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# EVEN IF IT GOES, CHROME IT!

RETRO USA'S NEW CHALLENGER BUMPER KITS ADD STYLE TO YOUR LC BEAST... QUICKLY.

STORY GEOFF STUNKARD

THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A LITTLE DISDAIN AMONG THE HARDCORE MUSCLE PEOPLE FOR ITEMS THAT DON'T ACTUALLY HELP YOU GO FASTER. SURE, MAYBE YOU CAN SWAP A SET OF NEW BLOWER PISTONS INTO YOUR GTX ON A COOL SUMMER MORNING, BUT FOR A LOT OF US, THAT'S STILL A BUNCH OF WORK.

Parts that simply look good on the outside can make a statement too, especially when they don't need a huge amount of tools or skill to use.

style is subtle, with the inset grille area sculpted to match the surrounding bodywork with nothing bright except the rim of the grille insert and the

Florida, had a personal cruiser base-model Challenger. These guys have been doing top conversions since the 1970s and have found the new LC models

a great market niche (they did virtually all the Chally convertibles shown at SEMA last year). Larry felt something was missing.

"The front of my car, which is black, lacked anything distinct," he recalls. "I was parked next to a 1970 convertible and realized it was the lack of the chrome bumper and nose trim that was missing. The grille leaps out of the older car because of the chrome trim."

Luckily, Retro USA is offering just what was needed. Gary and son Daryl Green are long-time Mopar fans (they have a '64 Polara drag car) and are using 21st century technology to add vintage styling cues to modern American performance cars. They now have several Challenger pieces available, and Larry agreed to have Daryl (a summa cum laude graduate of Mankato State University in Automotive Engineering Technology and a SEMA Scholarship recipient) do the bumper install onsite at the Mopar Nationals in the Retro USA booth. The whole process took about 20 minutes; you'll probably need a little more time if you are doing this at home for the first time, but it is pretty easy.

Retro USA's Challenger dress-up pieces fit that bill.

While there are many ways you can modify and personalize your ride, one thing that is somewhat lacking in the present models is chrome. The modern

chrome nose emblem. Certainly it works, but if you want a little more shine up there, what do you do?

Larry Moran, who is the sales manager for Droptop Customs by Convertible Builders LLC (owned by his son Jeff) in





**1** Clean up the factory front bumper one last time; Daryl Green uses isopropyl alcohol to make sure no bugs and road spots are left on the Droptop Customs shop showpiece.

**2** The bumper set includes three pieces: the chromed bumper made from high-impact TPO plastic and two supports to keep it from being flush with the car itself. Take a look at the support; there is one for each side and it will only fit one way. 3M's VHB double-sided tape will keep it in place, leaving a seamless, OEM-appearing install. The adhesive is covered by bright red tape ribbon.



**3** Daryl holds one section up against the car, carefully making sure it is exactly situated on the OEM section. These are conformed to the shape of the fascia and are self-aligning. Once satisfied, he peels back about a half-inch of the red tape ribbon from each corner to keep it located. Then, it is a careful, steady pull to remove the entire backing ribbon, going from the end to the center; the end points keep the bumper located until all the rear ribbons are pulled off.

**4** Note as Daryl holds up the passenger-side support that the two sections do not abut each other; there is a space between them. The

supporters will align perfectly if the corners are on correctly. Again, peel back a small amount of ribbon to locate the support and verify they are parallel before completing the complete install for the supporter. Lay the new bumper over this for one final check before proceeding.

**5** This 3M Adhesion Promoter is used on the rear of the chromed assembly and will ensure the exposed adhesive on the support will adhere completely. It works just like a towelette; just be sure you are ready to install the bumper when you do this.





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MOPAR



**6** At this juncture, a second pair of hands are a big plus. Gary Green holds one end while Daryl makes certain the bumper is properly aligned. Time is taken to be sure that the bumper is exactly right; Daryl worked from the center of the car to the ends, making sure the bumper has not shifted. By exposing a small amount of adhesive at each end point, the bumper is securely held to the car while Daryl prepares to strip out the ribbons.


**7** The realistic gap between bumper and car created by the supports is a tribute to their pre-engineering and makes the bumper look like a stand-alone piece of equipment. Here is the front trim. Both it and the rear consist of three pieces and are created for perfect alignment and long-term construction. Lightweight and durable - frankly, we'd like to see this stuff on a few of the current NHRA Drag Paks.





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8 From behind, we can see the additional chrome rear bumper and perfectly fitted chrome trim, augmented by Magnaflow exhaust tips. The edge the trim mounts to seems made for this modification, and it frames the taillights.

9 Here is Larry Moran, engineer Daryl Green, and owner Gary Green with the final product. 

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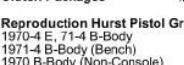
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