This is what we're starting with – a stock '03 Cadillac Escalade with 22-inch wheels and P305/45R22 tires. You can clearly see the fender gap we're about to close.

Slammed Elegance

McGaughy's Lays Down a Cadillac Escalade

With the onslaught of oversized high-stylin' wheels on high-end cruisers, there became a need to create a cleaner, more visually appealing stance. Nowadays, the market demands not only a lower look, but a sporty one as well. If you're going to have the stance, you need the handling. Filling this niche market with some substance is McGaughy's Suspension Parts. Known for the company's classic Chevy parts, it was a natural progression for it to ramp into the newer truck realm. How is McGaughy's doing in this new field? For starters, McGaughy's received the General Motors Design Award at the 2003 SEMA Show for the company's 2WD and 4WD 2-inch lowering spindles. With this in mind, we'd say the company is doing just fine.

1. Here is the final result ready to hit the streets and turn some corners. Follow along as we give you the lowdown on how the lowering was achieved.

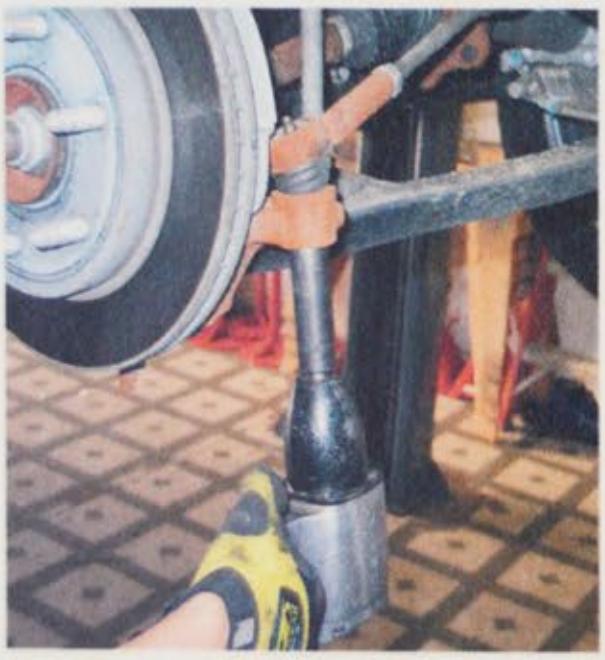
Here, we'll be settling our '03 Cadillac Escalade into its correct ride height with the wrench-turning handled at Billet Superstore in Anaheim, California. Sitting on 22 inches of chrome and rolling on some P305/45R22 Toyos, the Cadillac had a 4x4 ride height. A mild 2/3 drop will provide some much-needed fender gap removal, and Hotchkis front and rear sway bars for lowered applications will make this top-heavy SUV turn some corners. Keep in mind, we are lowering an all-wheel drive Escalade, so be sure to take your time and read the enclosed detailed directions. As always, work on level ground and use the proper frame supports. If you don't feel up to this task, check with a professional installer in your area. **TR**

BY HARLEY CAMILLERI ■ PHOTOGRAPHY: TRAVIS NOACK

2. The McGaughy's kit consisted of front 2-inch drop spindles, 3-inch rear drop coils, and rear shock relocaters.

3. Keeping the lean angles in line were Hotchkis antisway bars specifically designed for this SUV. With our newfound cornering performance, we'll be keeping up with Cadillac's new XLR.

4. The install started by loosening and removing the torsion bar adjusters on the front suspension.



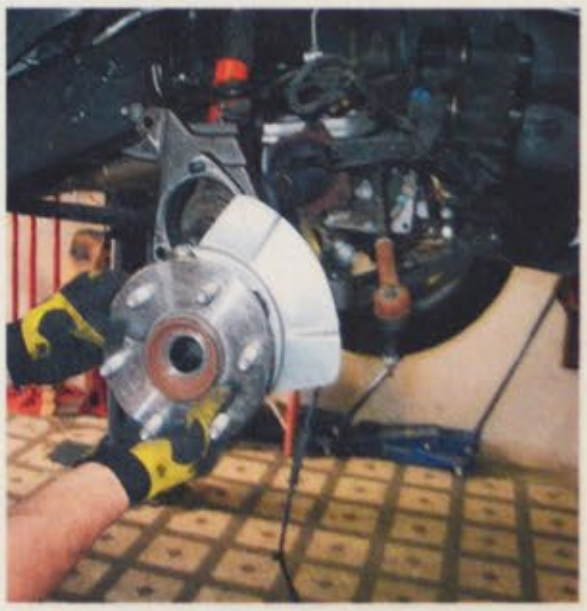
5. That step was followed by removing the tie rod ends on the stock spindles.

