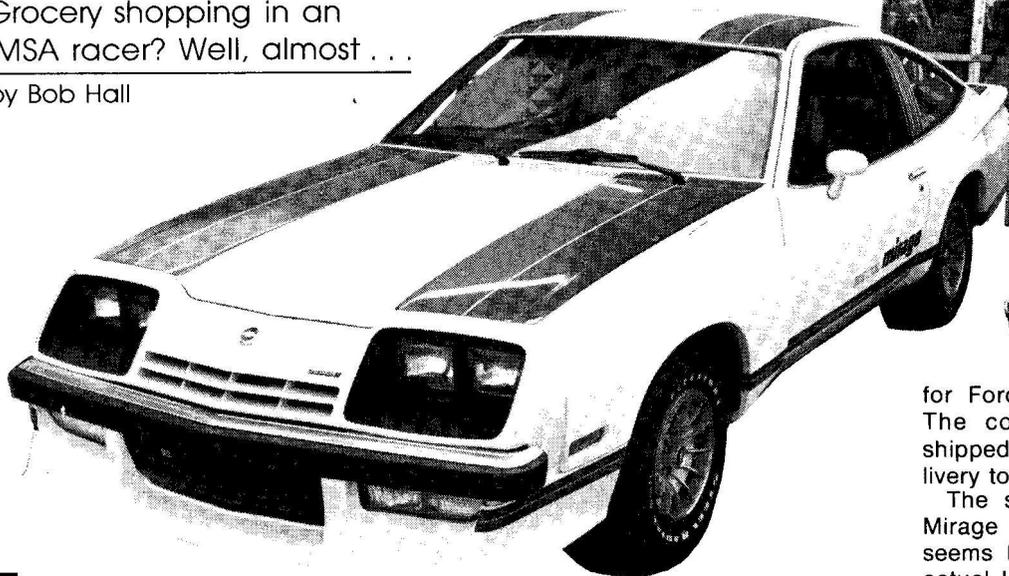


# Monza Mirage

Grocery shopping in an IMSA racer? Well, almost . . .

by Bob Hall



In this age of bolt-on performance goodies, few cars have aroused as much public interest as the specially prepared Chevrolet Monzas for competition in the International Motor Sports Association's Camel GT racing series. With gigantic fender flares and an air dam befitting a Porsche 935, the IMSA Monzas are impressive cars indeed.

Exciting and desirable as they may be, the cosmetics on these racing Monzas are just too radical to lend themselves to a street version. Imagine some of the problems. Where do you put the spare for an 11-in.-wide racing tire? We all know what a carelessly opened door will do to sheet metal, but what would it do to a fragile fiberglass fender? And perhaps some of the heartier outdoor types would enjoy getting out in the brisk winter air to remove the race car's mammoth air dam so the car can be driven up a driveway. The sort of problems that would be encountered are not likely to be tolerated by a large majority of Monza buyers who otherwise might love the IMSA design.

Clearly, some sort of street version of the monster Monzas would be a highly desirable (as well as marketable) item. To this end, BORT Inc. of

Grand Rapids, Michigan, developed a street IMSA Monza package called the Mirage. The package consists of front and rear spoilers and fender flares, and special Mirage identification and striping. Just the thing to impress the gang at the market.

BORT developed the package from the actual IMSA Monza for Michigan Automotive Techniques Corporation, a Grand Rapids marketing firm. The Mirage package is available on Monza 2+2s equipped with the 305cid V-8 engine only. Sorry econo-fans, no 4-cylinder Mirages. The Mirage is ordered through a participating Chevrolet dealer just as a normal Monza would be. The only color presently available is white, although other colors are being considered. While there is no choice of engine or body color, the Mirage can be ordered with the customer's preference of interior color, transmission and any other regular production options offered on the Monza 2+2 *except* the Spyder equipment.

After regular assembly at GM's Ste. Therese, Quebec, plant the Monzas are delivered to Michigan Automotive Techniques Corp., where the various items of the Mirage option are fitted. This is similar to the "drop-ship" system that has proved so successful

for Ford with its Cobra II program. The completed Mirages are then shipped directly to the dealer for delivery to the buyer.

The suggested retail price of the Mirage option is under \$700. If this seems like a lot, consider this: The actual IMSA body panels cost nearly \$1600, and that's just for the plastic pieces. Add the cost of labor and a set of wheels and tires to fill the blimp hanger fender flares, and the money tied up could probably buy two Mirages. In day-to-day use, the Mirage also is no less practical than the standard Monza 2+2. All of the spoilers and fender flares are made of the same soft urethane plastic used on the Monza's nose. This allows the Mirage to fit a larger front air dam than would be possible if rigid plastic were used, since the resilient air dam merely brushes over a steep driveway.

Living with the Mirage is great for the ego. Monza owners drool, Cobra II owners turn a lovely shade of Envy Green, BMW owners invariably speed up or slow down to get a good look, while those in Porsches try to ignore the little Chevy. Considering all the attention the Mirage attracted, it has got to be one of the Walter Mitty GTs of '77. It has the looks, and the 5-liter V-8 ensures a fair amount of spunk.

Some will feel that the Mirage is a half-hearted attempt at a street IMSA Monza. We prefer to look at it as a livable IMSA-looking car. After all, who can tell in the supermarket parking lot? ■

