

# Chapter 1



## History of the Chevelle

### 1964 - Not Your Average Family Sedan

The Chevelle was introduced in 1964 to fill the gap in Chevrolet's model line-up, targeting the family car market. And fill the gap they did, as sales for its first year reached 338,286 units. The Malibu SS became an instant hit with sales of 76,860, accounting for nearly 23 percent of all Chevelle sales. Chevrolet's initial offering included two basic models, the low budget 300 series and the upscale Malibu.

The Chevelle for 1964 resembled Chevrolet's mainstay, the Impala, but in smaller form. Built on a wheelbase of 115" with an overall length of 193.9", made the Chevelle over a foot shorter than the Impala. The Chevelle also featured a full perimeter frame with coil springs, both front and rear.

Styling for the new A-body was rather boxy in appearance and chrome trim was minimal on the base model. The front-end styling featured quad headlights and a flat lattice style grille that looked very much like the Impala's. The rear cove panel was flat as well and featured one square taillight on each side.

The Super Sport could be ordered in either a two-door coupe or convertible form with a choice of six cylinder or V-8 power. Initially, the Malibu SS came standard with a 120hp Hi-Thrift 194 cubic inch six cylinder or a 195hp Turbo-Fire 283 cubic inch V-8 engine. Optional engine choices included the 155hp Turbo-Thrift 230 six-cylinder or the 220hp Turbo-Fire 283 V-8.

For those customers wanting a little more power, a Turbo-Fire 327 V-8 engine was introduced to the Malibu line. Initially, the 327 came in two versions rated at 250hp and 300hp. On SS' so equipped, a cross flag emblem was added to each of the front fenders, just behind the wheel openings, to signify a 327 was lurking under the hood.

January 1964, brought the release of a third 327 V-8, this one touting 365hp. This small-block featured solid lifters, 11:1 aluminum pistons and an aluminum intake manifold, but sadly was cancelled before it went into real production. A handful of L76 powered Super Sports may still exist today.

A manually shifted three-speed transmission was standard for the Super Sport. A variety of other transmissions were also available, including the two-speed Powerglide automatic and a three-speed manual with overdrive. For the V-8 equipped Malibu's, a new Muncie four-speed manual transmission could be ordered.

The standard differential housed 3.08:1 gears on all Super Sports. Optional 3.36:1 or 3.70:1 gear ratios were also available. A Positraction rear axle could be ordered with any standard or optional gear ratio.

When the Super Sport option was added to the base Malibu, bright wheel well moldings, rocker panel moldings, and upper body panel



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moldings were added, as well as bright trim on the hood's wind split. Additional bright trim was also added to the rear cove panel in the form of a ribbed divider panel.

To further set the Super Sport apart from the base Malibu version, special SS identification was added to the rear cove panel near the right taillight, and Malibu SS insignia was applied to both rear quarter panels. Full size SS "spinner" wheel covers were also included with the Super Sport option.

Inside, the Super Sport was equipped with a sport steering wheel and bucket seat interior with upgraded trim. A center console was also added when equipped with a manual transmission or floor shifted Powerglide transmission.

The standard engine warning lights were replaced by a set of four gauges, which included; temperature, voltage, fuel, and oil pressure. In addition, the optional tachometer was mounted in place of the clock when so ordered. The clock was then relocated from the instrument panel to atop the dash.

In all, the popular Chevelle line-up included eleven different models with fifteen exterior colors to choose from. That, combined with a host of available options, gave customers a myriad of combinations for ordering their new Chevelle.

### **1965 - The Mystery Motor Unveiled**

The Super Sport became a separate model based on the upscale Malibu, rather than an option as it was in its first year.

For 1965, the Chevelle was restyled to give it a longer, lower appearance. The Super Sport's refined chassis lowered its stance nearly an inch, while two and one half inches were added to the length. It was given a new front bumper and grille, along with an updated rear cove panel with larger taillights. An optional vinyl roof could be ordered, although only in black.

All Super Sports received a "blacked out" grille and rear cove panel. Black Super Sports received a silver rear cove panel.

A look inside revealed a bucket seat interior with upgraded trim and a sport steering wheel. As in 1964, a center console was standard when a manual transmission or floor shifted Powerglide transmission was ordered. A gauge package consisting of temperature, voltage, fuel, and oil pressure could be ordered in place of the standard engine warning lights. An optional tachometer was also available.

Once again for 1965, a 120hp Hi-Thrift 194 cubic inch six cylinder or a 195hp Turbo-Fire 283 V-8 engine were offered as standard equipment. Two optional 327 cubic inch V-8 engines



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could be ordered for those customers wanting a little more excitement. The 327 could be ordered in two versions rated at 250hp and 300hp.

Soon after the introduction of the 1965 model year, yet another 327 was added to the Chevelle line-up offered under RPO L79. It was a 350hp version with 360 ft-lbs of torque, which first debuted in the Corvette, and only available with a manual four-speed transmission. This radical small-block engine featured a Holley four-barrel carburetor, big valve heads incorporating hydraulic lifters, and 11:1 compression. To complete the package, Chevrolet added chrome valve covers and a dual snorkel air cleaner.

Externally, V-8 engine identification came in the form of an emblem mounted to each of the front fenders just in front of the wheel openings. The emblem consisted of the engine size incorporated into the now familiar cross flags.

1965 saw the emergence of the 396 Mk IV big-block engine as part of the famed Z16 Malibu SS. The Z16 was created to test the waters of the

high performance market as a prelude to the 1966 model. This special Malibu SS included a host of performance and comfort options packaged in a sporty two-door hardtop or convertible.

There were a mere 201 Z16 Malibus produced, 200 two-door coupes and one convertible. Since the Z16 option was produced in such limited numbers, it did not come cheap, as it added \$1,501.05 to the base price of the Malibu.

Each Z16 Malibu SS was equipped exactly the same. The drive train included a 375hp L37 396 engine, M20 four-speed transmission, and a 3.31:1 ratio 12-bolt non-Positraction differential. A heavy-duty convertible frame with two extra body mounts and heavy-duty suspension were used to handle the tremendous torque produced by the sinister Mk IV engine. A heavy-duty rear sway bar and control arms were also added. Extra stopping power was provided by eleven-inch brakes borrowed from the Impala. Gold stripe tires mounted on 14 x 6 inch rims with mag style wheel covers were standard.