

## fit &amp; fiddle

STORY &amp; PHOTOS PAUL TUZSON



# CHASSIS TRANSFORMATION

Beauty is only skin deep. Performance relies on a stronger foundation.

**P**EOPLE go on about how heavy old cars are but it just isn't true. An XA GT Falcon weighs in at a touch under 1590kg and a '55 Chev is about 100kg less than that.

Compare them with a base-model FG Falcon, which tips the scales at around 1700kg. A VE Commodore is a porky 1800kg or more!

Yet despite their weight advantage, older cars tend to be slower and more cumbersome because they ride on sloppy chassis equipped with poorly designed suspension systems that were carried over from the days of cross-ply tyres. And while you can improve things by adding upgraded springs, shocks and sway bars, this is

never going to match the superior geometry and outright dynamics offered by current designs.

To remedy this inherent problem, the chassis experts at Art Morrison have developed an array of replacement frames that feature modern double A-arm fronts matched to multi-link rears. Suspension and chassis enhancements in one fell swoop, with guaranteed performance results — that's a good deal. When you look at the full package, the costs involved are also reasonable.

Morrison offers two basic types of full chassis. There's the GT Sport, which is a bolt-in type designed as a direct replacement for '49-'54 and Tri-Five Chevs, Customlines, Cadillacs and Corvettes, plus 1968 to 1972 GM A-bodies

(ie, the Pontiac GTO, LeMans, Oldsmobile 442, Buick GS, El Camino and Chevelle).

The other is the Max G, a weld-in style for monocoque (uni-body) cars such as the Camaro, 'Cuda, Dart, GTO, Mustang and Challenger. Morrison also offers front clips for Camaro, Trans Am and Nova, along with generic rear clips for both cornering and straight-line applications.

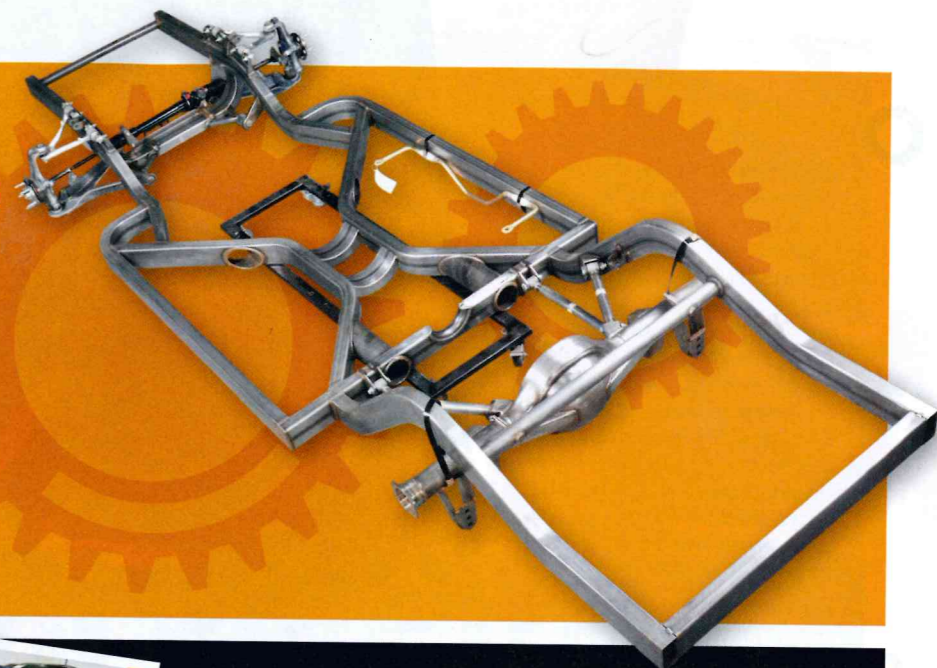
Here in Australia, The Muscle Car Factory ([www.musclecarfactory.com](http://www.musclecarfactory.com), 03 9580 3548) has been importing and fitting various Art Morrison products for some time. To demonstrate, the guys there showed us the fitment of a GT Sport chassis into a 1968 Chevelle and a Max G chassis into a 1970 Challenger.

## CORVETTE DNA

THE Max G and the GT Sport can be ordered with either C6 Corvette forged aluminium arms or Morrison's own C6-based twin A-arm set-up. Both sport power rack and pinion steering (in left or right-hand drive) and an integrated adjustable sway bar. Advantages of the C6 architecture include outstanding driver feedback, instant response, zero bump steer and reduced scrub radius, which allows the tyres to sit up inside the guards, yet still turn without hitting the body. The Corvette's burly upright and bearing assembly is also designed to handle a 9½in-wide wheel and 275-section tyre, which is plenty wide.

Other features include a four-bar rear, Strange adjustable coil-overs all 'round, stepped-in rear rails for wide tyres and through-frame exhaust passages that'll accommodate a three-inch pipe while combining ample ground clearance with a low ride height, which in turn yields a low centre of gravity for excellent road holding.

Increased torsional rigidity over the factory chassis combined with superior geometry means the Morrison chassis will transform the handling dynamics of even the most ungainly dinosaur.



## PART 1: GT SPORT FIT-UP



**STEP 01** The GT Sport chassis going under this Chevelle is a specific-fit replacement. That means all the factory body mounts are used, along with the radiator support and bumper bar mounts. This makes installation basically the same for all applicable models. Disconnect brake lines, fuel lines, clutch, accelerator, steering and wiring. Once the bolts securing the body to the chassis are undone, lift the body free.



**STEP 02** Out with the old, in with the new. MCF ordered this chassis to accommodate a 4L65E four-speed auto and LS3, which bolted straight in. It's easier to fit them now rather than slotting them in later. Removing the chassis revealed some serious rust issues, which is very common. In reality this Chevelle was in pretty good condition overall but the corroded areas needed repair before the fit-up could continue.



**STEP 03** With the old chassis removed, simply roll the new one underneath. Use trolley jacks or Go Jacks, along with a few plumb lines, to manoeuvre the chassis into the correct position as the body is lowered. Although this procedure could be done without a hoist, it would be extremely difficult and probably quite unsafe. Note the 17-inch diameter wheels — they're necessary to clear the high performance C6 brakes.



**STEP 04** Morrison supplies all the necessary nuts, bolts and washers, along with new chassis-to-body spacers. As the body is lowered into place, ensure all the holes line up and the body spacers are in place. Once everything is aligned, slip the bolts into place and tighten them up. While the GT Sport has been designed as a direct replacement, a small amount of massaging may be required with some fitments.