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# Trail Ride

## HOMEGROWN CREW

Words: Harry Wagner  
Photos: Harry Wagner and TJ Briscoe



You read *Crawl Magazine* because you love rock crawling. And if you love rock crawling, you probably rock a Toyota or a Jeep. We aren't trying to dog the Suzukis, internationals, and other makes, but we see more Jeeps and Toyotas on the trail than anything else. Regardless of the make and model, if you are *really* hardcore, you need to have a bunch of tube and one-ton axles on your trail rig. Or do you?

Colorado's Homegrown Crew doesn't think that you need Dana or Rockwell axles in order to run the hardest trails in the country. To paraphrase the late Notorious B.I.G., they "stay Toyota down to the socks." The Homegrown Crew is made up of a close knit group of guys in Colorado that refuse to use Chevy engines, Dana axles, or Atlas transfer cases. Their rigs all feature rugged and light Toyota drivetrains. You may think that this limits their capability, but it hasn't slowed them down yet. The entire crew runs very similar equipment, making it easy to work on all of the rigs and share spare parts.

And these guys aren't naive enough to think that they don't need spares. They regularly sacrifice hubs, diffs, and output shafts on the trails of Moab, Montrose, and

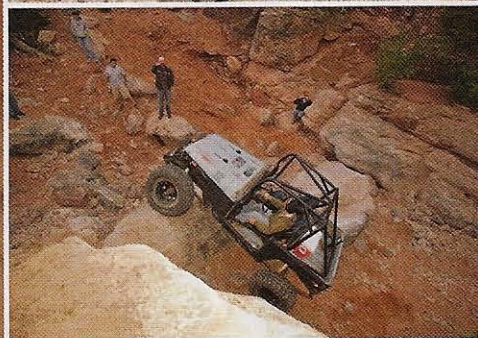
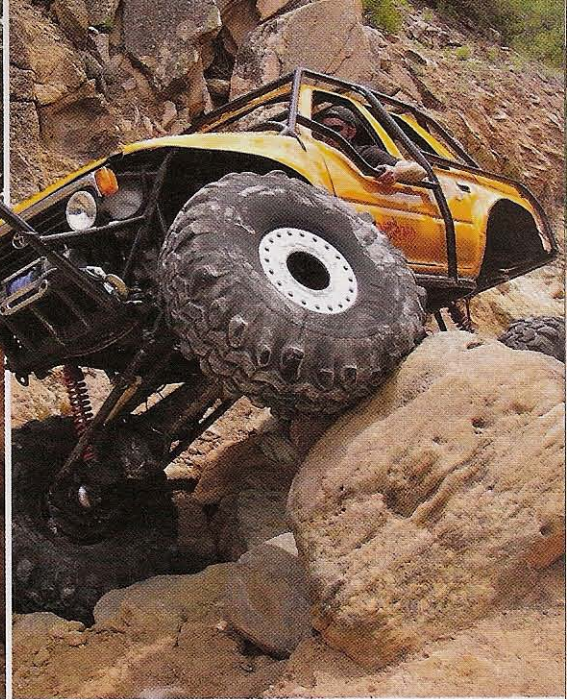
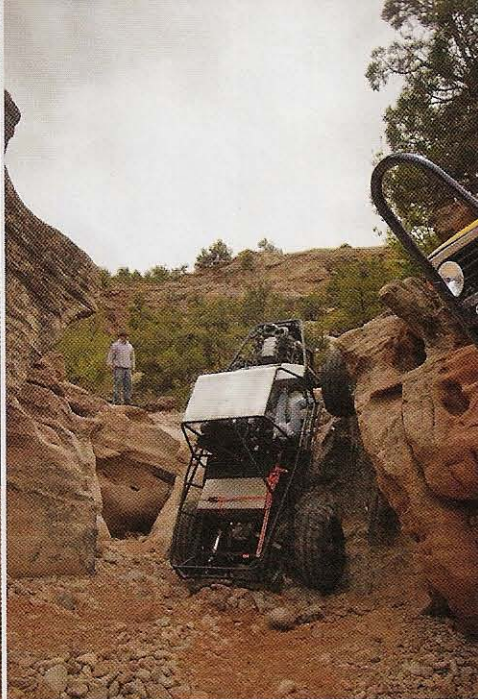
the Black Hills. Most are running 40-inch TSLs on Toyota axles, while Joe Rivisi and Mike Caskey have pushed the envelope even further, with 42s on FJ80 front axles and mini truck rear axles. Not to be outdone, Ben Swain started running 44-inch TSLs on 8-inch Toyota axles last year. Mass carnage soon ensued. Instead of conceding defeat, Swain upgraded his front axle with a Diamond Axle housing, full hydraulic steering, and 30-spline Longfields. The rear axle is yet another Diamond Axle housing with 35-spline Yukon chromoly shafts and a Land Cruiser third member. Thus far, the axles have held up admirably, even behind the 2UZ V8 that was recently swapped in.

