

# ELEGANT EMERALD SS

A Stunning '62 Chevy Roadster—Does This Car Look 1 Inch Wider to You? It Is!

Appearing to be a moderately customized '62 Impala, the workmanship on this convertible is anything but moderate. Although it started life as a hardtop Impala SS, Derick Samson removed the top, smoothed the body and covered it in Galapagos Green paint from DuPont.



It's hard for a young car builder to make a name for himself, but if your work speaks for itself, and if owners are generally happy with the results of your efforts, then the name-building process can be shortened dramatically. Many Chevy builders have to work 20 years or more to earn a good reputation within the Chevy community, but this was not the case with Derick Samson from Marshall, Missouri, since he's only been alive for a little over 20 years.

Although Samson is young, he has plenty of experience building cars, particularly Chevys. His current rides are a '62 Chevy wagon, a '51 Chevy coupe and, of course, the very smooth '62 Impala roadster featured here. As a result of his efforts, Samson now owns and operates Samson Designs, where he builds some of the finest Chevys in the nation.

For a couple of years, Samson had been gathering ideas for a subtle but modern design, and this '62 Chevy Impala was the perfect platform on which to test his skills; he took a traditional car and altered it. It's a big car, and it surely was not your run-of-the-mill Camaro. Not that there's anything wrong with a Camaro, but this wasn't even a customer's car, and since this Impala was one of Samson's first complete builds, he could do what he wanted, and it would serve as a launching ramp for his career in designing and building sleek and elegant cars.

Samson enlisted the help of his father, Ken Samson, to help with the build, and it took nine months to complete the project. The result is an amazingly slick '62 with numerous modern

touches to update the GM classic styling as this was one of the more successful bodies in the early '60s. As you can tell, many hours were spent cutting and welding this old body, and several modifications were performed to lower the car to the ground. What you notice first on Samson's Impala are the smoothed lines, as well as the fact that the roof has been removed. Although there are extensive body modifications done to the car, all are subtle and give the look of a non-complex car. Widening the car 1 inch was no simple task, yet it hasn't altered the looks of the car in a big way, which is exactly the look and style Samson wanted—a modern, stylish Chevy with subtle details that would look like something GM might have built in the '60s.

Starting with a neglected and rusty hulk, Samson started cutting up the original Impala SS sheetmetal, forming it to his liking. Returning the body to its once-solid form was first on the list, and that required a new pair of quarter panels to be welded in place. After the original hardtop was cut off, a custom tonneau cover was shaped and molded to the body, enhancing the smooth appeal of the roadster. Widening a car a mere inch is not everyone's idea of a good time, but Samson gave this Impala

an extra inch of width anyway, which he felt added to the proportion of the car.

As part of his handiwork, every modification was performed in steel, requiring hours of welding to get the car completely back together. Certain holes for the trim, emblems and door handles were welded up and smoothed. All this effort simply added to the finish of that clean look, which was the goal. When the metalwork was completed, Samson covered the '62 in several coats of high-build primer and sanded it thoroughly to remove any imperfections in the 45-year-old body. After taking all that time to prep the body, he sprayed the Impala with a few coats of DuPont Galapagos Green basecoat, followed by several coats of clear to give the car that high-gloss look. When the paint cured, the car received more hand massaging with ultra-fine sandpaper, and hours of buffing and polishing ensued. After the finishing steps, the paint was flawless, and only then was the car reassembled using stock '62 Impala bumpers, giving it a smooth but classic Chevy look.

The extensively modified body sits atop a stock-style '62 Chevy chassis. The suspension is made up of new, more modern components, and Samson ground the welds and smoothed the



A custom tonneau cover was formed from steel and flows with the interior panels nicely. A widened '50 Chevy dash replaces the stock unit and gives the interior a unique appearance. McGraw Designs in Marshall, Missouri, re-faced the simple gauge cluster.



The custom interior was hand-formed by Soskey Upholstery in Springdale, Arkansas. When the fabrication was complete, the interior components were covered in green Ultraleather to blend with the exterior color.

frame from front to back, making it as straight and smooth as the body. An adjustable air suspension was installed, enabling the car to be driven at a moderate ride height and then slammed to the ground for those times when stance is all important. An Air Ride Technologies air system, combined with a pair of 2-inch-dropped front spindles, creates this awesome look. Up front, rolling stock consists of Billet Specialties Vintec wheels, measuring 18x7 inches, fit with Falken tires.

