

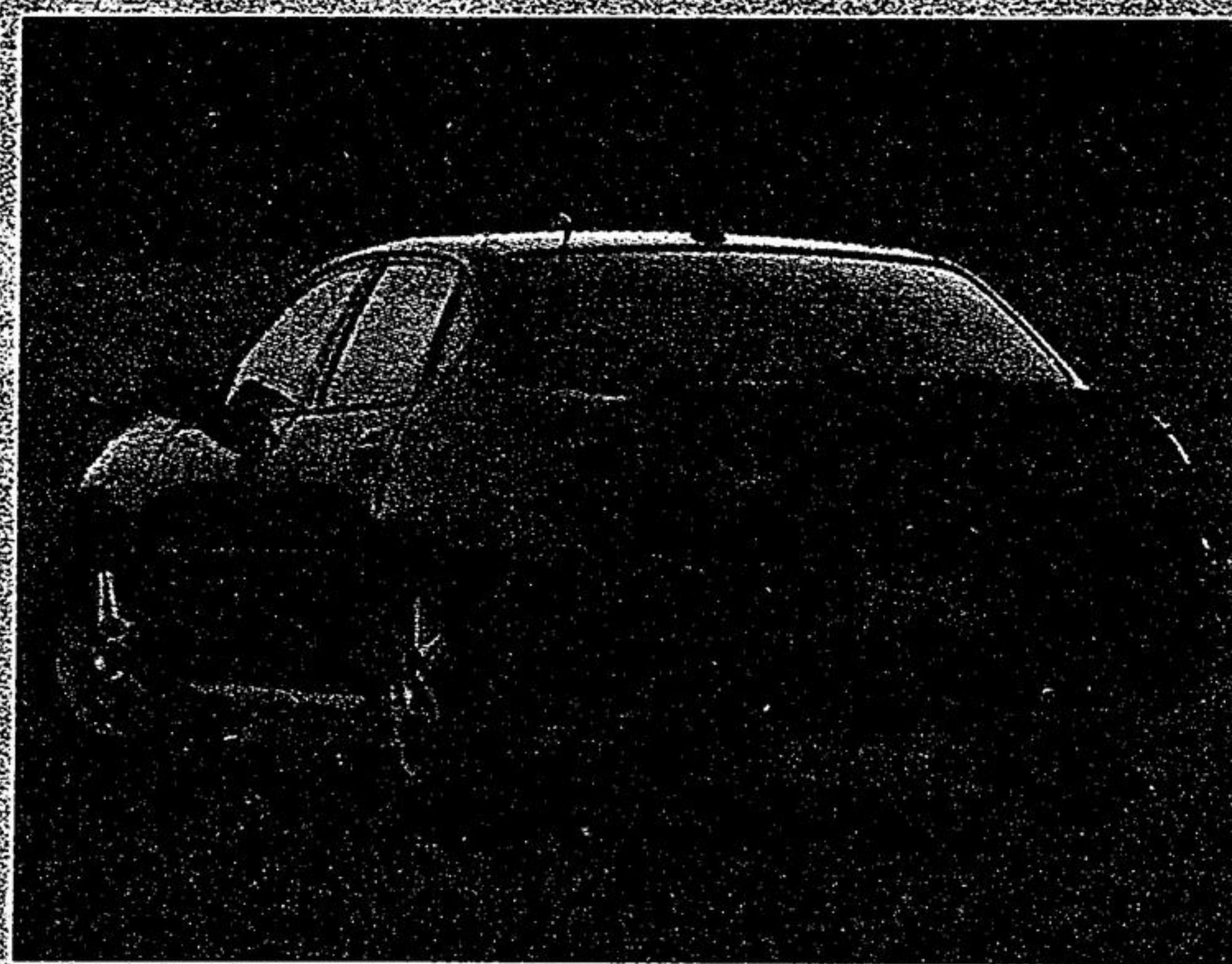
MORE IMPALA
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WHEELS

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WRITER WINS AWARD
[PAGE 18]



The Impala SS is only available in black with a monochromatic theme, including colour-keyed bodyside mouldings, "SS" badging, and lowered front fascia with integrated fog lamps.

Impala has a modern take on the muscle car mystique

2004 Chevrolet Impala SS
by Rob Beintema

There's a certain romance in returning to an idealized past. A nostalgia that keeps bringing back familiar names — like the Impala SS.

Back in the old days, it didn't long for GM to latch onto the '60s muscle car craze and bolster the original Impala's reputation.

In 1961, just three years after the first Impala rolled off the assembly line, Chevrolet redesigned the entire car and introduced the first SS or Super Sport model complete with the legendary 409 engine.

Since then, the "SS" logo has ebbed and flowed through Chevrolet's timeline, ghosting in and out of favour on special edition models and, most recently, as a high performance version of the Caprice.

Now, more than forty years after the original, the car that launched Chevrolet's

celebrated SS series returns with a modern take on the muscle car mystique of the past. Also debuting in the 2004 model year is the Supercharged Monte Carlo SS.

The latest generation Impala has offered a choice of two V6 engines — the base 3.4L LA1 engine making 180 hp and 205 lb-ft of torque or the 3.8L L36 motor making 200 hp and 225 lb-ft of torque.

The new Impala SS features a supercharged version of the bigger 3.8L engine. A supercharger is a device that forces a concentrated charge of air into the intake manifold, for better breathing and a more powerful combustion stroke. The benefit is increased torque and horsepower. Unlike an exhaust gas-driven turbocharger, the 3800's Eaton supercharger is belt-driven for smooth, linear power with virtually no lag.

Okay, it's no V8. How much of a muscle car can it really be?

Well, this award-winning 3800 Series II supercharged V-6 engine L V6 generates

240 hp at 5200 rpm, and a substantial 280 lb-ft of torque at 3600 rpm. It also features a torque curve that is consistently high over a broad operating range, for good off-the-line acceleration and ample power for highway merging and passing. And there's little evidence of the usual supercharger whine.

There's a premium pump penalty for the extra performance. The supercharged engine requires high-octane fuel. It seemed to manage okay on cheaper mid-grade gas but don't tell GM. Fuel mileage also drops when compared to the regularly aspirated engines — 13.4L/8.2L (city/hwy) or 21mpg/34mpg (city/hwy).

Among improvements for 2004, the 3800 SC will be outfitted with a direct-mount air-conditioning compressor that reduces vibration for an improvement to the engine's already excellent noise, vibration and harshness (NVH) levels. In addition, powder-metal connecting rods replace cast-iron rods for increased dura-

bility and reduced weight.

In the Impala SS, the 3800 SC will be mated to a heavy-duty version of the Hydra-Matic 4T65-E four-speed electronically controlled automatic transmission. It's a smooth and seamless tranny that never draws your attention.

The Impala provides a ready-made and solid foundation for good ride and handling. An extruded aluminum engine cradle saves weight and helps isolate engine noise and vibration, and the overall tautness of the Impala's body structure allows chassis components to be finely tuned to enhance performance. Impala also features four-wheel independent suspension with MacPherson struts at all four corners, power rack-and-pinion steering, electronic traction control, and large-diameter four-wheel disc power-assisted braking with ABS and race-inspired cooling ducts.

To complement the additional power, chassis and suspension enhancements

See IMPALA, page 12

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