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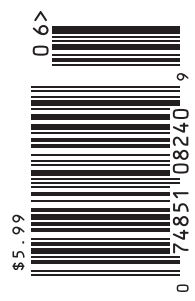


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1969 Yenko/SC 427 Camaro

A collector's latest score gets a body-on makeover

BY MIKE McNESSOR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DINO PETROCELLI

PROVIDED BY JOE VERRILLO/PRESTIGE MOTORCAR

Restorer and collectible-car dealer Joe Verrillo barely had time to bask in the glow of the 1970 GTO Judge convertible his shop restored last year, when the car's owner rolled out another legendary muscle car in need of a makeover.

"We were working on my client's 1970 GTO Judge convertible at the time, and he said, 'I've got a surprise to show you,'" Verrillo said. "So, we delivered the finished Judge to him, then went in his garage and he pulled the cover off of this 1969 Yenko Camaro."

The freshly acquired Yenko turned out to be a 39,000-mile rust-free car with one repaint and an engine rebuild performed in 1988. It had been in Indiana from 1969 through 2004, changing hands through three different caretakers. Its stock number at Yenko Chevrolet had

been YS-9607, and it had been sold new through Nankivell Chevrolet in Indianapolis, Indiana, for a grand total of \$4,563.25. The base price with destination charges was \$4,302, and options including an AM radio, Yenko's instrument package and Atlas wheels added \$261.25 to the original sticker price. Needless to say, the current owner paid considerably more than that for the pleasure of possessing a legend among Chevrolet enthusiasts.

"The paint was faded on the hood a little bit, and the grille had a small break. I suggested that we could wet-sand and buff it," Verrillo said. "The interior was phenomenal, though the dash pad was rolled up a little bit."

Thrilled with how his GTO turned out, Verrillo's client would hear nothing of a little wet-sanding and buffing—the

Yenko needed to be show quality.

"He told me how the Yenko had the original engine and all of the original paperwork and how he would really like to take it to the level of the Judge we'd just finished."

So, on the trailer the Yenko went, for a ride back to Verrillo's shop, Prestige Motorcar in Clifton Park, New York (www.prestigemotorcar.com). Once there, it was relieved of its front fenders, hood, grille, radiator support and wheel-houses, and the paint was removed using a combination of chemical stripping and media blasting.

"As we took the car apart, we noticed that it was damaged in the driver's side cowl and one of the doors had been replaced with one that had been Huger Orange," Verrillo said. "So we pulled out the cowl and soda-blasted the door



During the refurbishing the Yenke underwent at Prestige Motorcar, its engine remained in place, but a lot of details were attended to.

Fresh paint on the inner fenders and radiator support, new tower hose clamps and some new, correct fasteners make the car like-new again.

PARTS PRICES

- Camaro coupe complete (reproduction)
body shell – \$13,500
- Cowl induction hood (reproduction) – \$195
- Quarter panel (reproduction) – \$289.95
- Front fender – \$219.95
- Front fender extension – \$25
- Door shell – \$339
- Door skin – \$109.95
- 1969 Camaro front subframe – \$995
- Yenko valve cover decal – \$11.95
- Yenko window decal – \$6.95
- Yenko fan shroud decal – \$11.95
- 1969 Camaro 427 Yenko emblem – \$32.95
- 1969 Yenko Fender/Rear panel emblem – \$32.95
- 1969 Yenko Camaro stripe kit – \$209
- 1969 Yenko Camaro wheel decal – \$8.95
- 1969 Camaro standard interior kit – \$899.95

SOURCES

Yenko: The Man, The Machines, The Legend

By Bob McClurg
Published 2010 by CarTech books
www.carttechbooks.com
The most definitive book ever compiled about Yenko Chevrolet's performance history.

Camaro Research Group

www.camaros.org/
An amazing amount of information here about first-generation Camaros.

The Supercar Registry

www.yenko.net/
An online Yenko and COPO authority with lively discussions and more.

Camaro Untold Secrets

By Wayne D. Gunn
Published 1991 by Motorbooks
www.camaro-untoldsecrets.com
The site features excerpts from the book and includes some interesting Camaro development information.



Nothing fancy here. Standard '69 Camaro interior, floorshift with no console and accessory instruments installed by Yenko. Everything is original, though the seat springs were replaced.

to strip it. We then stripped the rest of the car to bare metal. It turned out to be really clean—zero rust.”

