

1969 Nova SS

The Chevy II is all grown up!

BY RICHARD TRUESDELL ■ GROWING UP IN THE '60S IN ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA, DAVE LINDSLEY LOVED CARS, MUSCLECARS IN PARTICULAR. HIS STORY ISN'T ALL THAT DIFFERENT FROM THOUSANDS OF OTHER BABY BOOMERS WHO JUST HAPPENED TO COME OF AGE WHEN HORSEPOWER AND FAST CARS RULED THE STREETS.

"I bought my first car, a 1958 Pontiac with a three-speed transmission on the column," Lindsley said. "Being 16 in 1966, I was smitten by the musclecar era. By 1968, I had bought and sold six cars. During my senior year in high school, I bought a 1967 Chevelle SS 396 that was just 11 months old. As times were, I did a lot of street racing. In November 1969, I ordered a brand-new 1970 Nova SS 396/375 L78 with a bench seat and a Super Turbo 400 on the column. I received the Nova in January 1970. I added all of the race parts and after the winter season was over, I really terrorized the streets. To support my habit, I have always worked hard and steady – usually at two jobs plus wheeling and dealing."

Around 1972, the dawn of the Disco Era, Lindsley abandoned his musclecar fixation, growing up a bit by purchasing a 1970 Riviera. After a 1983 move to California Lindsley started his own construction company and purchased two Corvettes – an '85 model for his wife and a '66 L79 327/350 for himself. While not technically a musclecar, the fiberglass sports cars put Lindsley back on the path to automotive righteousness. Shortly after the 'Vettes came along, he acquired a '67 Camaro from a guy who owed him money.

"I did a frame-on restoration to the Camaro," Lindsley said,



INTERIOR: The interior of this low-mile '69 Nova has never been restored. The aftermarket gauges are correct for the period and useful for the car's high-performance purpose. **ENGINE:** Only 5,262 1969 Novas were equipped with Chevy's 375hp, 396ci L78 V-8. This car's engine compartment has been detailed, but is otherwise original.

"and later I became seriously involved in the original numbers-matching musclecar community. Shortly after that, I met Sal Perez, owner of American Muscle Cars, who had done two frame-off restorations and countless other car related projects. We have become very close friends."

That brings us forward to the stunning black-on-black 1969 Nova Super Sport L78 you see on these pages. The Nova was a new breed of musclecar in its day. Where the first generation of musclecars was primarily intermediate-size GTOs, Chevelles, Mopar B-bodies, and Fairlanes from Ford, the Nova counted among its contemporaries true compacts – A-body Mopars such as the Dodge Dart and the limited-production 1969-only AMC SC/Rambler.

Lindsley has an extensive history on his Nova. It was bought new by Dick Martin from Berglund Chevrolet in





Jamestown, New York, then sold to an unknown second owner in Corry, Pennsylvania, in 1972, then on to Robert Saddler in Erie, who owned it from 1986 until 1995. Saddler then sold it to a William Hain, also from Erie, who kept it until 1998.

"It is amazing that this car was in Erie, my hometown, all this time," said Lindsley. "A friend of mine, Mark Graves, heard about this car from his dad who lives in Akron, Ohio, and is a car enthusiast himself. Mark, who already owns a 16,000-mile black 1969 Nova SS 396/375, flew back and bought it. He shipped it to California back in 1998. Mark did some detailing and decided that having two virtually identical Novas was too much. Having three young boys to raise was going to take all of his time and extra money, so he decided to sell it. The car really caught my attention but I still had hope that I would be able

to buy back my original Nova I had ordered new. So, this Nova was sold to a local guy who sold it to someone in San Diego."

The car came into Lindsley's custody in February 2008 with 52,000 miles on the odometer.

"I had just bought a California Classic Auto Trader on Saturday and saw it and knew that this was the first time this car was in the magazine for sale," Lindsley said. "I called the owner and went to see it that day. I called my friend Mark who had owned the car before and he went with me. We both knew it was the same car as soon as we saw it. After a bit of negotiating we agreed on a price and the car was mine. My brother Marty and I took the trailer down to San Diego the next day and brought the car to its new home."

Upon getting the car home Lindsley took note of its condition. It was in

excellent shape overall especially, considering it was repainted only once, in 1988. The body panels are super straight and the paint only has a few minor flaws which Lindsley plans to correct shortly. The undercarriage is very clean, and the car still retains its driveshaft loop and frame connectors from its drag racing days.

Lindsley is meticulous about all of his cars, a collection that includes a 1966 Nova SS 327, a '66 Chevelle SS L78 396 (profiled in the September issue of our sister publication *Musclecar Enthusiast*), a '66 Chevy Biscayne two-door sedan L72 427, a '67 Plymouth GTX two-door hardtop 426 Hemi, a '69 Camaro Z/28 Cross Ram, a '69 Camaro SS L78 396, and a '69 Camaro SS L78 396. He detailed the car and brought it back very close to the way it left the factory. He installed some of the deep-groove pulleys that were missing,



When Dave Lindsley bought this SS this year, it was wearing the sporty Rallye wheels, but the owner decided to dress the musclecar down with a set of plain steel rims, dog-dish hubcaps, and redline tires.





proper valve covers, date-coded plug wires, replaced the electronic ignition to original, and other miscellaneous engine detail items. In Lindsley's opinion the biggest change was replacing the car's Rallye wheels with standard steel wheels, complete with red line tires and the proper dog-dish hub caps.

Model year 1969 marked the first time Chevrolet's compact was simply called "Nova." From its inception in 1962 through a restyling in 1968, the Nova was the senior series for the Chevy II line. In the second year of its second generation – 1969 – the "Chevy II" part was dropped, and the Super Sport, or SS, took over as the premium package. A 153ci four-cylinder engine was standard equipment in the '69 Nova, but only around 6,000 were so ordered that year. Most Nova buyers were attracted to the 140hp, 230ci inline-six, with approximately 157,400

being built. Of the 88,400 V-8s built that year, 17,654 were upgraded to SS status – 7,209 of those SS V-8s were the 375hp, 396ci L34, and 5,262 were the 375hp, 396ci L78 found under the hood of our feature car.

The numbers-matching engine in Lindsley's Nova features an 11.0:1 compression ratio, forged pistons, steel crank shaft, rectangular heads, solid lifter camshaft, aluminum "Hi-Rise" intake manifold, and a dual-feed 780 Holley carburetor. This car is equipped with a 3.73:1 Positraction 12-bolt rear end, and the legendary Super Turbo-Hydromatic available only in the big-horsepower/solid-lifter cars.

Of all the cars in his collection the SS 396 is the car Lindsley drives the most and the farthest. The interior of the car is mostly original.

"Most of my other cars have had frame-off restorations," said Lindsley.

"They are basically trailer queens, and are driven only to local car shows, no freeways ever."

Like Lindsley, this author grew up on the East Coast, which gave us a lot to talk about besides his Nova. One thing we both remember is fueling up at Sunoco, which at the time offered the highest-octane fuel available. This potent liquid was dispensed through the company's unique "Custom Blending" pumps, which offered six different grades of gasoline from sub-regular to super-premium. This compared to only two or three grades available from competitive stations. Sunoco 260, the highest grade available, was what you put into the tank of your musclecar. Years later, Lindsley has become an avid collector of Sunoco memorabilia, a passion we both share. I bet he wishes he had a working Sunoco Custom Blending pump in the middle of his current high-octane collection. ■

For its redesign in model year 1968, the Chevy II received a roofline inspired by big brother Chevelle.

