

HOW TO IMPROVE THE STANCE OF THE 1965-1985 AVANTIS AND MAKE IT KILLER LOOKING !

There are very few things, that I don't personally care for about the entire styling package of the outside and inside, of the 1963-1985 Avantis. Understand some of the reason's why the Altman's had to raise the front of the Avanti for 1965, to accommodate the Corvette engine. In doing so, they also had to change the front fenders. This was accomplished by adding about two inches filler panel to the front fender openings, above, and around, the front tires.

They also shimmed the body up on the frame, about two inches for clearances, for the air cleaner and fan shroud. They also added a front spring spacer to the bottom of the front springs and manufactured a new bell crank illustration number 1209-1B, part number 1563499M N.O.S. \$299.00, for clearance of the Chevy motor.

They may have thought that controversial rake was youth oriented, and by raising the front of the Avanti it might appeal more to their contemporaries. The new stance of the Avanti by Avanti Motors, left something to be desired. The front of the Avanti sat too high (the rake was gone). This may be the reason some think the Studebaker Avanti is better looking, than the Avanti II, but it's the same body and frame. I think the lack of the rake allows a person to not be able to put their finger on why the Studebaker Avanti may look better than the Avanti. I think you can improve the look of any car, or truck, by changing the stance of that vehicle. If you add wheels and tires to that formula, you can create a killer looking vehicle, for a very small investment, that is totally reversible.

In the late 1960s, I started taking out the first spring spacers from under the front springs on the 1965 and up Avantis. I added aftermarket wheels, smaller tires on the front, with larger tires on the rear. These little tricks really improved the looks of the Avanti.



Illust# 1510-8 P#1560408 \$65.00

These half-inch spring spacers, illustration #1510-8, Part #1560408 were added to all 1965-1985 Avantis, except the 1983 Anniversary and the 1984 -85 Touring Coupe options.

This accomplished what they felt was needed, but it also took away that beautiful rake, of the 1963-1964 Studebaker Avantis.

By Dan Booth
Nostalgic Motor Cars

Dan Booth has over 47 years of exclusive, hands on Avanti sales, service, collision and parts, not Studebaker cars or trucks, just 1963-1985 Avantis.

In February of 1979, I took my wife, Betty's, British Racing Green 1978 Avanti and transformed it into a killer looking Avanti. My simple, inexpensive changes were as follows:

1. I removed the 2 front spring spacers
2. I added after market aluminum wheels
3. Smaller tires on the front with larger tires on the rear
4. I removed the Avanti and the II name plates, front and rear, filled the holes and blended the paint.
5. Installed blue dots tail light lenses
6. Installed a pair of glass pack mufflers
7. I had both quarter windows acid etched with the beautiful Avanti name plate logo, Nostalgic Motor Cars and my phone number
8. Bulb type head lights instead of sealed beams. They were a factory option from Avanti Motors way back then.

These simple changes really enhance and compliment the beautiful lines of the Avanti, which maybe now you can put your finger on why one Avanti looks better than another!

Pictures of 1979 burgundy



Before: Factory stock with 205-75x15 tires



After: Front spring spacers removed, with 215-60x15 tires on the front and 245-60x15 tires on the rear.

Notice the height off the ground of the rocker panel and the top of the roof at the windshield

In early February of 2023, I received a phone call from a gentleman from California. He got my name as an Avanti dealer. He wanted to know the difference of the different year Avantis from 1963-1985. We were on the phone for hours as I explained the differences between each year and what engines and transmissions were offered for each year. I also explained what options were available for each year. He was very appreciative of the information, that he could not get anywhere else. He stated he was going to purchase an older Porsche, as correct information explaining the differences from 1963-1985 was very hard to come by.

I told him about my wife, Betty's, red 1981 that I just sold and went to Washington state and my gold 1977 that I just sold to the Lingenfelter collection museum in Brighton, Michigan (both original cars). I also explained that I just sold my dark brown 1983 Avanti that was going to Texas and a 1963 going to New Mexico, both of which I had to work on before they could be shipped.

I explained about the used Avantis I had for sale. I also mentioned a 1979 Avanti, burgundy on burgundy, that I personally owned, that I was thinking about selling. This was a one previous owner with 15,000 original miles, that was 99 percent factory original and best of all was that Nostalgic Motor Cars did all the warranty and all the non warranty work for those 15,000 miles and 44 years.

