

BISON: ZR2 ON STERIODS

By Joe Sage

There is an explosion happening now in the midsize pickup market, as an ongoing boom in pickup sales across many demographics has left some realizing they don't really need a full-size truck, outside ranch country or construction sites. After years of Toyota Tacoma and Nissan Frontier having it pretty much to themselves (with Honda Ridgeline also in the segment, with a different take on things), Chevrolet and GMC reentered the zone in the US in 2015 with a new Colorado and Canyon, respectively; Ford's new Ranger is just coming to dealerships; FCA revealed the Jeep Gladiator at the LA Auto Show (also in this issue); and we're keeping an eye on upcoming auto shows for what

Ram may or may not have up their sleeve.

The Chevrolet Colorado and GMC Canyon have been well received. But, of course, some people will always take the best they've been given and still reach for the parts catalog, whether for style, performance or specific capability such as off-road.

So Chevrolet has decided to do this, too. A big part of Chevy's strategy with the Colorado midsize pickup is to offer a wide variety of models, with a wide variety of purposes, factory-ready.

Thus they created the Chevrolet Colorado ZR2, which we had in our fleet a month or so back, a beefed-up off-road, desert- and trail-running build, which was our first drive of their new midsize pick-

up. Highly outfitted with wider track, taller suspension, 31-inch tires, electronically locking differentials, a body and undercarriage modified for approach, departure and clearance hazards in the field, and a choice of gasoline or diesel powerplants, the Colorado ZR2 seems ready for anything you can throw it at—exactly as it comes off the assembly line in Wentzille, Missouri—the factory-ready philosophy applied to maximum effect. Or so we had noted a month earlier. Turns out that was "maximum so far." Meet the new maximum.

The new Chevrolet Colorado ZR2 Bison build also gets one step ahead of ZR2 shoppers who might be thinking ahead to modifications. For the

ZR2 Bison, Chevy reaches beyond the bowtie parts bin, teaming up with AEV—American Expedition Vehicles of Wixom, Michigan—builder of off-road custom vehicles and overlanding parts extraordinaire and a regular at Off-Road Expo West near Flagstaff each spring. If you've coveted their over-the-top builds and have also coveted the new Chevy Colorado, particularly the Colorado ZR2, meet your double covet.

Enhancements on the ZR2 Bison include an AEV front bumper set up to accommodate a winch; a rear bumper with recovery points; AEV hot-stamped boron steel skid plates for the front differential, engine oil pan, transfer case, fuel tank and rear differential; AEV-designed fender flares; AEV-designed 17-inch wheels (and spare); and AEV-logoed floor liners front and rear—all proclaimed upon arrival by standard fog lamps and a burly blacked-out grille reading "CHEVROLET," rather than bearing the normal tidy bowtie.

We met up with the Chevy truck team in Paradise Valley and headed out on surface streets and Valley freeways—where the truck was smooth and comfortable—then out of the East Valley on US 60 to a dedicated off-road area southwest of Superior. Here, we put the ZR2 Bison through extremes, including rock crawling and canyon-squeezing that fully challenged the truck's approach, breakover and departure angles, its outer dimensions, its undercarriage protections—and ultimately most of all its drivetrain and sus-

pension. This was a course that could break even the most serious off-road vehicle, but (with invaluable help from ground crew guiding us through the very tightest spots) our small army of ZR2 Bisons conquered it all and drove away happy and ultimately unscathed.

(From here, we swapped into the new Silverado 2.7T turbo; see other feature in this issue.)

One more note if you're shopping for the new Colorado ZR2 Bison: since Chevy knows that no matter how complete a truck they build, some are still going to reach for even more specialization, they are now offering Best in the Desert factory race components, starting with 15 suspension and other parts originally developed for Chad Hall's Best in the Desert race and Baja 1000 pre-running truck—representing over 10,000 miles of actual extreme proof of product—enough for you to build a full race or pre-running truck of your own,

ZR2 models aside, Chevy Colorado has more up its sleeve with the factory-build-ready philosophy. Watch for two more specialty models—the RST (a both tough and classy appearance package for the street-focused LT trim, with black trim details, 20-inch wheels and the Bison's bold grille); and a Z71 Trail Runner (a more moderately off-road feature set than ZR2, for Z71, with skid plates, rock rails, 17-inch wheels and big off-road tires, and again also the Bison's grille). Each is created not to dilute the ZR2 or ZR2 Bison models, but rather just to spread their wealth. ■

2019 COLORADO ZR2 BISON

GASOLINE

ENGINE3.6L DOHC dir inj V6
DRIVETRAIN4WD
HP/TORQUE308 hp / 275 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION8L45 8-speed auto
MPG16/18/na (city/hwy/comb)

DIESEL

ENGINE2.8L Duramax turbo-diesel I-4
DRIVETRAIN4WD
HP/TORQUE186 hp / 369 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION6L50 6-spd auto
MPG18/22/na (city/hwy/comb)

SUSPENSIONF: indep coil-over shock, twin-tube shocks;
R: solid axle w semi-elliptic two-stage multi-leaf springs, twin-tube shocks
STEERINGelec power-assist rack & pinion
BRAKESpower-assist 4-wheel disc w Duralife long-life rotors, ABS, hill descent avail; F: 12.2" / R: 12.75"
WHEELSBison-specific 17x8 alum tires31" Goodyear Wrangler Duratrac O/R
REAR AXLE3.42
CAB / BEDextended cab / 6'2" crew cab / 5'2"
LENGTH / WHEELBASE212.7 / 128.3 in
PAYLOAD1100 lb
TOW CAPACITY5000 lb
WEIGHT extended cab ...gasoline4639 lb
.....diesel4925 lb
crew cabgasoline4745 lb
.....diesel5011 lb
FUEL CAPACITY21 gal

ZR2: Front & rear locking electronic differentials, Multimatic DSSV™ dampers, off-road rocker protection, cast-iron control arms, Autotrac transfer case and more.

BASE PRICE\$42,900

ZR2 BISON: Chevrolet lettered grille, AEV steel front & rear bumpers, fog lamps, AEV hot-stamped boron steel skid plates, AEV 17" aluminum wheels, AEV wheel flares, AEV badge floor liners, AEV badge embroidered headrests, integrated recovery points, integrated winch receiver and more.

BISON ADDS\$5,750

KEY OPTIONS:

2.8L DURATEC TURBO DIESEL3500
PREMIUM BOSE AUDIO500
CHEVROLET INFOTAINMENT 3 PREMIUM W NAV:
8" HD color touchscreen, voice recog Bluetooth, audi streaming, Apple/Android, in-vehicle apps, personalization capable495
DESTINATION CHARGE995

