



Multiple personalities

CAN'T CHOOSE BETWEEN THE CLASSIC LOOKS OF THE '57, '58 AND '59 CHEVYS? NO PROBLEM – THANKS TO CUSTOM SPECIALISTS, RACEPAINT, YOU CAN HAVE ALL THREE IN ONE CAR – THE '789'!

Several years ago, when John Evans spotted a 789 Chev being unloaded from a transporter at the SEMA show in Las Vegas, he knew it was something special. It was developed by U.S. custom car designer, Fred Kantar, and was spawned from his love of early Chev's. As the name suggests, the 789 combines the classic looks of a 1957 Chevy Belair front, the rear of a 1959 Chevrolet (including tail fins and cat eye taillights) and a midsection suggestive of a 1958 Impala. For modern performance and handling the bodywork is built over the latest C6 Corvette.

John snapped some photos and, on his return to Melbourne, showed them to a longstanding client who decided he just had to have one. Fortunately, for more than 15 years John's business, Racepaint, has been renowned for producing outstanding custom vehicle projects so he was well placed to get the job done. To begin with, an '06 Corvette was sourced from the U.S., along

with the five piece kit from manufacturer, N2A (No-2-Alike).

Initial fitting of the panels was done by Motor Cars International (a Melbourne company which imports and converts Corvettes) and the vehicle was delivered in a raw fibreglass state to the Racepaint workshop in Braeside for repairs, adjustments and finishing. According to John, the project took around five months and had its share of difficulties.

"All the Corvette body panels are removed and, basically, all the replacement panels are glued and bolted in place. A fibreglass skin is bonded over the existing door skins, the rear is a one piece wrap around piece and the front is also one piece. The bonnet tilts forward to access the engine while the bumper, grille, etc stays in place.

Unfortunately, we ran into numerous difficulties in finishing this car, with the kit that was supplied requiring extensive work. Most of the panels had air cavities hidden beneath the fibreglass gel-coat on all the sharp edges and all of these had to be found and filled. And, although they looked straight, the panels required hours of speed filing and filling, as well as getting all the gaps right on the doors, bonnet, etc.

For example, the bonnet had over 80 hours invested in it just to get it to the paint stage. We had to do all the final fitting up of components, including having all the body moulds polished – they're CNC machined



out of billet aluminium and arrived just as they came off the machine with all the machining marks. Also, the kit came with no instruction manual so it took a lot of brainstorming to figure out what went where.

Fortunately, my experienced Racepaint Team took it in their stride and we got some specialist help from a good mate of mine, Chris Walton, from Maverick Boats in Corowa NSW. Chris is an expert patternmaker with years of experience designing and building world

class ski boats and he volunteered to drive down several times to assist."

The finishing touch is provided by the stunning PPG paintjob. John recently made the switch to PPG after over 12 years with another custom paint manufacturer and, he says, it's already paying dividends.

"The custom paint industry may not be as big here as it is in America but PPG still believes that it's worthy of full support and it provides everything we need. The PPG Vibrance range of custom colours is amazing and the technical support is outstanding, as is the user friendly aspect of the products."

Despite its unique nature, John says the 789 project is pretty typical of the work done by Racepaint.

"The range of wild and unusual projects we get involved in is nothing short of mind-boggling at times. The other side of our business, Fleeting Image, focuses on digital printing and vehicle wrapping and sign writing – it was amongst the first in Melbourne catering to that type of work.

We've landed helicopters in our car park, wheeled them in and fully airbrushed them and we've painted 60 foot sports boats. In fact, ski race boats have been our specialty for years and we've painted in excess of two hundred social and race boats, as well as race cars, hot rods, choppers, helmets and much more!

The importance of 'getting it right' on the 789 project can't be overstated. It's unique because it's the first to be built as a coupe – all the others in the U.S. are roadsters. When it hits the show car circuit shortly, it will be very difficult to miss – it's the centre of attention wherever it goes!"

Racepaint '789' facts

Value: Approximately \$220,000

Weight: 1500kg

Engine: 6.0 litre LS2 V8

Power: 298KW

Torque: 542 Nm

Transmission: Six-speed manual

