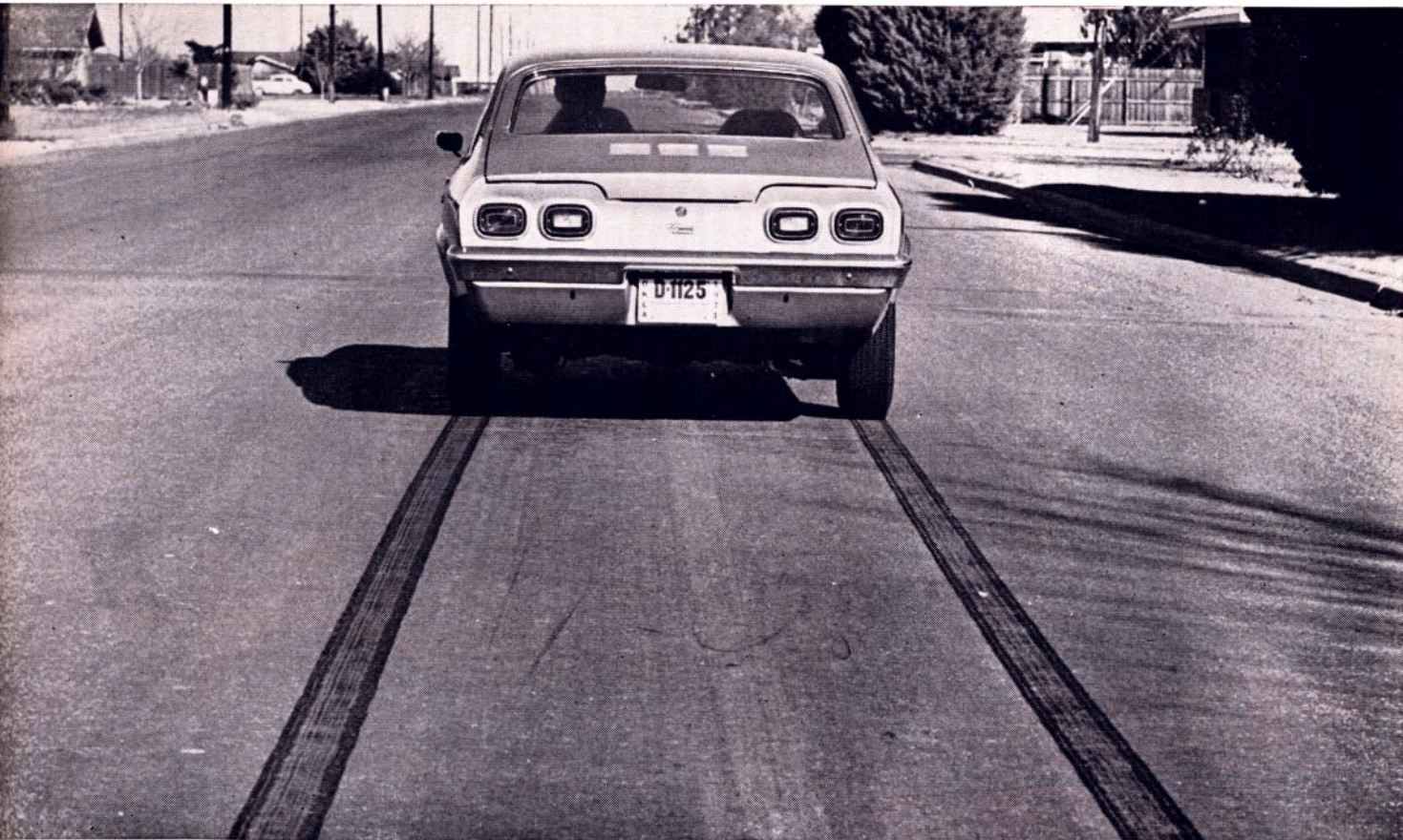




*LEFT — End product of Don  
Honda Sum*





# 8 VEGA

*Don Hardy of the Funnys proves he can also build some serious street machinery, with a kit to drop a V8 into a Vega*

**D**on Hardy has built his reputation on a Funny Car chassis foundation, something not easy when you're working out of Floydada, Texas, and bucking the most vaunted race car fabricators in the sport. Yet Hardy's handiworks, like Kelly Chadwick's amazing all-Chevy Camaro, are usually among the front runners in any show. Recently, Don branched out into another category of drag racing, putting together the chassis for Gary Kimball's small-block Vega Pro Stock, generally acknowledged the first of its type. Now the cordial and conscientious Hardy is moving into still another new area, by putting together and marketing a kit for installing a small-block Chevy (with Turbohydro 350 or three- or four-speed manual transmission) in a street Vega. He plans to call it a Super Twister Kit, and judging from the pilot vehicle (which was fitted with a two-barrel 350 and automatic), if nothing else, the final package is guaranteed to twist a few minds, since the exhaust system is the only visual giveaway.

With the kit, the actual swap is very straightforward. The secret is the headers, since no stock exhaust manifolds will fit. These are made exclusively for Hardy by Jerry Jardine and use 1½-inch-diameter primaries, deemed more than adequate for the street. Although an under-car exhaust system was used on the pilot, Don recommends that side pipes be used for added ground clearance because of the Vega's extremely low floor. Another sneakier solution might be to keep the pipes under the car and use a crossflow muffler, such as a Mustang unit.

To cope with the additional frontal weight, the kit includes stiffer front springs and one-inch shims. In the case of this particular swap, overall weight was increased by just 120 pounds (from 2480 to 2600), but the total on the front end went up from 1320 to 1540. The stock muffler accounted for a good share of the 100 pounds that came off the rear. Despite these changes, steering effort remained low, and the good stock handling appeared little changed. Traction, even with the stock rear suspension and A70-13 tires was easily controllable, and the car was able to "leave" very hard, with no wheelhop. By the time you read this, Don will probably be offering a narrowed 12-bolt Chevy rear end with "tough" axles to go along with the kit, though he foresees little problem with the stock setup for street use.

As for other details, the drive shaft has to be shortened eight inches to mate to the Turbohydro, and the steering arms have to be bent downward about ¾-inch to put the steering cross link under the oil pan. If a '69 or later engine is being used, a short water pump and related parts are required, all available from Chevrolet. For all installations, a longer speedometer cable (parts No. 6477547) is needed, and for those choosing a car, the heavy-duty radiator is recommended. The stock fan and Delcotron alternator bolt right up, and nothing beyond the stock wiring is required. The swap is so neat, in fact, that we wouldn't be surprised to see it offered as a dealer-installed option. All of which goes to prove that not all the good things come out of Michigan or Southern California; a few come out of Floydada, Texas. ■