



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY CHRIS NEPRASCH

# Slick Shifting

SHIFTWORKS SOLVES TRANS SWAP GEAR CHANGES

**T**he Powerglide transmission will always have its loyal fan base. There will also be those who love the cinematic quality Betamax produces, think 8-tracks offer superior music playback, and the Pony Express is still the most efficient way to deliver a message. Nostalgia aside, for street-driven cars, the two-speed GM transmission is now regularly swapped out for three-speed automatics or more modern overdrive units.

Depending on the application, bolting a modern transmission in place of the Powerglide is the easy part. Things like rerouting lines and reworking shift linkages becomes the part of the swap that consumes the most time. If you're trying to retain the factory look while utilizing the original console, the job becomes even tougher.

Shiftworks created its shifter conversion in 1991 when owners replacing the Powerglide with a TH350 wanted to modify existing factory shifters to work properly with the updated transmissions. As the popularity of overdrive transmission

retrofitting increased, so did the demand for a console-style shifter that could be mounted and used in all sorts of different applications. And with that, the Trans-stormer was born.

Available in either a rod linkage or a cable-actuated shifter, the Trans-stormer when used as a rod shifter can be mounted close to or beneath the floor to accommodate early Impalas, Novas, Corvettes, and the '67 Camaro. In cable format, the unique mounting system that allows for mounting on irregular surfaces, along with the flexibility of cable operation, make it an ideal candidate for a number of factory consoles. The optional stainless steel handle lengths and knob styles allow owners to custom-tailor the Trans-stormer to fit the ideal look they're going after.

When Shiftworks told us about the new Trans-stormer, we knew exactly the car we'd want to try it out on. After ditching the Powerglide on a '64 Malibu SS, one of our staffers who shall remain nameless made a valiant [we use that term loosely – Ed.] effort

to retrofit an aftermarket shifter into the factory SS console. Although mechanically it was sound, the finished product was rough on the eyes and could stand to be improved.

We opted for the cable-actuated Trans-stormer, and in less time than it takes to cook 90 batches of Minute Rice, beauty was brought back to the factory center console. The Trans-stormer looked the part of the factory console shifter, and between the greatly improved aesthetics and ability to have positive selection of all forward gears, we were left with only one question: Why didn't we do it this way in the first place? **15**

**(A)** Yeah, it shifted gears before, but how good did it really look doing it?

**(B)** The Trans-stormer by Shiftworks returned the factory shifter look to the center console while allowing for full range of all the forward gears.

**(C)** Shiftworks offers the Trans-stormer with either cable or rod actuation. Both options come with the necessary hardware, including neutral safety/backup light switch.





**(1)** Begin by disconnecting the battery, and then remove the console and all of the factory shifter hardware.

**(2)** The Trans-stormer shifter comes with adjustable arms and 90-degree legs. Use star washers between mating surfaces and turn until finger tight.

**(3)** With the legs installed, place the shifter on the floorboard and put the console in place to use as a guide. For the '64 Malibu, we found that facing all four 90 degrees toward the front of the car allowed the best fit. Mark the hole locations.

**(4)** Remove the console and place the shifter on the marked holes. Adjust the universal legs until the shifter is level and tighten the mounting hardware.

**(5)** Install the neutral safety/backup light switch. Depending on the application, like the '64 Chevelle, the shifter is reversed 180 degrees and the switch is able to be placed on the outside to fit properly. Shiftworks did this intentionally so that the Trans-stormer would be able to fit in more consoles.

**(6)** Install the cable bracket and the cable to the Trans-stormer shifter. Mount the shifter into the car and secure to the floorboard.

**(7)** With the shifter mounted, measure 5 1/2 inches from the forward point of the shifter and mark. If the cable is dropped through the factory Powerglide shifter hole, it's too long, so a hole about 1 1/2 inches in diameter at the marked point needs to be drilled. The cable can now be dropped through the floorboard and the provided cable grommet screwed in place.

**(8)** Attach the supplied Shiftworks brackets to the transmission and install the cable.

**(9)** The factory gear selection indicator only has low and drive, so Shiftworks includes an overlay sticker that has L1, L2, D, and overdrive.

**(10)** On the back of the factory indicator bezel there are three screws and washers holding the indicator in place. Remove the three screws, lift off, install the Shiftworks overlay, and screw it back in place.

**(11)** Reinstall the console and shifter bezel, verify that the transmission engages in all gears, and the install is completed. Note the button on the knob of the shift indicator, this is the knob included with the Trans-stormer.

**(12)** Shiftworks also offers optional knobs like this black smoothie. Instead of a button, the knob is lifted to put the transmission into gear. It's strictly user preference, but we liked the optional smoothie knob over the button sticking out of the top.

## SOURCE

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