

Using modern shocks with 1959-62 Larks and Hawks, and early chassis 1963 Avanti: The shocking truth about Corvettes and Jeeps.

You probably read much about how difficult it is to get high performance, modern shock absorbers for your 1959 – 62 Lark and Hawk, and the early chassis 1963 Avanti. Pages have been written on web pages, bulletin boards and news groups on how to retrofit performance shocks, involving sawing, pressing, and re-using parts from old shocks.

I am presenting this to show that none of that is necessary. If you do adequate research, for example [Studebaker_Shock_Interchanges](#), in this issue of Avanti Magazine, you will find modern shocks from companies that specialize in shocks that range from OEM-like to drag racing. These are all “bolt-in.”

No cutting, pressing, just bolt-in

Reasoning that the body sway, body weight, and ride on my 1985 Volvo is similar to the Avanti, I decided to try the same brand I had good luck on the Volvo, namely KYB. After research, and cost-benefit guessing, I bought mid-range KYB “*Gas-Adjust*”. Below these are the **GR-2**, and above are the **AGX** and **Monomax**. What follows is what I have found. (More on Bilstein and other shock absorbers below)

First the rear shocks

Dan “the Man” at KYB technical support, dug up the remarkable fact that the rear shocks on the '99 - 04 *Jeep Grand Cherokee*, and Grand Wagoneer, have the same collapsed height, same bushing ID, and is only 2 inches shorter in the expansion length. The beauty of this is the Jeep has many companies scrambling to sell you performance stuff, high tech shocks, coil-over springs, et.al. The mind boggles as what I will see at the next national.

I wonder why Gabriel does mark their shocks with either “Gabriel” or even the catalog number? Note the 2.07 inches difference. If a modern jeep does not need that extended 2 inches for off-road, then I can breathe easy on my 1963 Avanti. (What is that bolt for at the bottom? Simple, it ensured that the shocks were lined up for the photo.)

What about compressed length? Well, you will have to trust me on that or call the KYB tech line yourself. While Gabriels are easy to hold compressed to photograph, KYBs are another story altogether...

Any Modifications needed? Yep, 4 washers on each end. No cutting. No arbor presses.



Note the extended lengths of the Gabriel “Classic” 82151(top) and the KYB Gas-adjust KG5197.



Bushings created from 4 3/8-inch washers.

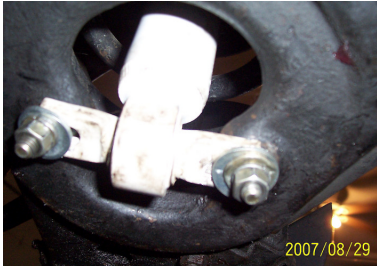
The KYB bushing is shorter than the OEM. I made bushing spacers by epoxying 2 3/8-inch washers together, rough side in. These fit snugly on the 7/16 bolt. I installed one on each side. Is this necessary? I do not know, but it seemed like a good idea. Yes that is the real lower mounting plate. I have the rear end out in pieces, sand blasting all, and putting 2 coats of anti-rust tractor primer, and 2 coats of premium tractor enamel (silver).

What about the top bushing? On my top bracket, the same treatment works. However, the bracket appears to have been spread in the past.

Front Shocks, including Avanti II

Again from “Dan the Man” on the KYB tech hotline, go for '63 - 85 CORVETTE shocks, not Buick. This opens up a world of performance shocks, coil-overs, and other related parts. As I said, the next National could be interesting.

Like the back shock absorbers, this is a bolt-in installation. I did add two fender washers to get more bite on the slighter shorter bottom attaching bar.



Note the two fender washers used to give the OEM bolts more “bite” on the slighter shorter bar.

What about Bilstein, Edelbrock, and other shock absorbers? Now that you know that you can use Corvette and Jeep Shock Absorbers without modifying either the shock or the chassis, have fun! Let me know at 63Avanti@sterkel.org on any adjustments such as my added washers.

*Proof of the Pudding, the ride:
I will know around the Holidays, when I get the suspension re-assembled. As these are not off-road, drag or racing shocks, I do not expect a harsh ride, but one less mushy than OEM/Gabriel, more befitting my Euro-tuned posterior*