I told him about the Nostalgic Rake and how it took the Avanti to the next level in looks. He absolutely loved the look of the Nostalgic Rake on the Avantis and wanted that done along with the following to be installed

The factory 7/8-inch sway bar kit, my last set of seven inch wide chrome factory wire wheels, Custom Auto Sound USA-740 radio, removal of the cow catcher bar with driving lights installed. A black anodized aluminum dash/console set to be installed at a later date, in the trunk. The Avanti was just shipped to him in California, and he received it on March 15 2023.

I thought I should write an article, for the Avanti Magazine, about the Nostalgic Rake that I have been doing for over 50 years. As you may have never heard of it, unless you have talked to me or one of the Avanti owners that installed the Nostalgic Rake.

How To Install The Nostalgic Rake, on a 1965-1985 Avanti

If you have a 1983 Anniversary or a 1984 Touring Coupe or the Touring Coupe option, for 1984 & 1985, your car left the factory with the Nostalgic Rake, more about this after the instructions.

You must use a jack and jack stands if you not using a hoist. Do not try to compress the spring with a floor jack; you must use a coil spring compressor. I use the same size tires that Avanti installed on the 26 1983 Anniversary, 1984 Touring coupes and the 1984-85 touring coupe options. They are 215-60x15 fronts and 245-60x15 rears, mounted on seven-inch-wide wire wheels.

1. Remove the front wheels and tires
2. Remove the front shocks
3. Mark one of the coils on the spring, so the spring will be returned to the same clocking. Compress the front spring, with the special spring compressor (auto zone has them for rent, but when you take it back, they will give you a refund
4. If your front end needs to be rebuilt, now is the time to rebuild. I will have all he parts you will need, in stock.
5. Remove the cotter pin and castle nut from the bottom of the king pin.
6. If you are not going to rebuild anything, somehow, tie the rotor and knuckle assembly to the upper control arm, so the knuckle does not drop down off the king pin.
7. Separate the bottom of the king pin Illust # 1203-2 from the king pin support, Illust #1204-64
8. Lower the lower control arm down enough to remove the factory spring spacers as one piece or in pieces.
9. Install a new cork grease seal, illust#1203-8 p#519483 \$1.75
10. Re assemble the king pin back into the support and tighten the nut to factory torque to first cotter pin hole beyond 100 ft lbs.
11. Install a new cotter pin
12. It's a good idea, to grease the car
13. Install the wheels and tires. If you don't install the smaller front tires, your old tires may now be too tall and could break the fiberglass fenders.
14. A front end alignment will be needed. If you are going to drive the Avanti to an alignment shop be warned the car may be very very squirrely and should be towed or put on a trailer.



Coil spring compressor

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I started with a pristine 1979 Avanti, that only had 15,000 original miles, which has sat on it's original front springs for about 44 years. It appeared to have very little front spring droop.



I measured the height from the bottom of the front fender, to the ground in the center of the wheel which was about 27". Which could be about 1-inch lower than when new. This was with the factory correct 205-75-15 tires.

When the front spring spacers were removed and the 215-60x15 tires mounted on 7-inch wide wheels (6-inch wide will also work) this is what created the "Nostalgic Rake". It measured about 25½-inch from the ground, up to the center of the front fender opening.

The 1979 Avanti came out to be about 1-inch lower than a factory 1963-64 Studebaker Avanti at the front bumper.



As Paul Harvey, the radio personality, used to say "and now for the rest of the story".

In about April of 1982, I received a phone call, from Arie Altman, one of the owners of Avanti Motors. It was not one of his usual phone calls, that he made asking if I wanted more service work or a particular Avanti that they were sending me for warranty work. This was different as he asked me for a favor. The phone call went like this:

Arie: Dan, how far are you from Southfield, Michigan?

Me: Depending on where, in Southfield, but it's about 20-30 minutes away, why?

Arie: Do you know where G.E. Plastics is?

Me: No, but I can find it. Why are you asking?

Arie: The guy that wants to purchase Avanti Motors, Steve Blake, has made an appointment with G.E. Plastics, to see what parts they might be able to manufacturer for the Avantis. Can you take one of your two new Avantis you have in your showroom to G.E. Plastics. They want to keep the Avanti for a couple of days to study it, before Blake flies in.

Me: Arie, it's too much of a hassle to get one out of the showroom and then have to clean it up again. Betty and I will take her '78 Avanti, for their study. Our daughter, Angie, will still be at the dealership to answer the phone and ship parts. Give me their phone number, date, time, address and contact name.

Arie: Thanks, I owe you one!

