by Jim Youngs

One of the major aspects that attract a guy to a kit car is the ability to build it exactly as he wants. No going into an auto dealership and just reluctantly accepting some of the unwanted combination "packages" that a manufacturer wants you to have, because that's what is available. Nope, the aftermarket world is your oyster and you can configure your dream car any way you can think of, even to the point of convincing the manufacturer to alter their stock offerings. They might draw the line, however, at dork wheels and crushed velvet upholstery, though we know some who would probably even accommodate those requests.

Mark Kassab chose a Unique Motorcars Cobra replica, a 427 S/C version, and credits the company with helping immensely to get the car finished in a short period of time and accommodating his custom modification requests for the chassis. Unique also handled the paintwork. Mark went to B2 Motorsports for his engine build and Mike Lavelle (killerpaint.com) for the airbrush snake on the underside of the hood. The rest of the build he accomplished himself.

The mods that Unique did to the frame included some extra fabrication to accommodate a Canton AccuSump system, a pair of remote oil filters, oil thermostat and oil cooler. They also added trailer tie-down loops, X-frame cross bracing, front brake line lock and special motor mounts. The chassis was also powdercoated in silver.

Otherwise the ladder-style chassis is typical Unique with a '70 Jaguar IRS (3.73:1 with posi-traction) with inboard disc brakes and coilovers. The front also incorporates disc brakes and coilovers. Mark chose Trigo five-pin knock-off wheels (15x7.5 fronts and 15x9.5 rears) shod with Avon CR6ZZ DOT race tires (245/60VR front and 295/50VR rears).

Mark mentioned that the only issues with these race/street tires are that they are rather expensive and difficult to find in the U.S.

Brent Lykins at B2 Motorsports started with a Dart Iron Eagle Sportsman block based on a Ford 351 Windsor configuration then punched it out and stroked it to 427 cubic inches. The small-block mill wears AFR 205 heads, Edelbrock Super Victor intake and a Quick Fuel Q-950 carb. Internally the engine was fitted with a custom ground Comp Cams solid roller cam, Comp lifters, Wiseco forged pistons...
and a Scat forged steel crank. Mark had the engine dyno tested and it produced 563 horsepower and 560 lb-ft of torque; plenty of power for a lightweight snake. In fact, on the dyno they de-tuned the engine so as to be a bit more manageable on the street.

For the interior Mark stayed from the standard Unique offerings in that he chose red leather with embroidered snakes on the seat backs and a set of Speedhut polished-bezel, black-face instruments with more snakes and “Cobra” logo silk-screened on the faces. The speedo is a GPS unit that we wrote about recently (KCB Oct. 2010) and it reads to 180 mph in a reverse direction. He also installed a Secret Audio sound system, forced air vents to cool the foot boxes and a custom made wiring harness with 12 circuits.

Being a Florida guy, Mark paid lots of attention to cooling on his car. In addition to the traditional pair of pusher fans mounted ahead of the radiator he also added a 16” SPAL puller fan to the rear of the radiator. He also incorporated a master switch to control all three fans plus a Flex-A-Lite variable speed and temperature controller. The controller allows greater control over engine temps that help to reduce charging spikes and current load on the charging system. They also keep the fans running for 30 seconds after the ignition is shut off. The rear fan will start at low speed at 180 degrees. The front fans kick in at 200 degrees and turn off at 180 degrees.

As we said Unique’s guys painted Kassab’s snake. They used DuPont Hot Hues, a three-part system, in Flame Yellow with Turbo Silver stripes and red team stripes. 16 coats of paint were slathered on the smooth fiberglass. When it came time to polish the car, Mark used Griot’s Garage #3 and #4 polishes followed by Zanio polish, three coats of Zanio #5 with ZFX and two coats of Zanio #2, with Zanio Spritz in between each coat.

There are lots of hidden touches on this car. Mark used Lizardskin throughout the interior. The unobtrusive third brake light is a nice touch. All the stainless braided plumbing is neat and tidy. And we really appreciate the custom oil system designed to keep the engine healthy.

Mark Kassab obviously has some mad car builder skills as his Unique snake is a very handsome car with lots of clean detailing. It’s also in keeping with one of the main reasons we build kit cars; so we can own something distinctive and just the way we want it. It’s also pretty cool that we can say, “Yeah, I built that.”

KCB
MY WAY FOR THE HIGHWAY

This Unique Snake Has Lots of Venom and Lots of Custom Touches

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