6. After removing the calipers and caliper brackets, we checked to make sure the caliper was safely supported so it would not dangle from its brake hose. We slid the rotors off and set them aside on a soft towel. The weather-tight connector was disconnected on the ABS sensor. Then the drive nut holding the hub assembly to the front half shafts was removed. The hub assembly was set next to the rotor on a soft towel.

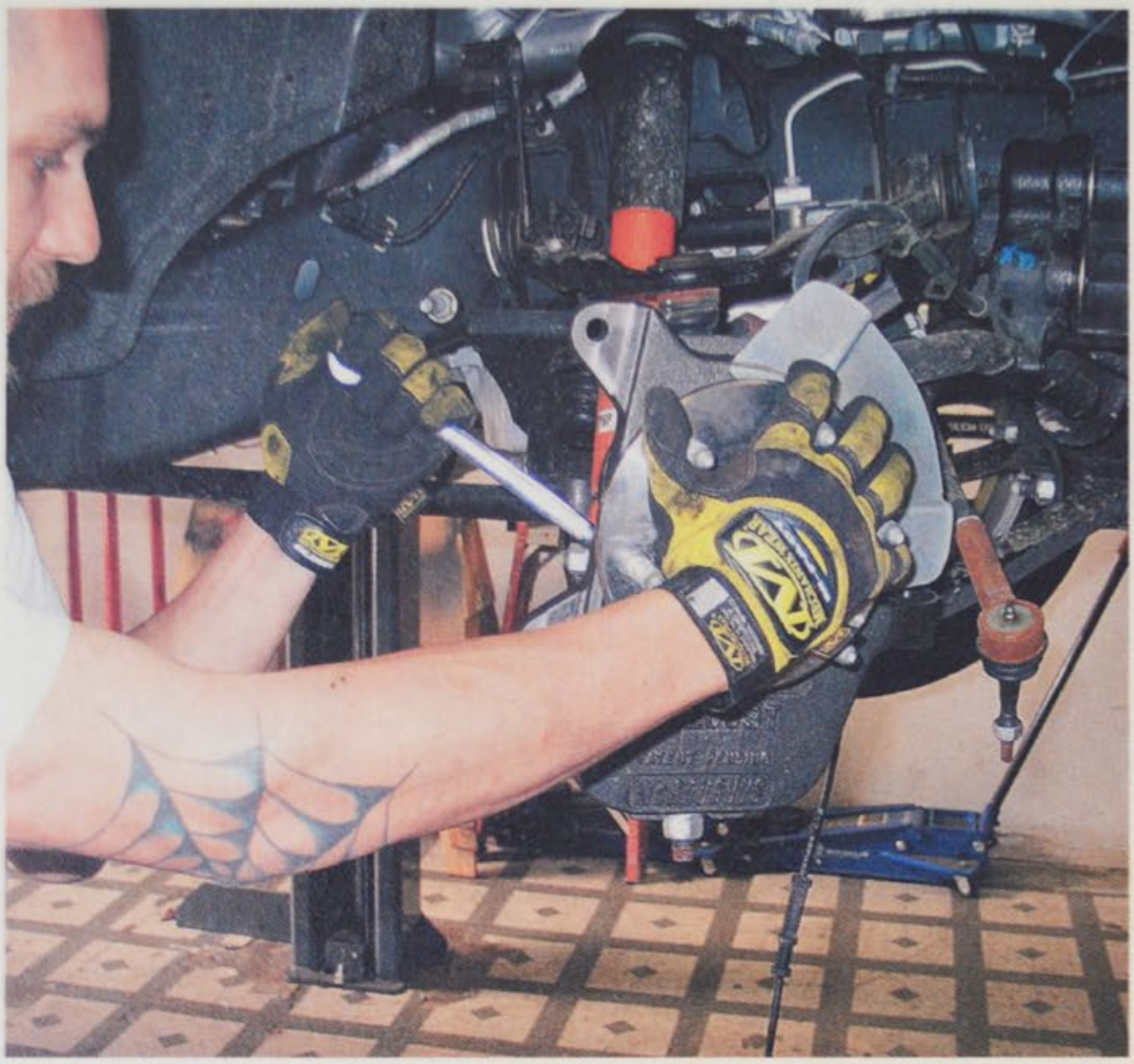
7. Since we already removed the tension from the torsion bars, it was now safe to remove the cotter pins and castle nuts from the upper and lower ball joints. We used a separator to get the factory spindle off the ball joints, and then we relegated the spindle to the spare parts bin.