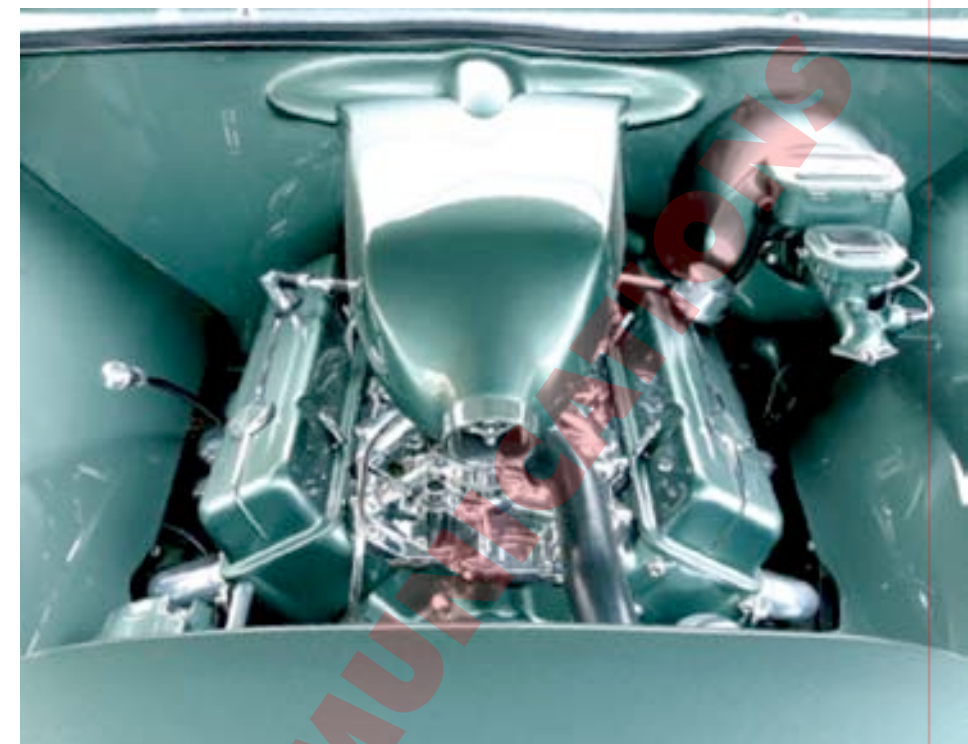
Out back, the stock '62 rearend is still in place, with a 3.73 ring-and-pinion that gives the Impala a nice mid-range ratio, perfect for any style of driving. The Air Ride Technologies system controls the ride height of the rear and makes the car far more practical from a drivability standpoint. Braking is controlled by a set of one-off Samson calipers in the front and rear, and they clamp onto a set of large rotors for superb stopping power. Billet Specialties Vintec wheels, measuring 20x8 inches, are tucked nicely under the rear of the Impala roadster, with traction coming from the road-hugging Falken tires.

Sitting between the slick inner fender panels is a well-massaged small-block Chevy engine displacing 355 inches, providing plenty of power for the topless Impala. Fuel and air enter the engine through a Holley 650cfm carburetor, with an Accel ignition to provide the

spark. A pair of GM "double-hump" cylinder heads provides 11:1-compression ratio in combination with the TRW pistons. DynoMax headers rid the engine of spent gasses, and Flowmaster mufflers give the Impala a healthy exhaust note. A one-off set of valve covers features custom trim and emblems, and a hand-fabricated air cleaner covers the carb. Samson's father, Ken, along with Rick Darling Performance, built the power-packed small block, and behind this potent 355 is a 350 Turbo transmission, which also was built by Ken Samson. For a proper launch, a 2,500-rpm stall-speed converter controls the power application.

