

The Better Idea

Lee Sherwin's '72 K-5 Blazer is proof of why they are still some of the most popular 4x4s ever built

by Thomas Glatch

There once was a time when there were either Jeeps, or trucks that wanted to be Jeeps. Jeep made the first popular 4x4, and the Ford Bronco and International

Specifications

Overall Length	177.5 inches
Wheelbase	104.0 inches
Height	68.7 inches
Width	79.0 inches
Track - Front	60.4 inches
- Rear	60.4 inches
Front axle	Dana 44
Rear axle	GM 12-bolt Posi
Transfer case	New Process 205 (gear drive)
Gear ratio	3.73:1
Engine	350ci V-8
Horsepower	245 @ 4,800 rpm
Torque	350 @ 2,800 rpm
Carburetion	(1) Two-barrel Quadra Jet
Compression Ratio	8.5:1 / regular gas

Scout tried hard to do the Jeep one better.

Then came the Blazer. When it was introduced in 1970, the Chevy Blazer was a whole new kind of 4x4. In typical fashion, Chevrolet didn't play follow-the-leader, but blazed a trail all its own. They took their full-size K-series 4x4 pickup and shortened it to 177.5 inches. Then they filled their new creation with the same powertrain and comfort options as their pickups, and added a standard softtop or optional fiberglass hardtop. The result was a vehicle with superior room, performance, and comfort.


Ford Bronco buyers could not order air conditioning, front disc brakes, automatic transmission, or even power steering. The Bronco's biggest engine, the 302 V-8, looked pretty puny next to Chevy's standard 307 or optional 350. And though four people could ride in the Bronco, there was little space for anything else. Compare that to the Blazer's full-sized interior—there's room for five with plenty of storage space behind the rear seat.

When *Motor Trend* magazine tested the Blazer and the Bronco side-by-side, they reported: "As tested, the Blazer was built for the dirt. Maneuverability, despite the car's size, 104-inch wheelbase and 177.5-inch overall length, was good due to the power steering and disc brakes. And punishment, the Blazer endured it all... In fact, the Blazer was so well adapted to its purpose that we spent most of the time in two-wheel high

with an occasional stint into four-wheel high, and a very short period while descending a rather precipitous trail when we shifted to four-wheel low for safety. It was a most impressive experience... Adequate passenger comfort is also important to the off-roader since rough country can lead to driver fatigue and here the Blazer won out. The conclusions? In our little contest the Blazer wins hands down with the Bronco a distant second."

That is something Lee Sherwin knows full well. Lee always liked the style and practicality of the early K-5 Blazers. He stumbled across one for sale at a car show in 1994, and though he didn't have the cash to purchase the Blazer right then, he did leave the show with the seller's phone number. Several weeks passed before Lee was able to come up with the money. Expecting the vehicle to be already sold, he happily discovered it was still available, and made the trip to Waterloo, Iowa, to pick it up. The Blazer was in fine condition, partly because an Iowa Chevy dealer had stored it for eight years. After the Blazer reached its new home, Lee and his good friend Brian Knueppel began the task of making it look new.

Today, Lee's Blazer is driven often—both on- and off-road. As nice as it looks, he's not afraid to get it muddy at various events. Equipped with a 350 two-barrel and automatic transmission, there's more than enough power for street and trail. And there's plenty of room for his wife Cheryl and their four children.

Lee Sherwin thinks his Chevy is one great ride. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then look at what Ford did to the Bronco in 1978, and Dodge to the Ramcharger in 1973. That's right, they copied the K-5 Blazer. So who had the better idea? 



'72 K-5 Blazer
Owner: Lee Sherwin
Milwaukee, WI