8. Assembly of the front drop spindle was the opposite of the removal. We set the McGaughy's unit into place on the ball joints and reinstalled the factory castle nuts.

9. We tightened the nuts to factory spec and reinserted the cotter pins into their respective holes.



10. The hub assembly could then be placed back into position.



11. We lined up the splines on the drive axle into the back of the hub.

12. After that, we placed the drive nut back onto the shaft end and tightened them. We placed the rotor onto the studs and tightened the caliper mount and caliper back in place. We reconnected the ABS sensor and the lowering of the front was mostly complete.

13. To make this SUV turn and burn, we completely removed the factory soft sway bar and its corresponding endlinks and center mounts. To ease this step, note that we left the tie rod end loose from the spindle.

14. We made sure to lube all points of the new bushings with the supplied grease that touch metal to prevent squeaks.

15. We put the Hotchkis sway bar into position under the frontend and used the supplied center mounts we greased to hold the bar in place. We did not tighten anything at this time.

16. We assembled the sway bar endlinks to the bar and control arm mounting hole and tightened it snugly. There should be just a slight bulge to the bushings and that is enough. We could now torque the center mounts to the recommended force given in Hotchkis' directions.

17. We completed the frontend by placing the tie rod end back on the spindle and snugging it into place.

18. In the rear of our high-end roller there is this height indicator switch for the level ride system. We removed the small bar that attaches the link arm to the sensor.

19. Before we dropped the rearend to remove the coil, we popped the brake and sensor lines out of this holder.

20. At this point, we supported the rearend separately from the frame. We removed the lower shock bolts on both sides to allow the rearend to swing down enough so we could remove the coil.

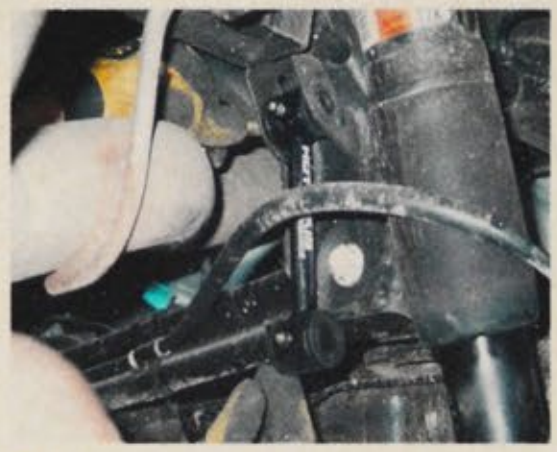
21. While we had the coil out, we installed the McGaughy's shock extender to the lower mount on the axle.

22. Then we trimmed the bumpstop to just above the first roll where the axle contacts, and reinstalled the pieces.

23. After putting the 3-inch drop coil in its final resting place, we jacked up the rearend.

24. Then we bolted the shock to the new lower mount.

25. We took all the mounting and attaching hardware off the rear factory sway bar and added them to our collection of front parts.



26. Once the bushings were greased, we installed the link bars first. As shown in the picture, we ensured the links were placed with the Zerk fittings facing toward the rear of the truck, since it would be difficult (virtually impossible) to get a grease gun on them if they faced the other way.

27. We heaved the new Hotchkis sway bar into place and bolted it in the factory position with the new mounting components.

28. This step was crucial to proper rear lowering on this vehicle. McGaughy's does not supply a new link for the level ride sensor. Instead, the supplied instructions require you to bend the factory part to the configuration you see here. This new position fools the sensor into thinking the truck is still stock, otherwise, the level ride would try to lift the rearend back to stock height.

29. After putting the bent bar into place, we torqued our 22s back on and test-drove the Escalade to ensure all was well. After a trip to the local friendly alignment man, it was off to our favorite canyon road to break in the new twisty straightening suspension.

▶ Sources

Billet Superstore
Dept. TR
2380 Orangethorpe Ave.
Anaheim, CA 92806
(714) 871-2905
www.billetsuperstore.com

McGaughy's Suspension
Dept. TR
5680 W. Barstow Ave.
Fresno, CA 93722
(559) 226-8196
www.mcgaughys.com

Hotchkis Performance
Dept. TR
12035 Burke St., Ste. 13
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
(877)-4-NOROLL (466-7655)