The engine was left in the car, but a lot of detail work was performed to make the engine compartment shine: new tower-type hose clamps, new power steering hoses, new exhaust manifold bolts and more.

“We never took the motor out because it was in nice shape; we refinished the wheel wells, the radiator support,

changed all the bolts around in the engine and touched up the firewall,” Verrillo said.

Some of the body's minor imperfections were addressed, it was primed and block-sanded then finally painted with DuPont ChromaPremier basecoat/clearcoat paint. A DuPont representative was able to match the original Rally Green by sampling the paint underneath the jacking instructions sticker on the inside of the trunk lid. Reproduc-

tion stripes were applied, though altered slightly to make them more true to the originals. For the final touch, new Yenko emblems and 427 call-outs for the Cowl Induction hood were installed.

The interior of the Yenko appeared to be entirely original, but the owner wasn't happy about the feel of the original seats. The dash pad, too, needed attention.

“We took the seats out because the owner complained that they were



The car had received one repaint and was stripped bare with a combination of chemical stripping and media blasting.



Some repair work was needed in the car's cowl, and the driver's door was orange under the paint. Otherwise, it was as new.

WHAT TO PAY

	Low	Average	High
Camaro Yenko/SC 427 Camaro coupe	\$83,000	\$120,000	\$290,000
Camaro COPO (427)	\$79,000	\$110,000	\$277,000
Camaro ZL-1	\$156,000	\$256,000	\$466,000
Camaro SS L89	\$113,000	\$133,000	\$171,000
Camaro coupe	\$9,800	\$15,000	\$26,000

Central Office Performance

Insider knowledge that led to the baddest first generation Camaros

The Central Office Production Order numbers that Don Yenko used to build his now-legendary 1969 Yenko 427 S/C Camaros are COPO 9561 and COPO 9737.

COPO 9561 included the cast-iron L72 427 engine and high-capacity radiator; the ZL/2 special ducted "cowl induction" hood; 14x7 steel wheels and hub caps, Turbo Hydra-Matic 400 transmission or Muncie four-speed manual (\$195.40); dual exhaust; BE 12-bolt axle with five-leaf springs and a 4.10:1 gear ratio with Positraction. Front power disc brakes were mandatory at a cost of \$64.25. The total cost of the package was \$749.40.

COPO 9737, also known as the Sports Car Conversion, included 15x7 rally wheels; E70x15 White Letter Tires; 13/16-inch front anti-roll bar; and a 140 MPH speedometer.

These COPO cars were not exclusive to Yenko Chevrolet; any Chevrolet dealer could order them. Some of the more famous include Berger Chevrolet in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Emmert Chevrolet in Detroit, Michigan; Baldwin Chevrolet in Baldwin, New York; Nickey Chevrolet in Chicago; Dana Chevrolet in South Gate, California; and Fred Gibb Chevrolet in LaHarpe, Illinois.

Gibb is particularly notorious for conjuring up the most treasured COPO Camaro of all, the ZL-1, with its all-aluminum 427 engine also known as COPO 9560.

mushy," Verrillo said. "Our upholsterer determined that the springs were broken, so he installed new springs and put the original covers back on. We looked for an NOS dashpad and couldn't find one. We weren't happy with the reproduction, so we took the original dashpad out, heated it and molded it as best we could back to what it originally was, and put it back in the car."

Cosmetically, the results of this body-on, engine-in restoration speak for themselves. The mechanicals and chassis of

the car were left entirely as-is, because nothing really called out for attention.

"The car runs and drives like the day it was brand new," Verrillo said.

When brand new, the Yenko S/C 427 Camaro was a force to be reckoned with. In the July 1969 issue of *Super Stock & Drag Illustrated*, Ed Hendrick, a ringer from the NHRA Super Stock ranks, drove a supposedly stock 1969 Yenko Camaro to a 12.59 at 108.07 MPH on street tires.

The SS & DI story was written by Ro McGonegal, who remains dubious about

the car's stock status.

