

Retro Rocker Covers

OLD SCHOOL DRESS UP FOR A MODERN MOTOR



(Below) Here are the center bolt valve covers from PML. The sand-cast aluminum covers were powder coated black with brushed raised fins and retro Chevrolet script.

WHEN YOU ARE BUILDING A TRUCK WITH SOME OLD SCHOOL, CLASSIC HOT ROD FLAIR THERE ARE PLENTY OF AVAILABLE PARTS THAT CAN BE USED OR ADAPTED TO FIT THE THEME OF THE BUILD. Late-model engines, the '96-98 Chevrolet 5.7L Vortec motor in particular, can be tough to dress up without looking modern or by painting pieces under the hood. Unlike earlier Chevy small-blocks, the Vortec is sort of a middle child. Many of the components are the same, but a lot of extra electronics and smog equipment were seemingly thrown on top with no consideration for appearance. The folks over at PML offer a variety of classically styled valve covers that fit everything from 409 motors and Cadillacs to modern LS1 motors. We opted for their finned covers with retro Chevrolet script for our center bolt application. You can get it raw, polished or powder coated like we did. The covers have internal baffles and holes for breathers or PVC valves can be drilled to order. The holes are on the sides of the covers for an extra clean look. While we were at it, we changed the oil using a few quarts of Royal Purple. We topped the engine compartment off with a few polished aluminum covers for the wiper and fuse box from Empire Motorsports via Latemodel Restoration



Supply. Installing aftermarket valve covers on a newer engine can be a bit of a challenge, so follow along as we bolt on some old school covers to finish off the motor of our retro-inspired C/K truck. ■

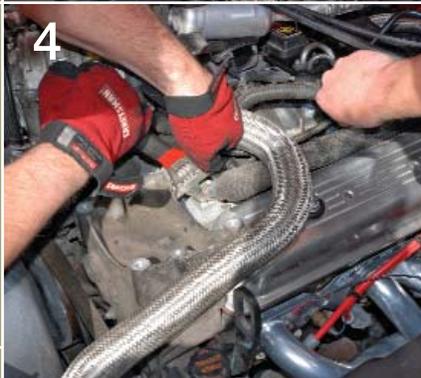
Everything that overlaps the valve covers has to be unbolted and set aside. The spark plug wires are unplugged along with the air intake, coil, throttle line mount, and PCV valve.



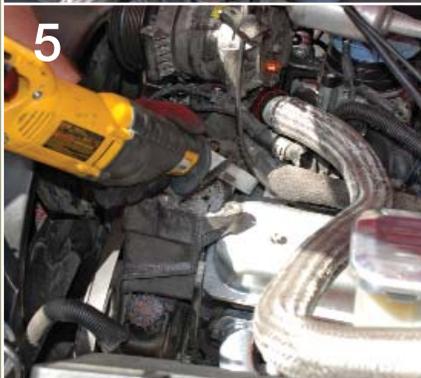
The new covers are taller to accommodate taller rockers. The raised fins also add to the height. Because the truck has A/C mounted right over the valve cover, the compressor needs to be removed so that we can trim the back of the mount. The serpentine belt's tension is released and the compressor is unbolted. Tech advisor at large Marcel Venable of Venable Concepts tackles the job with ease.



The EGR tube is disconnected from the intake manifold as is the upper radiator hose. The fairly fresh coolant is collected for reuse later. An empty beer bottle does the trick, and chances are you have plenty of them in your garage to use.



We busted the Sawz-all out to trim the back of the A/C compressor mount. Grinding the bottom of the mount down to almost nothing would accomplish the same result but is much more time consuming. The compressor still has three solid mounting points and with a little Loctite it will be fine.



Make sure you vacuum up any metal shavings and dirt before you remove the old valve covers. For some reason, loose metal dust and motors don't get along.



The old, scratched "polished" valve covers are removed as well as the old gaskets.



Gasket sealer is applied to the inside of the new valve covers.



A fresh set of gaskets is stretched and fitted to the covers. Duct tape the gasket to the valve covers and set them out in the sun for a little bit to allow the sealer to dry. The last thing you want is an oil leak.



The tape is removed and the new valve cover is installed. An extra set of hands can help keep all of the accessories out of the way to avoid scratching the clean black powder coated covers.



The supplied Allen bolts are secured. Because of the thicker material and internal structure of the valve covers, only two bolts are needed per cover. This allows for a cleaner look and the ability to cast scripted logos and maintain the center bolts.



The passenger side valve cover is test fitted. We covered them with blue painter's tape before fitting to make sure no scratches occurred.

The EGR tube is hit with a little bit of grease before it is screwed back into the intake manifold.



While much simpler than the driver's side, the taller covers meant we had to raise the coil mount for clearance on the passenger side. This was accomplished by cutting some #6 metric all-thread longer and using a couple of nuts to replace the short mounting studs.

The spark plug wires and all of the other connectors are plugged back in.



Here you can see the difference between the new spaced mounting stud and the old one.

The PCV valve is plugged back in. As the hole is mounted on the side towards the back, we flipped the tube around so that the bend was closer to the valve cover, and with a little bit of finesse, we got it in.



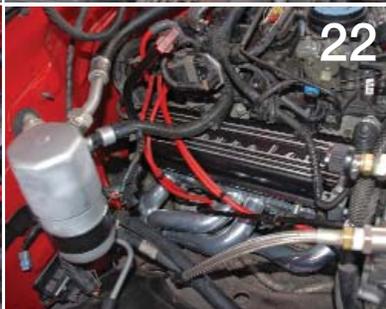
The coil is screwed onto the new raised mounts.

The A/C compressor is bolted back in and then the serpentine belt is reinstalled.



All of the wiring is plugged back in on the passenger side and the brackets are reinstalled.

While we were at it we drained the old oil and yanked the oil filter to make way for some new synthetic petroleum from Royal Purple. Changing the oil with our setup is going to be a little tricky down the line as we opted for no extra holes. You can pull the PCV valve or order a separate fill hole on the covers. We put a funnel into the lifter valley and pumped the motor with 5 quarts of Royal Purple.



Here is the finished passenger side of the motor complete with old school styling.

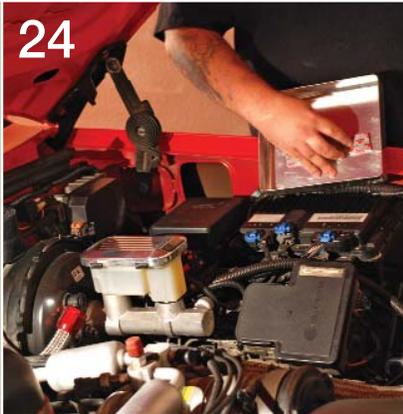
The upper radiator hose is reinstalled and the coolant is put back in. A radiator flush was done on this truck fairly recently so the fluids were still good. Run the motor for a bit and then check the level just to make sure you are not running dry.

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To cover up some of the electronics on this modern motor, we picked up a few polished aluminum covers from Empire Motorsports via Latemodel Restoration Supply. The fuse box and wiper motor are wiped clean of all grease and dirt. The supplied Velcro is stuck to the inside of the covers with both sides attached.

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The backing is removed from the Velcro before it is pressed onto the wiper motor and fuse box. Keeping the Velcro attached ensures it is perfectly lined up on both surfaces.



Sources

LATEMODEL RESTORATION SUPPLY
866.507.1737
www.latemodelrestoration.com

PML, INC.
310.671.4345
www.yourcovers.com

ROYAL PURPLE, INC.
888.382.6300
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