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GM'S CHEVROLET BEL AIR

SPORTY TWO-DOOR CONVERTIBLE BLENDS TRADITION AND INNOVATION

The Chevrolet Bel Air concept is a modern American convertible built on the tradition of the legendary 1955-57 Chevys of the same name. The two-door Bel Air concept celebrates an American icon in a manner reminiscent of the originals with style, performance and an exciting new engine.

"This is not just another convertible," said Wayne Cherry, GM's vice president for design. "The Bel Air is about embracing the essence of those mid-50s Chevys — the 'tri-5s' — in a contemporary way. This car is the right size for America, just like the originals were in the 1950s."

The 1955 Bel Air enhanced Chevrolet's image virtually overnight with its natty styling and unique powertrain.

The new Bel Air concept vehicle retraces the graceful flowing lines of those classic originals. The modern exterior with its signature beltline kick-up gives the vehicle a sleek appearance. And with its somewhat taller profile and higher driving position, the vehicle's proportions recreate the comfort, visibility and ease of entry and exit of the cars of the 1950s.

The Chevrolet bowtie is displayed prominently on the Bel Air's egg-crate grille and five-spoke aluminum wheels with 18-inch tires enhance the car's sporty look.

The rear-wheel-drive concept also was inspired by several interior design cues from its 1950s predecessor. The simple, elegant passenger compartment features a twin-element instrument panel, steering column-mounted gearshift and bench seats. The seats are covered in soft high-technology fabrics, in colors that match the exterior. The front seats are cleverly designed to slide forward for easier backseat entry.



But the concept's kinship with the tri-5s goes beyond the interior and exterior styling cues, Cherry said. The legacy also extends under the hood.

The original small-block Chevrolet V8 option featured in the 1955 used the latest advances in engine technology to set a new benchmark for performance and dependability, Cherry said. The engine for the Bel Air concept uses today's advanced technology to provide affordable, efficient performance, he said.

"This new engine is just as significant today as that V8 was in the '55," said Cherry.

The Bel Air is powered by a Vortec 3500 turbocharged inline five-cylinder concept engine based on the highly regarded inline engine family that debuted in GM's midsize sport-utility vehicles. The all-aluminum engine delivers up to 315 horsepower and 315 lb-ft of torque, and is mated to a Hydra-Matic 4L60-E electronically controlled four-speed automatic transmission.

A button on the steering wheel activates the powertrain control module to trigger a more aggressive spark and fueling calibration for maximum horsepower.

"This engine sets a new benchmark," Cherry said. "You can go from a super-efficient five-cylinder to a high-performance engine all in the same package."

To provide the appropriate structure for a large convertible, the Bel Air concept uses a 21st century interpretation of body-on-frame construction, employing the same hydroforming technology used in the frame rails of the Corvette and GM's new midsize sport-utility vehicles. The hydroformed frame rails help provide impressive torsional rigidity and stiffness in a light package, for terrific ride and handling.

Cherry said the design team had fun capturing the expressiveness and flair of the 1955-57 Bel Airs by drawing on some of the cars' intriguing details, such as the traffic light viewfinder and the gas filler cap located in the taillight.

Chevrolet has long appealed to a diverse cross section of consumers who want dependable, spirited vehicles. The 1955-57 Chevrolets provided refreshing, exciting designs; powerful, reliable engines; and smart, spacious interiors at a great price. The cars became symbols of the can-do American spirit of the 1950s, and they are in high demand by car collectors of all ages.

"This concept plays to people who are rediscovering the fun and excitement of the open-air vehicle, as well as those discovering them for the first time," Cherry said.

