



LEFT: While the Trans Am received its distinctive, rear-facing shaker scoop beginning in 1970, Formulas featured a fiberglass, raised twin-scoop hood that was as artistically

beautiful as it was functional. **MIDDLE:** Galvan had many fond memories in his Firebird's interior, so he chose to have it restored rather than customized. **RIGHT:**

The Firebird's refurbished interior is essentially factory-fresh, with the addition of a B&M ratcheting shifter to command the Turbo 400 that lurks beneath the stock console.

While it would have certainly been easier – and probably cheaper – for Galvan to discard his Firebird like worn-out jeans, he had practically a lifetime of memories in this Firebird, so he was determined to bring it back to life.

He brought the car to renowned San Antonio, Texas-based restorer, Jeff Lilly, and asked him and his crew to rejuvenate his old 'Bird.

According to Lilly, “the car was wasted. But Mark was really attached to it. He loved it and still had a passion for it.” So, together, they set about planning the car's comeback.

Galvan was insistent that the car had to be streetable. And he didn't want it to look like every other Firebird ... or run like them.

Since Galvan was enamored with the Formula's factory design, it was determined they'd restore the body – no small feat, when nearly every panel needed replacement or major reconstruction

surgery. But procurement of a donor car gave Lilly's crew the solid sheetmetal that the Formula so desperately needed. From there, they spent countless hours patching, shaping, smoothing and sanding every panel, paying particular attention to the nose and twin-scooped hood, which are particularly challenging to fit properly on second-gen Firebirds. When it came time for paint, Lilly convinced Galvan to go with a deep, lustrous black, polished to perfection.

While the body was being attended to, the boys from Butler Performance were busy building the Firebird's replacement motor for high-performance street use. The 400-inch engine's 9.75:1 compression helps it develop 525 horsepower on 93-octane pump gas. A B&M shifter in the stock console is used to command the beefed-up Turbo 400 automatic, while a Currie 9-inch rearend sports 3.55:1 gears, providing a decent compromise

between streetability and track-ready performance.

Galvan remembered the Firebird as being a capable handler back in the day – another attraction to the car. But he also realized upgrades were available, so the car was fitted with Global West Suspension's tubular front upper and lower control arms, along with Global West's 1¼-inch sway bars to keep the car flat on its Nitto tires, which measure 225/50R17 front and 255/50R17 rear. American Racing Torque Thrust wheels provide a nostalgic yet timeless look, while Wilwood brakes are used to pull the Formula down from speed.

The changes add up to what Lilly describes as one of the best-handling yet gnarliest Firebirds he's ever driven. Which is apparently just what Galvan was shooting for, as he's now back to driving the Formula as often as possible – especially when he's got the chance to scare the pants off his buddies. ■

BOTTOM: The second-generation Firebird's only available bodystyle was the beautifully flowing fastback-like two-door sports coupe with dazzling surfaces off which the light and reflections dance in these studio shots.



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