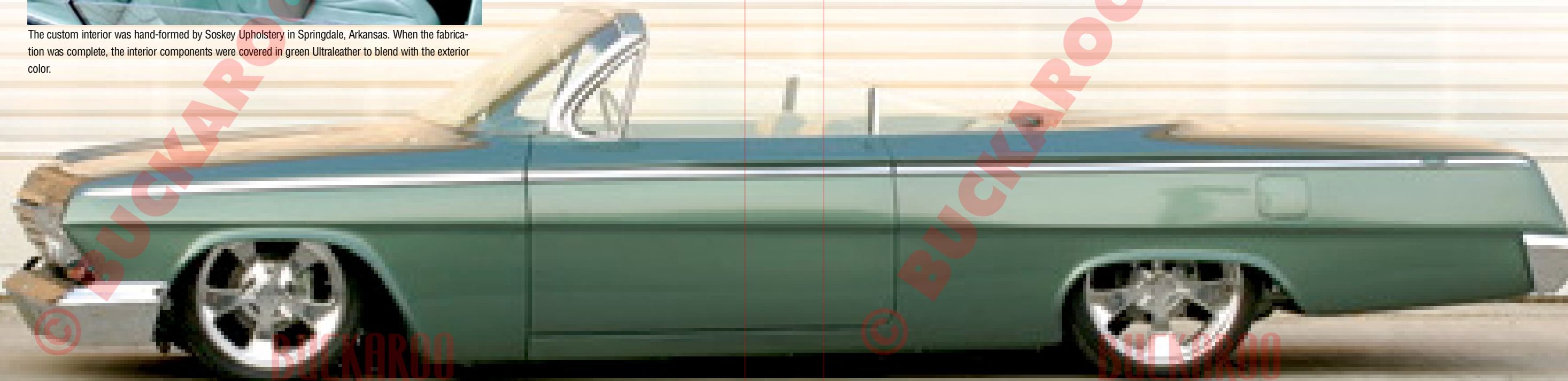
The attention to detail continues throughout the Impala, even under the hood. A tremendous number of hours were spent getting the engine surroundings in the condition you see here, and the modifications fit with the smooth look of the car. Details such as molded inner fenders and a filled firewall go well with the de-burred and smoothed engine, which continues the theme Samson was striving for.

After the chassis and bodywork were completed, it was time to design and fabricate a fitting interior that would flow with the smooth contours of the reshaped Chevy. Knowing this car was going to get a lot of attention and would play a significant role in the cultivation of his car-building career, Samson wanted the execution of the interior to be up



Smooth is the only word to describe the sanitary engine compartment of this classic Chevy. Surrounded by a slick firewall and inner fenders, the potent 355-inch small block provides ample horsepower with its combination of large valves and increased compression ratio.

AN AWESOME STANCE GIVES THE EMERALD SS AN AGGRESSIVE LOOK, AND A SET OF BILLET SPECIALTIES VINTEC WHEELS FITS NICELY IN THE FENDERWELLS OF THE IMPALA. A SIMPLE PIECE OF BEL AIR TRIM EXTENDS FROM FRONT TO BACK AND CONTINUES THE SUBTLE THEME THAT SAMSON WANTED.



Samson wanted his car to be subtle but noticeable, so he widened the car 1 inch to improve its proportions. Although the car has been smoothed in many places, some details remain unaltered, such as the bumpers and lights, to give it the appearance of a mild custom.



Binswanger Glass in Marshall, Missouri, made the one-off side glass for Samson's '62 Impala. The angled cut on the glass gives the car a speedy look even when it's sitting still. The convertible sits low thanks to an Air Ride Technologies kit coupled with dropped front spindles.

to the same standards as the rest of the car, so he decided to send the car to Soskey Upholstery in Springdale, Arkansas, where Roger Soskey worked his magic.

Soskey took on the painstaking job of fabricating all four bucket seats, as well as the custom-molded door panels and console, and then covered them in green Ultraleather. Replacing the stock dash with a widened '50 Chevy Deluxe dash gives the roadster a unique look, and the single round gauge panel adds to the overall simplicity of the car. A Sony stereo system provides Samson the opportunity to listen to his favorite songs while blasting down the highway. He may also choose to turn it down to let the small block provide the ear-pleasing music.

Building such over-the-top Chevys for a living may sound like a lot of fun, but it



takes an immense amount of perseverance to pull all this off and still make it in business. Samson, though, wanted a career in building cars—particularly cool Chevys—and judging by the final result of this slick '62 Impala, there's little doubt he'll have much trouble convincing would-be Chevy project owners that he builds a quality car. The goal for this Impala was not only to build a show-winning, one-of-a-kind convertible, but also to build his business, Samson Designs. He's been successful so far and plans to continue building some exceptional and slick creations—and this particular car has already received numerous awards. The car will be on hand at several ISCA indoor shows, as well as a number of Goodguys shows in 2007, and we doubt that bringing home awards will be much of a problem. And no matter how tall those trophies are, he can always stick one in the open-air Emerald SS to get it home. **CR**