Desired Customs' freelance workers, upholstered the doors and ceiling in UltraSuede with perforated leather.

The front-row spectator controls the car from the comfort of a Yonaka Ronin leather perch lined with LiteGlow harnesses for safety and a B&M short shifter speeds up shifts. The rear, center seat is flanked by two Exile Car Audio XP12D woofers, good for 2,000W of peak power and mounted in a sealed enclosure. The rear fill comes via a pair of Exile X65COAX speakers mounted on the fibreglassed rear shelf. The ceiling houses two more X65COAX drivers in fibreglass 'stalactites' sprouting down as well as another 65COAX acting as a center for a 5.1-channel surround sound experience. On the top of the dashboard, a 65COMP acts as the center channel and it's flanked by another X65COMP component set complete with satellite-mounted tweeters.

The bass drivers are pushed by an Exile Audio X1200.1 monoblock amp, able to crank out 1,200W into one channel. The components, meanwhile, make do with a pair of X600.4 Power amplifiers. The heatsinks share the trunk with the Gnet computer hardware and air ride controls so you know it gets warm in there.

Scosche 1/0-gauge power wire, front fuse holder and distribution blocks carry the power necessary to feed the hardware, while Scosche's 1-farad PSC1F20PK capacitor supplies it. Starting amps come from an Optima Yellow Top battery, with one more hidden away for back-up.

The car's hood is like a biography of who had a hand in this project, and Losier entrusted Autographix for the logos. Apart from the many great companies, Losier wants to thank friends and family, including wife Cheryl, little son Zachary and father Hector. GM's SEMA Relations Director, Bob Kern, gets special thanks for making this project possible. And let's not forget the Desired crew, made up of Norm, Jesse, Phil, Tom and Brad. We can't wait to see Losier's Cobalt step into the ring against other vehicles, as it should stir up the show scene and be at the top of the Ecotec tuning community for a while

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