"In those days, most manufacturers routinely had cylinder heads on their press cars blueprinted," McGonegal is quoted as saying in Bob McClurg's 2010 book, *Yenko: The Man, The Machines, The Legend*. "Often they capped a short-block that had been brought to normal spec for an edge, anything that might distinguish its performance from its raging counterparts. Of course, we were told that the Yenko was completely stock, save for headers and the leaf



CLUB SCENE

Worldwide Camaro Association
 8235 North Orange Blossom Trail
 Orlando, Florida 32810
 800-456-1957
 www.worldwidecamaro.com
 Dues: \$39/year; Membership: 3,000

PRODUCTION

Camaro Yenko/SC 427 199-201
 1969 Camaro total243,085
 Camaro ZL-169
 Current estimated Camaro COPO 9561
 (L72 engine) is 1,015 units or less



Orange paint was discovered, so this door was media blasted rather than chemical stripped in order to get in all of the nooks and crannies.



Fresh basecoat/clearcoat urethane paint was applied. The Rally Green color was replicated using a spot concealed under a trunk decal.

spring clamps, and had no proof to the contrary.”

Prior to 1969, Canonsburg, Pennsylvania-based Chevrolet dealer and sports car racer Don Yenko was in the high-performance Camaro business the old-fashioned way—he bought stock automobiles and modified them. But in 1969, Yenko used his clout with GM to subvert the Central Office Production Order system to his advantage. The result was a line of factory-built 427 Camaros and 427-powered Chevelle sister cars. Yenko added black or white vinyl side and hood graphics, headrests with the SYC logo, Yenko emblems on the fenders and taillamp panel, and offered accessories like a Stewart Warner 970 transistor-

ized tachometer (some later cars used the factory in-dash tach) with accessory water temperature, oil pressure and amp gauges; optional cast 15x6 Atlas wheels, or exhaust headers.

The stuff that came from GM in the Central Office Production Order Camaro package (and the Chevelle) was stout, to say the least. Under the cowl induction hood was a 427 engine rated at 425hp by GM or 450hp by Yenko. The L72 used a four-bolt-main cast-iron block, a forged crankshaft, solid-lifter camshaft, 11:1 compression, rectangle-port heads with 2.19 intake and 1.72 exhaust valves, an aluminum intake and a Holley carburetor.

Yenko 427 Camaro S/C buyers could

get either an M21 four-speed manual transmission or a Turbo Hydra-Matic 400 three-speed automatic transmission, and the cars all had a 12-bolt axle with 4.10 gears and Positraction. The Yenko Camaros also boasted a 140 MPH speedometer, a 1/8-inch anti-roll bar, heavy-duty coil springs, five-leaf rear springs and power front disc/rear drum brakes.

Yenko produced between 199-201 of his tuned-up Camaros in 1969. It is estimated that 171 of them came with a four-speed manual transmission and the rest were automatics. The color choices included Le Mans Blue, Hugger Orange, Olympic Gold, Daytona Yellow, Rally Green, and Fathom Green.

With only 200 built, opportunities to



The offset emblems on the rear were installed in place of the bowtie emblem by drilling just two holes and using two existing ones.



buy original '69 Yenko Camaros are few and far between. At RM's Milton Robson Collection Auction, November 13, 2010, a Fathom Green Yenko Camaro with a four-speed and Atlas wheels hauled in \$308,000. The 26,000-mile car was said to have had all of its original body panels, all of its original lacquer paint except for the hood, and original interior.

Popular pricing guides put Yenko Camaros at \$283,000 on the high end, \$83,000 on the low end, with an average of \$120,300. All of those prices seem low, considering what we've seen these cars trade for in recent years.

Clones, tribute cars and fakes are definitely out there.

With reproduction emblems and stripe

kits on the market, and unscrupulous people who will restamp blocks and produce false VIN tags, it's possible to build a very convincing fake Yenko Camaro, Chevelle or Nova. However, because so few of these cars were built and because they have such an ardent following, it's also easy to weed out the imposters.

The best source of Yenko information and the best place to meet Yenko owners on the web is at The Supercar Registry, www.yenko.net.

The best place to meet the owners and experts in person, as well as see these cars on the drag strip is at the annual SYC Supercar reunion put on by the Yenko Sports Car Club. Keep your eyes on www.yenko.net for details. 🏁



Before the stripes were removed, measurements and notes were taken to ensure accurate replacement.



Ditto for the famous Yenko hood graphic. Reproduction stripe kits as well as emblems are available from the aftermarket.

SPECIALISTS

Heartbeat City

586-226-8811
www.heartbeatcity.com

Alumitech Reproductions

517-404-6262
www.chevellecooling.com

National Parts Depot

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www.nationalpartsdepot.com

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www.carsinc.com

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