Other than their drivetrains, another thing that sets the Homegrown Crew apart from clubs full of high school kids with studded belts and stick welders is the skill that they possess. As their name implies, the Homegrown Crew does all of their own fabrication. Additionally, nearly everyone in the Crew has some specialized mechanical skill, and many work fulltime in the offroad industry. Mike Caskey owns Off Road Solutions, where he develops innovative new parts for Toyota pickups and

4Runners, such as his 3.4L engine swaps and coilover kits. Slee Off Road is comprised of Ben Swain, Joe Rivisi, and Christo Slee, who develop and import products for late model Land Cruisers. Jay King and Greg Lundeen produce rock crawling videos at Twisted DV. TJ Briscoe is a mechanical engineer by day, but at night he turns out some of the cleanest tubework we have ever seen in the 30x40 foot shop behind his home.

The next time you are on the trail, keep an eye out for the Homegrown Crew. They might not be doing front digs or lighting up the tires, but they will likely be crawling over just about anything in their path. The Crew is easily recognized by their 22RE engines and ultra low gearing. Or, just look for the rowdy bonfire and keg when you get back to camp.





Opposite Page: The Homegrown Crew chews through hard trails like a fat kid through cake. Here they are pictured on Upper Helldorado after running Coyote Ugly. And they never get on the trail early due to, uh, common headaches in the morning.

Counter Clockwise From Above:

One of the few members running coilovers is Mike Caskey. Caskey uses his personal vehicle to test and develop products offered by his shop, Off Road Solutions. A 3.4L engine swap and front coilover conversion are just a few of the products he offers.

