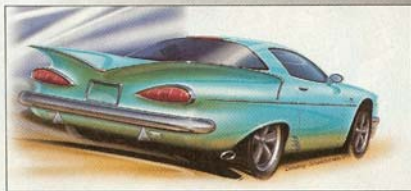


BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Old-school cool meets cutting-edge tech in Kanter Concepts' latest creation.



By **Steven Rupp** • Photography by Johnny Hunkins and GM

As cool as the rides from the '50s and '60s are, their factory performance is downright prehistoric compared to modern musclecars. But the problem with modern cars is that all of that high-tech performance engineering is wrapped inside a cookie-cutter shell lacking the soul and personality of our favorite classics. So what's a hot rodder to do? If you're Kanter Concepts, the choice is simple: blend the best aspects of then and now

into one kick-ass package. Though the idea seemed simple, the task itself was anything but.

Rather than updating a nearly 50-year-old ride, Kanter decided it would be smarter to infuse a modern platform with classic style. To pull off such automotive DNA manipulation, Kanter Concepts spun off a division called N2A Motors, which stands for "no two alike." N2A set about the task, and soon a concept rendering of the

"789" sat seductively on the drawing board. According to Gene Langmesser, president of Kanter Concepts and N2A Motors, "the name is derived from the three years represented in the overall design. The 'hooded eyes' and chrome grille bar come from the '57 Bel Air, the mid-section and tri-toned interior were inspired by the '58 Impala, and the iconic 'bird in flight' rear tailfins were pulled from the '59 Chevy." The design elements blend so well together that

"We can only imagine what a blast it would be to tear up a local road course in a Z06-based 789. Picture the perplexed look on faces as they're lapped by what appears to be an old-school ride from the '50s." —Steven Rupp



Look inside the 789 and you can see it's all C6 Corvette. That equates to modern comfort, safety, and serviceability.



The heart of the 789 is the chassis, suspension, and driveline of a C6 Corvette. Once all the C6 body panels are off, N2A turns it into the sleek, sexy 789. By only changing the skin on the Vette, Kanter's 789 retains all the high-tech safety and performance systems of the donor car.

one wonders why GM didn't think of it first. N2A also took a different approach to the actual design of the 789. Instead of rendering the car pixel by pixel in Auto CAD, Designer Terrence Robinson did it the old-fashioned way: he drew it. This allowed them to refine the sensuous curves and sexy features of the 789 without that cold, computer feel.

With the appearance of the 789 nailed down, N2A needed to find the perfect platform to attach it to. Since the goal was to have a car that performed as nicely as it looked, the choice was obvious: the C6 Corvette. Fred Kanter, chairman of Kanter Concepts, tells *PHR*, "We have

taken the world's best value in a performance chassis—the Le Mans-winning Corvette C6—and wrapped it in an iconic selection of American designs." This means that under all those gorgeous body lines lies a 400hp LS2 V-8 and a cutting-edge sports car suspension. It also means that the 789 is not much more difficult to maintain than a typical new Corvette. When dealing with a classic car, even a modernized one, an owner has to work with a host of issues like rarity of parts and the

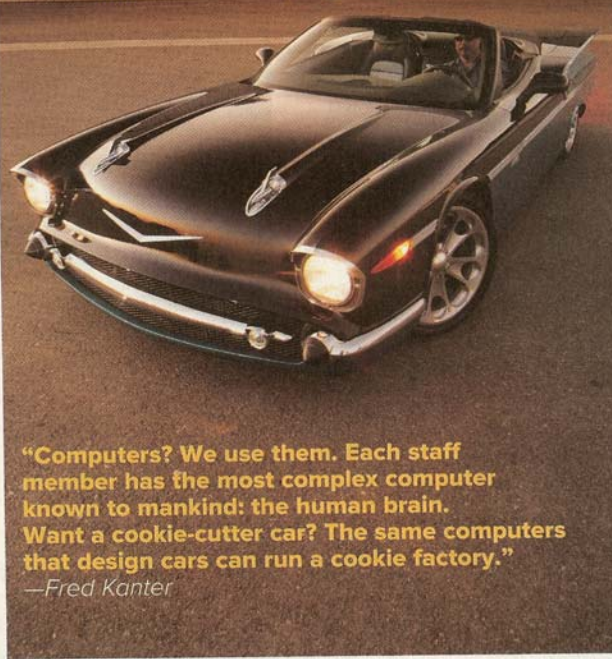
upkeep of custom, one-off systems like the suspension. According to Kanter, the 789 offers the best of both worlds: retro looks with classic styling—and it'll fire up every time you push the start button.