When we arrived, at GE Plastics, we were to see Conrad Zumhagen, their automotive marketing manager. Upon meeting Conrad, I stated Betty's 1978 Avanti that is here for a study, not test driving. If anybody wanted to test drive an Avanti, they were welcome to come out to my dealership, Nostalgic Motor Cars, in Wixom, that I had four to five used Avantis and two new ones in stock.

A couple of days later I received a phone call from Arie Altman. He was very pleased and grateful, as it saved him shipping an Avanti to GE Plastics for that study. He told me to thank Betty and Angie for them in assisting me in taking Betty's Avanti to GE Plastics and reminded me that he owes me one. He also mentioned that Steve Blake would be calling me in a few days to personally thank me.

Then he caught me off guard as he stated that Steve Blake said "Betty's 1978 was nothing but a hot rod. Can you explain to me what he's taking about?"

Yes I can, it sits lower in the front, which creates the "Nostalgic Rake" has glass pack mufflers. It also had blue dot tail lights I removed the Avanti and the II emblems front and back. Filled the holes and blended the paint, installed red or amber back up light lenses. I also removed the front grill and that area was painted black. It had small tires on the front, with large tires on the rear, and aftermarket aluminum wheels. He was very puzzled of what I had done to a new Avanti. I stated it was my interpretation of what a new Avanti should look and sound like. He asked why I removed the Avanti name plates. I stated nobody knew what the car was to begin with, but this little trick made them look longer, and harder, trying to

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figure out what it was. Then most discover that I had both rear quarter windows acid etched with the beautiful Avanti Name plate, Nostalgic Motor Cars, Wixom, Michigan, and the phone number. I also explained that this British Racing Green, with the Nostalgic Rake, tan leather Recaro seat interior always sparked more questions and got more looks than any other Avanti that I have ever had, or seen.

To this day I still get phone calls from people that had seen Betty's 1978 Avanti at my dealership over 40 years ago and want to know, do I still have it? Yes! Do I want to sell it? NO !

A couple of days later, I received that personal phone call from Steve Blake. He wanted to thank me, Betty and Angie, for dropping off Betty's '78 Avanti at GE Plastics for their study. He didn't say anything about the '78 being a "hot rod" but he did ask how I got that gorgeous Avanti so low. I told him I simply removed the front spring spacers. I installed smaller tires on the front, and larger tires on the rear with an aftermarket aluminum wheel and it was referred to as the "Nostalgic Rake."

He went on stating he was anxious to meet us, as Arie told him what an outstanding job that a very small dealership that only serviced and sold new and used Avantis did so well. My building at the time, I displayed two new Avantis, in the showroom, sometimes three. I had three stalls for service. The used Avantis were displayed outside.

He also went on about Avanti Motors, since 1978, wanted to get out of the service business and they were gradually sending all the service work to Nostalgic. He stated that he agreed with that plan and he was going to shut down Avanti's service department and turn it over to me. He stated that he was going to increase the number of Avantis produced each year. He felt he needed to expand the number of employees and needed that floor space. He wanted to expand on the dealer network and

each dealer would be doing the service with Nostalgic's help. He said he wanted to work out something with me to talk his new dealers through the service advice they would need. He stated he wanted to build new Avantis, not service them.

Now when the 1983 Avanti Anniversary edition came out, in about July-August of 1983, it sure did remind me of Betty's Hot Rod 1978 Avanti. It had the "Nostalgic Rake", as they didn't install the front spring spacers, part number 1560408, that had been installed on all previous Avantis from 1965-up through that date. It also had smaller tires, 215-60x15 on the front and larger 245-60-15 tires on the rear both on 7-inch wide aluminum wheels. Glass pack mufflers were now installed, along with amber back up light lenses. The first 50 Avantis for 1984 were Touring Coupes only. The balance of 1984 and 1985 production offered a touring option, or partial Touring Coupe option. They also had the "Nostalgic Rake", glass pack mufflers but had red backup light lenses.

Now, for Conrad Zumhagen, former Automotive Marketing Manager, GE Plastics. That was involved in the study of the Avanti for Steve Blake. He has owned five Avantis over the last 40 years. His first one was a 1970 Avanti, that I sold him after he saw Betty's 1978, in 1982, and I sold him a total of three cars out of his five. He is currently Avanti less, we will see how long that will last!

Conrad has become a friend, and a good customer since that spring of 1982 meeting for the study of my wife, Betty's, 1978 Avanti at GE Plastics.

About two years ago, Conrad purchased a used 1984 Avanti that I sold new. Guess what? He put the Nostalgic Rake, in that 1984, just like my wife, Betty's that he remembered from that GE study, in the spring of 1982.

