



Beach'n Bronco Buildup

BY CHRIS GRAHAM, NEW YORK

Sometimes work is boring, but once in a while, we really get to have some fun. That's why we do what we do; we're truck guys and we love to build awesome rigs. Bronco's, Jeeps, Full-Size Trucks, SUV's, it doesn't matter as long as it gets the full EVB treatment and the customer is happy in the end.



When Andrew Grant, one of our long time customers, called me up out of the blue, I was eager to see what he had in store for us. We had previously built up a 99 Chevy for him that he used every day for school and work without problems, so when he and his dad were looking for a Nantucket beach vehicle, he called us for suggestions. They had been looking at early Bronco's and asked the pro's and con's and what to look for, etc. We do a lot with Jeeps, but we've built our share of Broncos too; everything from full fiberglass body restorations to a posi and gear swap on an original classic. I suggested looking for a truck from out west where the rust wouldn't be as bad so we would have a good starting point. I knew they would want reliability as well as function so we talked about EFI conversions, and other upgrades such as brakes and steering. We had a plan, now all we needed was a truck.

About a month later, Andrew called back and said they had found a nice 71 out west and was having it shipped in. They brought it by for us to check it over one Saturday and right away I knew it was gonna be a great build. Within the last few years someone had put a lot of effort into body work because with some new panels installed and fresh yellow paint, the body was looking clean. We

also tested the 302 V8 and found a couple cylinders with low compression, and the 3 speed manual wasn't shifting too great, so I couldn't recommend doing a fuel injection conversion on a tired motor. Instead I told Andrew about doing a Mustang GT 5.0 motor swap along with a newer NV3550 5-speed. This way, they will have the reliability of a fuel injected V8 and also the smoothness of a good transmission for everyday driving. Other upgrades we planned were a small 3" lift to fit new Nitto tires and AR wheels, 4-wheel disc brakes, power steering conversion with a new steering column, full roll cage, interior SPEEDLINER spray, Hanson bumpers front and rear with a Warn winch and other goodies. Luckily the axles had already been built with 4.10's and lockers, so it was perfect for the new setup.

I was lucky to find a wrecked 89 'stang GT sitting in a garage of someone who knew someone who I knew and after a couple phone calls and negotiation I had it delivered on a flatbed. We immediately tore it apart and had a nice low mileage 5.0 waiting for a new home. While it was



out we cleaned and painted many parts on the new 5.0, new plugs and wires and also added the truck power steering pump with some custom brackets. Mating the NV3550 to the 5.0 required a custom bell housing and crossmember from Advance Adapters and we used Centerforce clutch components for long lasting performance. We rewired it using a Painless harness and new Ford ECM. Tom's

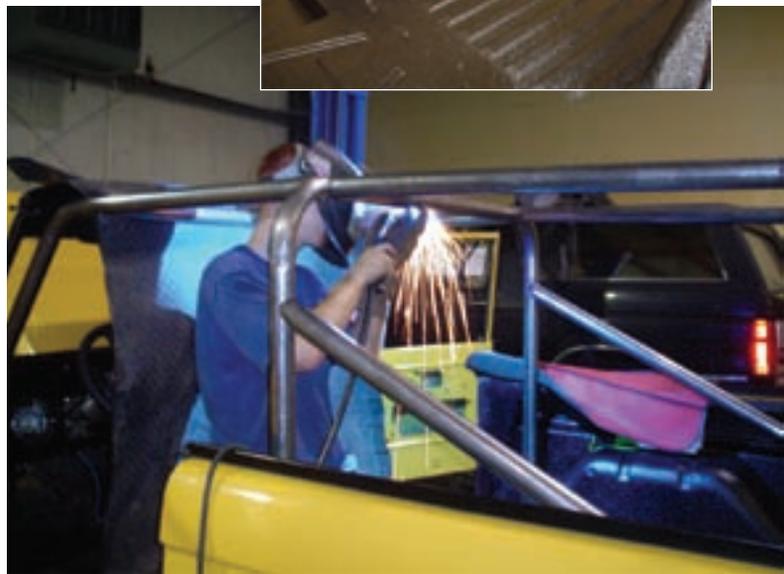
Bronco Parts supplied many of the other items we installed including the 4 wheel disc brake kit and steering parts. And Wildhorses had the new 23 gallon fuel tank with a new high pressure pump for the EFI, which was required for the new motor. We ran all new factory style lines up to the fuel rail using some special high pressure adapters and fittings.

The original drum brakes couldn't stop the truck if you were going up hill, so a brake conversion was mandatory. Everything was changed; all new spindles, bearings, hubs, shafts, seals, calipers, master cylinder, lines, everything! What a difference it makes, especially with the larger tires.



A 3" suspension lift from Superlift along with a 1" body lift made room for the 325/70-16 Nitto Terragraper's on 16x10 American Racing wheels. Trimming the front fender and mounting Bushwacker flares was also done to cover the larger tread and match the already existing rear flares. With this combination there were no clearance issues, rubbing problems or fitment concerns at all. And the Nitto tires balanced out perfectly and drive smooth and quiet on the highway.

We also customized the interior and added protection from the sand and salt air by applying SPEEDLINER to the entire floor and sides of the tub. Kevlar fibers are mixed into the chemicals to provide a strong tear resistance and the rubbery texture is great for keeping things in place. By adding a Protofab family style roll cage



we insured the occupants would stay protected, and by color matching it, it looked good too. Once the cage was in place, we reinstalled the seats and Tuffy center console, as well as the new 5 point harnesses from Sparco. Paint work also made it onto the new Hanson bumpers in the form of gloss black. These brand new models are



designed specifically for the early Bronco's and hold a Warn 9.5Ti winch in front and a built in tow hitch in the back. They even accommodated the 1" body lift by drilling extra holes in the mounting brackets.

With the new engine and tranny in place and all the accessories installed, it was time for a test drive. The EFI 5.0 fired right up and purred like a lion breathing through a pair of shorty headers, Flowmaster 30 series mufflers and 2.5" piping. When it was cruising down the highway, it was smooth, quiet and comfortable, but with 300 ftlb of torque at your command, some quick ankle action would release the ponies for some fun driving. Everything stayed cool thanks to the Griffen aluminum radiator designed for this exact conversion.

Without a doubt, this '71 Bronco gets attention. At every light or gas station people stop to look and check it out; young or old, male or female, everyone loves it. And with all the upgrades we performed it's easy to drive, reliable and tons of fun. Why buy a brand new truck when we can modernize and customize a classic? 🚙