Once the game plan was nailed down, Gene bought a brand-new convertible, and the team stripped the C6 of its body panels. Next, they covered the chassis with plywood and added 1,500 pounds of clay before beginning to sculpt. This way, they were able to blend the various design elements, like the shoulder, where the rear wings flow into the body. Once that was done, they picked the side they liked best, laser scanned it with a coordinate measuring machine, mirrored it, and directed a CNC machine to make a foam master. From the foam master, they made forms for the carbon-composite panels. "At first, we were going to use fiberglass for the panels," says Gene, "but we found it added 350



The 789 is a mere 6 inches wider, 6 inches longer, and a scant 50 pounds heavier than a stock C6. Many of the 789's parts are reproduction items from Danchuk, including the headlight bezels and hood bullets.

pounds to the weight of the car. By switching to a carbon fiber composite material, we managed to get that down to only 50 pounds, including all of the added chrome." From start to finish, the prototype 789 took an amazingly short 14 weeks to complete. N2A was careful to ensure that its design didn't compromise any of the electronic or safety systems GM spent so much time perfecting in the C6 Corvette. Gene tells *PHR*, "GM spent tons of money on impact tests, rollover tests, and other safety systems. We wanted to make sure all of these stayed in place with the 789. For example, our design keeps the Corvette windshield and frame, which was designed by GM to hold up to a rollover. The 789 also



"Computers? We use them. Each staff member has the most complex computer known to mankind: the human brain. Want a cookie-cutter car? The same computers that design cars can run a cookie factory."
—Fred Kanter

The engine powering the 789 is the 400hp LS2. By the time you see this, Chevy will have upped the power ante to 430 hp on next year's base LS3 Corvette engine, and thus all production 789s. Due to the prototype nature of this 789, N2A declined to let us photograph the engine compartment, citing its "rough" appearance. Mechanically, it's all factory C6, though.



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retains all of the Corvette electronics, like traction control, ABS, and the heads-up display. Even the slick electronic pads to open the doors are still there, they've just been cleverly hidden under the fins. The 789 also retains its trunk volume. If it fits in a Vette, it'll fit in the 789."

The cost of this transformation is \$75,000—not including the donor car, which the customer can provide or N2A can source. The 789 also comes in three flavors: the 789SR, 789SC, and 789Z. The SR variant is the one featured here, and is based on the drop-top Vette. The SC model is a coupe version, and the Z is built on a C6 Z06. Yep, N2A can attach its curvaceous body panels to the hottest sports car around—the 500-plus-horsepower Z06. The base price includes a Borla exhaust system, larger PST sway bars, and a \$2,000 allowance for custom wheels. From there, the option list can incorporate whatever the customer wants, from a Magna Charger blower to upgraded brakes. Since each 789 is built to order, paint and interior colors are totally customizable. Build time is 12 weeks, and given how long most of our project cars take, that's nearly instant gratification.

Kanter Concepts and N2A Motors have managed to nail down exactly what they were looking to do: meld modern technology with yesterday's style. They're also currently working on several other designs, all based on the C6 Corvette. We've already seen renderings of a '55 Nomad wagon and a classic Buick, so be on the lookout for more cool creations. **PHR**



This sketch of the 789 shows what the hardtop version will look like. From the rear, the proportions conjure up an alternate world where the '63 Corvette was built in '59, fusing the one-year-only '59 Chevy fins with the wraparound glass of the mid-year Corvette.

SOURCE:
N2A MOTORS/KANTER CONCEPTS
 714-480-0404
 www.n2amotors.com



BY THE NUMBERS

789 CONCEPT CAR

Kanter Concepts • Santa Ana, CA
 Cost: \$135,000 complete, or \$75,000 for converting existing C6 Vette
 Construction: steel frame with hydroformed side rails, aluminum and magnesium cockpit structure, aluminum chassis components, composite body panels
 Estimated curb weight: 3,251 pounds
 Power: 400 hp at 6,000 rpm, 400 ft-lb at 4,400 rpm

ENGINE

Type:LS2 GM Gen IV V-8
 Block:319-T5 Aluminum, 364 ci
 Compression ratio:10.9:1
 Bore:4.0 inches
 Stroke:3.62 inches
 Oiling:wet sump, factory pan
 Rotating assembly:factory
 Cylinder heads:GM LS2, aluminum
 Fuel delivery:SEFI (sequential electronic fuel injection)
 Exhaust:Borla exhaust system custom-made for the car

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission:six-speed automatic, optional six-speed T56 manual trans

CHASSIS

Steering:speed sensitive, magnetic control, hydraulic power-assist, rack-and-pinion (16:1:1)
 Front suspension:short/long arm (SLA), cast aluminum upper and lower control arms, transverse composite leaf spring, monotube shock absorbers
 Rear suspension:short/long arm (SLA), cast aluminum upper and lower control arms, transverse composite leaf spring, monotube shock absorbers
 Sway bars:high-performance hollow PST antisway bars
 Traction control:electronic traction control, active handling
 Brakes:power-assisted four-wheel disc with ABS, front and rear

WHEELS & TIRES

Wheels:Budnik Cannon XX (20x10, rear; 19x8, front)
 Tires:BFG 285/30ZR20, rear; 245/35ZR19, front