

Blazer Pickup

Q I have an '89 Chevy S-10 Blazer with two-wheel drive. I've done all the usual lowering, emblem removal, custom graphics, and custom wheel and tire tricks. It's definitely a trick truck, but it's not very different from a lot of other two-wheel-drive S-10 Blazers in my area. I'd like to make a rather radical body change, but I'm not sure how to go about it.

I want to convert the Blazer to a pickup. I once saw a fullsize '72 Blazer that had a short cab and a small bed where the rear seat used to be. It was shorter than a normal shortbed Chevy pickup, and the smooth sides (no space between the cab and bed as on regular pickups) really looked great. I want to make an S-10 version. Does anyone make a kit for this type of conversion? If I cut my roof and shorten it, will I need to reinforce the frame? Any tips would be greatly appreciated.

Dennis McConnell, San Diego, CA

A We've seen a couple of fullsize Blazers converted to smooth-side pickups such as the one you've described. The first time we saw one, we did a double take, thinking that someone had filled the gap between the cab and bed of a Chevy pickup. The key to making one of these conversions look like a factory job is the shape of the back of the cab, back window, and bulkhead.

We've never seen any conversion kits. It wouldn't hurt to reinforce the frame, and you should also make sure that the frame is solid during the roof-removal part of the conversion. You don't want to put the Blazer back together and find that the doors were allowed to sag during construction. Unless you're a highly experienced welder and fabricator, we suggest you have a professional body shop do the conversion. A van/pickup conversion shop that has done some pickup/convertible or removable metal top conversions would be a good place to have the work done.

For the rear roof line, you have at least two choices. You could make the cut at the front edge of the stock Blazer rear side glass, which would produce a slanted B-pillar and create a sort of mini-El Camino look. This approach would work well with a slightly recessed rear window and bulkhead. The problem is finding an

acceptable rear window. An S-10 pickup rear window might work. Some custom fabrication around the inner part of the B-pillar would be required.

The other roof treatment would be to adapt the rear window and surrounding sheetmetal from an S-10 pickup. The stock slanted Blazer B-pillar would need to be trimmed and mated to the pickup rear-window panel. A smooth rear-window conversion is crucial to achieving a professional-looking job.

The other key to making the conversion look like a real pickup is the construction of the bed area. You could adapt the ribbed bed floor from an S-10 pickup or make a smooth sheetmetal floor. A unique cross between the factory pickup ribs and the smooth look is to adapt a mildly ribbed roof section from a station wagon. Street rodders use ribbed station wagon roof panels to fill the tops of vehicles that originally had cloth inserts. The wagon roof panel could be fitted over the stock Blazer floor.

When you finish your Blazer/pickup conversion, send us some photos.

Pressure Problem

Q The oil pressure gauge on my 1/2-ton '91 GMC stepside pickup with the 5.0L V-8 has been fluctuating more than I think it should. When I start the engine in the morning, the needle indicates an above normal reading. However, after the engine has warmed up, I notice very low oil pressure readings. I use a top-grade motor oil, and I change it every 3,000 miles. Is it just a gauge problem or something more serious, such as a defective oil pump?

Dan M. Murdock, Omaha, NE

A The problem is most likely the oil pressure sending unit. GM service bulletin 47-61-49 addresses this problem. The solution is to install a new oil pressure sending unit, PN 12553175.

Discs Go Bad

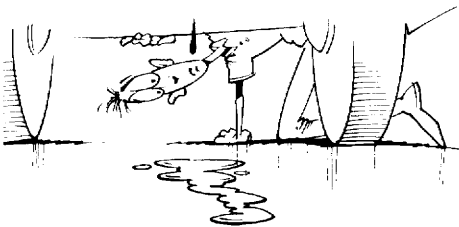
Q I own one of the hottest mini-trucks ever made—a '91 GMC Syclone. People who don't know what it is are stunned because they think a normal S-10 has just blown their doors off. The turbocharged 4.3L V-6 goes like a rocket, and the truck handles very well. The problem is the stopping department is sadly behind the rest of the truck's performance. I seem to go through front disc brake pads in a big hurry. I admit that I drive aggressively, but sometimes I can barely get 10,000 miles out of a set of front pads; the best I've ever done is about 15,000 miles. I get about twice the mileage on the rear shoes, but even that

isn't very good. I always buy the best available pads, so this wear rate seems unusual. The truck stops nice and straight, so I don't think there's an imbalance in the braking system. Should I have anything in particular checked? Can you recommend a better brand of pads? Or, do I just need to buy disc brake pads in bulk?

T.J. Johnson Jr., Chicago, IL

A You might consider your truck a mini-truck, and, granted, it's smaller than a fullsize Chevy/GMC pickup, but that doesn't mean that it's a lightweight. Your truck weighs as much as many musclecars, and the turbocharged V-6 puts out as much horsepower, or more, as the V-8 engines in many musclecars. That means your brake system is doing some heavy-duty stopping with relatively small 10-inch front discs and rear drum brakes. The brake system is not equal to the performance level of the rest of the truck—it's the same system used on low-performance Chevy/GMC S/T-series trucks (S-series trucks are two-wheel drive, and the T-series is four-wheel drive).

Your chassis is based on the four-wheel-drive T-series platform. That means that you can't upgrade to larger passenger car front brakes, as you can with the two-wheel drive S-series platform. A company that deals with high-performance brake systems and may help you improve your Syclone's brakes is Baer Racing (Dept. ST, 3108 W. Thomas Rd., Ste. 1201, Phoenix, AZ 85017, 602/233-1411). Ask about its four-wheel disc brake kits.



Leak Pique

Q I'm one of those people who believe that the condition of your truck and workshop reflects the type of care you give it. I take fastidious care of my '90 Ford F-150 pickup. I frequently inspect the chassis and engine compartment for any loose fittings or fasteners. Since my garage floor is painted light gray, any drip-related problems show up quickly. So, I was not happy when power steering fluid started appearing on my nice, clean floor. The leak is definitely coming from the power steering gear, but the steering works fine and doesn't make any unusual noises. I hate to replace everything just to stop a leak, but I hate a messy chassis and floor. Can you suggest any easier solutions?

Carl Zorne, Las Cruces, NM