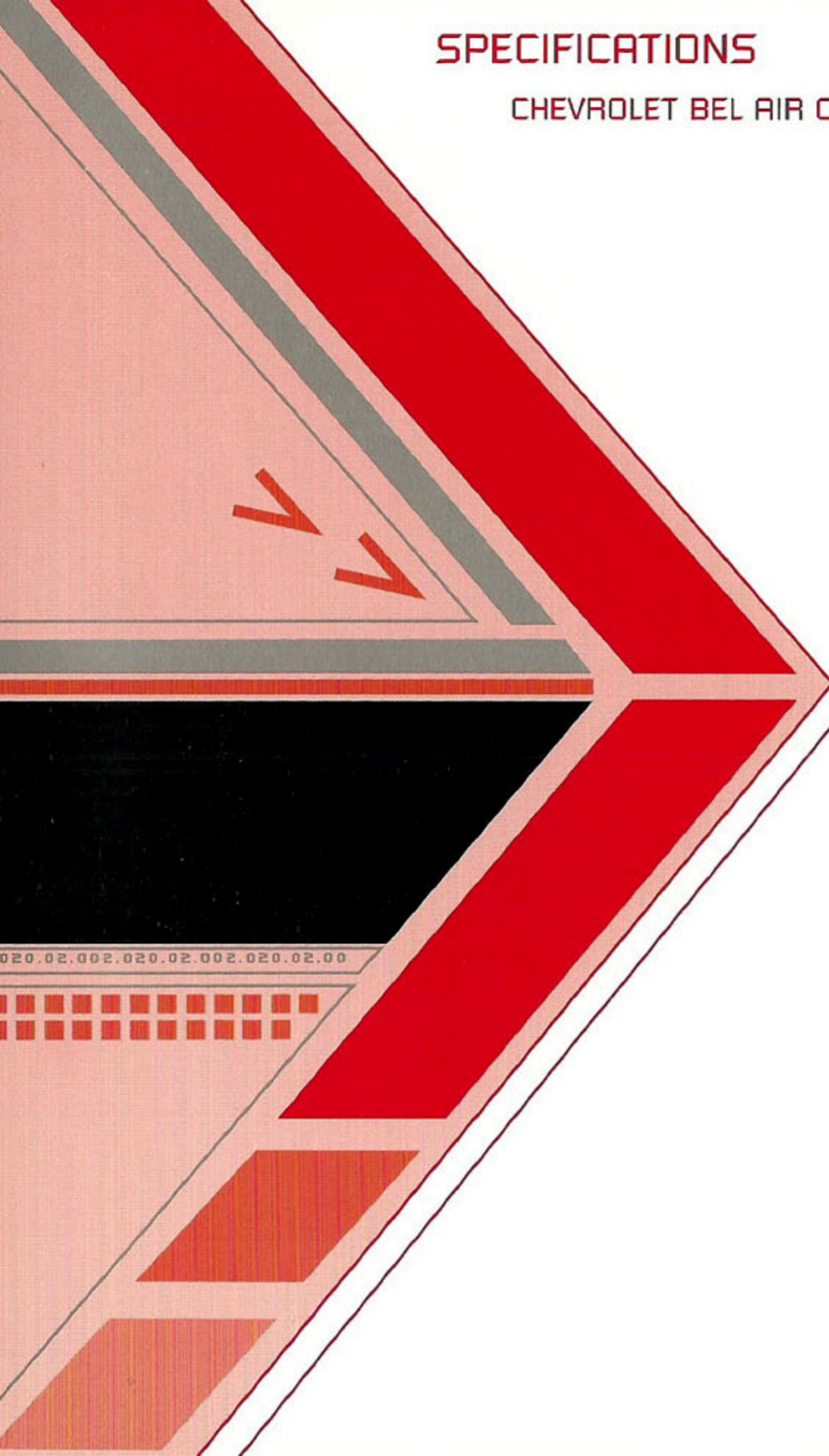
The Bel Air concept taps the interest in nostalgia that people of all ages share, while creating a fun, uniquely American automobile for a whole new generation of drivers, Cherry said. The concept blends the excitement of the 1955-57 Bel Airs, cutting-edge powertrain technology and the charm of open-air motoring.

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SPECIFICATIONS

CHEVROLET BEL AIR CONCEPT VEHICLE



Body/chassis structure:	body on frame, front-engine rear-wheel drive
Body material:	sheet metal
Chassis material:	hydroformed steel frame
Suspension:	front – short long arm (SLA) rear – Hotchkiss Drive
Wheels:	18 x 8 in. aluminum
Tires:	235/50VR18
Brakes:	front – 11 in. (280mm) disc brakes rear – 11.75 in. (298.45mm) disc brakes

POWERTRAIN

Engine:	Vortec 3.5L inline 5-cylinder
Engine displacement (cu. in / cc)	214 / 3500
Horsepower (hp / kw):	315 / 235
Torque (lb-ft / Nm):	315 / 427
Transmission:	Hydra-Matic 4L60-E electronically controlled 4-speed automatic

DIMENSIONS

Height (in / mm):	54.8 / 1392.6
Length (in / mm):	191.0 / 4852.2
Width (in / mm):	71.6 / 1819.9
Wheelbase (in / mm):	111.0 / 2820.1
Track (in / mm):	60.5 / 1536.7



