

The engine snarled. ~~and~~ I cringed, easing back automatically from the gas. I fell forward as the expansive red hood before me lurched and the car made awful, slow, gurgling noises, un-muffled regardless of my being inside the coupe. I gingerly but quickly tapped the gas in a last ditch effort to keep the car alive, but the gauges behind the thick, leather trimmed steering wheel fluttered before sinking.

“Well. You killed it.” My mom blinked a few times at me from the passenger seat. “Start it up again.”

I sighed, disappointed that I couldn’t even get the thing into gear. I had begged my mom all summer to teach me how to drive stick on her very expensive, very pretty red Camaro. Finally, she relented, and I could barely move the damn thing. I had gone through the steps of a manual transmission in my mind over and over again, preparing myself for the actual lesson. Save for ensuring that my eyes babysat the rpm gauge constantly, my pre-mental processing did nothing toward my success.

Driving is an action. It’s a sport, an art, a learned talent. With all things worth knowing, or better yet, worth *doing*, you can rest assured that it will demand a dogged, exhaustive, and annoyingly persistent attitude toward practice. The cars themselves are no different. They too carry a legacy of beating, and being beaten by the odds.

My mother’s glinting red Camaro is a 2010, RS, six cylinder, 3.5 liter, driving machine. Chevy resurrected their favorite pony car after an eight year gap in manufacturing. 2002 was an uncomfortable year to forever let lie as the bookend to the last generation of Chevrolet’s second most prized vehicle. Like awkward adolescents, the fourth generation Camaros couldn’t quite pull off the ‘coolness’ factor. But like any well-motivated, blissfully ignorant tenth grade outcast—it tried. The 2002 base model touted a 3.8 liter engine, V-6 with 225 torque ft-lb and a flat 200 horses riding out at 5200 revolutions per minute. Comparatively speaking, it was warranted to sneeze at the first of its generation, the 1993 base model which capped itself at 3.4 liters and 160 hp. Regardless, the 2002 model wasn’t going to pull through, no matter how sweptback and streamline its high school drama club body design was. General Motors discontinued the Camaro, subjecting it to the bleak future of nostalgic conversations in the streets of local car-shows.

Then Chevy’s new model—~~the 2010—re-~~lit the car enthusiast’s ~~world~~-afire, and not only because of ~~the 2010 Camaro it was handed down~~ the Corvette’s well-loved Victory Red paint ~~hand-me-down~~ option, ~~an option that, like a coveted pair of jeans, that~~ never went out of style. The Vette’s little sister was finally all grown up with a retro throw back design borne by arguably the Camaro’s best loved model year: 1967. With a wicked grin and sleek, fluid lines, the Camaro was turning heads and snapping necks.

Under the hood, the Camaro didn’t disappoint. The RS put power and esteem back into the daily driver. Making the most of its six cylinders, it pumped out 305 horse-power maxing at 5,900 rpms and 273 lb-ft of torque at 5,200 rpms. Zero to sixty is a smooth six point one second sprint—exercising two catalytic converters— to show off its optimal power production. Moving a step up from RS to SS, the prospects are designed to stun. The SS wore its attitude problem with all the swagger of its new ‘popular

kid' status but had all the maturity of following through on promises. Condescending straight from the Corvette's 2008 model year, the Camaro's LS3 engine was another prize inheritance. Working just as hard as its V6 counterpart, the SS can brag a 6.2L at 426 horses, 420 lb-ft torque and an eyebrow raising four point seven second dash from standstill to 60. The 2010 Camaro had turned the tide of the pony car wars in its favor, blazing ahead and leaving its competition shamefully dusted.

While Chevy's newly revived muscle car was burning rubber, the memory of another car bound up intrinsically with the Camaro was surfacing. Google search the 2010 model and something peculiar, born of hope and nostalgia, would pop up next to Chevy's grinning sport's car phenomenon.

I was fifteen when my mother first expressed an interest in owning a vehicle beyond her sage green Kia Sedona. Hurtling toward the age of driving, I—unlike most of my peers—could wait indefinitely for that plastic little card. Freedom was hardly a pull when I imagined myself responsible for a heavy, metal thing speeding at forty or fifty miles an hour. I wasn't ready for that.

And then I saw the vibrant, glinting picture of the new Camaro glancing curiously over at my mom's laptop screen. There was a different kind beauty expressed in that car, one that I hadn't ever identified with. All I knew was that I needed to know more. The Camaro couldn't be the only car made for more than a car's sake. What else belonged to this newfound world of gloss and speed?

Scrolling through nameless images of vehicles I never thought existed, my awareness of driving was decidedly roused. Amidst the sea of chrome and color I lighted on a car I knew would make me learn to drive.

It wasn't the newest, nor the most polished vehicle I could have been inclined toward. Coming up on thirty-two years at the time, Pontiac's 1978 Trans Am of the Firebird line was considered a classic without the reverence of being a first generation or having the bells and whistles of a modern hotrod. Yet, aftermarket companies were offering their own reinvented concepts of the Firebird alongside its back-in-production sister rival; and with a smooth, 'V' shaped nose, was undoubtedly nodding in pride to the '78 T/A.

A great beginning. Hard to tell where it's going, but it makes you want to read more.