



This Madeira Maroon example was the only 1966 L72-Impala sold by the renown Fred Gibb Chevrolet, in LaHarpe, Illinois. It now belongs to Kevin DeWitte.

Full-Size Fun: The 1966 Chevrolet Impala SS



The L72 427 comes with heavy-duty parts like forged pistons and crankshaft, four-bolt mains and rectangle-port cylinder heads. It was only paired to a four-speed manual transmission.

IF YOU WENT SHOPPING for a brand-new Impala in the mid-1960s, you could rest assured that Chevrolet had you covered. Personalization was at the top of their list, offering nearly 200 items that shoppers could add on to their new rides to custom-tailor it to their likings. In marketing, the brand even compared it to ordering a suit from a ‘wonderful little old tailor’ and it was all about getting exactly what you wanted.

For the horsepower hungry, it wasn’t about playing dress-up with fancy doo-dads—they wanted tire-smoking performance. They got it when they strolled into their local showrooms and browsed the line-up of available engines for ’66, finding a big, and welcome, surprise.

Skimming way past the standard six-cylinder 250ci option, the eight-cylinder 283ci option and even the 396ci option, they’d land on the mighty

(and available for the first time in the model) L72 427ci V8. To get it, buyers selected the Super Sport option and to lead-foots, it was so worth it. The solid-lifter, race-bred engine mounted on the other side of the firewall was rated at 425 horsepower and even with the vehicle’s curb weight of nearly 3,500 pounds, the monster motor could move it. It was best to stay in a straight-line when mashing the gas, however, given the car’s barge-like heft and wallowing suspension. One period magazine writer said he had given up driving with his arm out of the window for fear of scraping his elbows in corners.

While the car could scoot, cash-flush buyers didn’t. Only a handful of the L72 427-equipped Impala was ordered. Chevy wasn’t put off by the lack of interest, and after taking a year off in ’67, offered the big engine in the Impala again in ’68 and ’69. U

Collectible Insights

Chevy made over 100,000 Impala SS Sport Coupes in 1966 but getting one with the L72 is quite a feat, with less than a few hundred being produced. Hagerty values a one in Concours condition around \$67,500.



Matt Avery is an award-winning automotive writer and photographer. His new book, *COPO*, comes out this fall and documents Chevy’s ultimate muscle cars, showcasing over 40 of the world’s best examples.

Learn more at www.COPOthebook.com