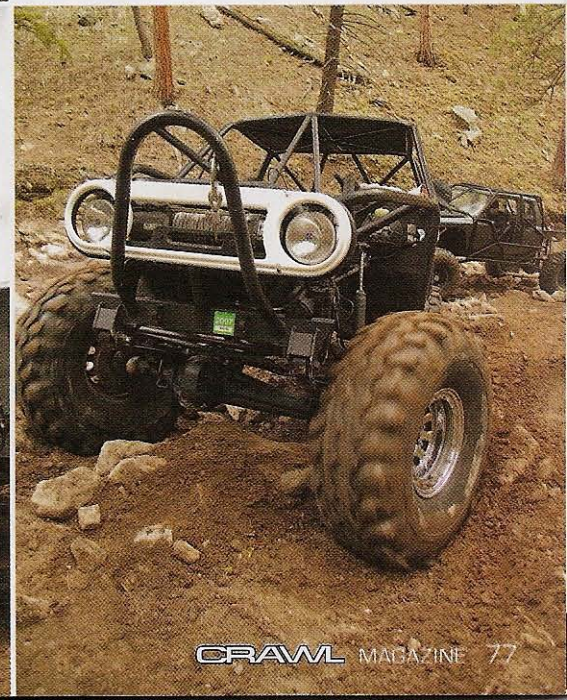
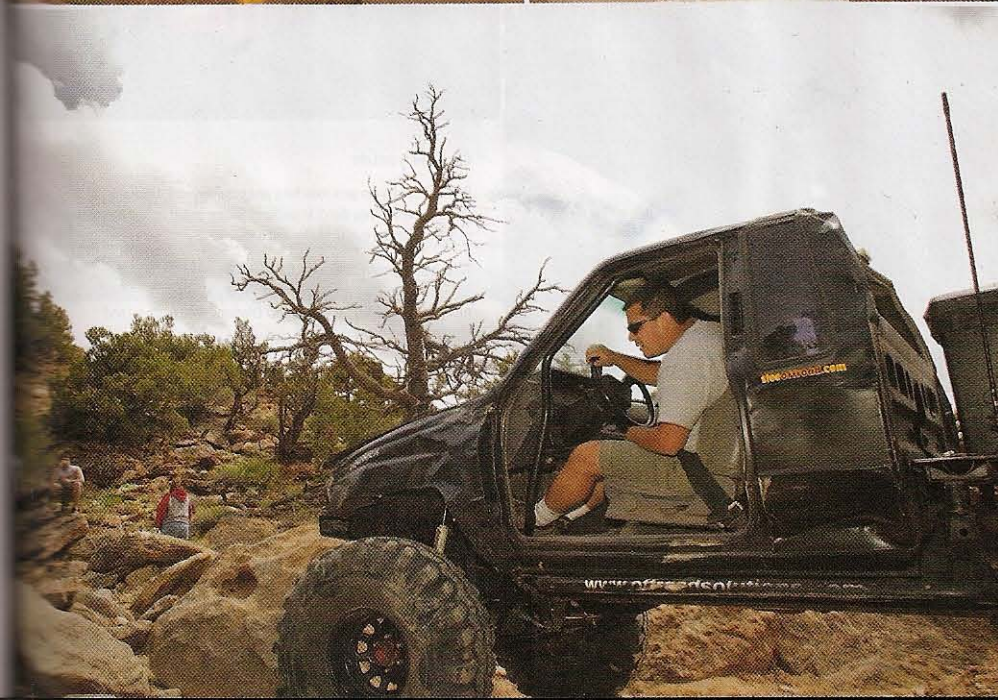
Most people winch up the last waterfall in Upper Helldorado. What fun is that? The Homegrown Crew either make it to the top or end up on their lid wedged in the crack.

The odd man out is Steve Caskey, aka Cobra Commander. Yes, his truck is still all Toyota, but it also still has all the glass and is driven to and from the trails. Fenders, doors, and taillights are removed for posterity once he arrives at camp.

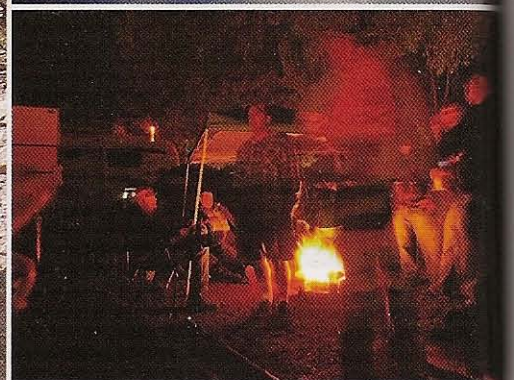
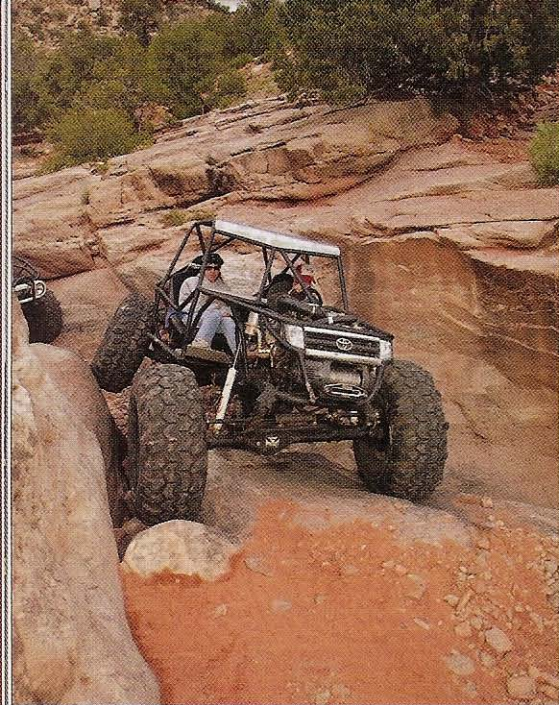
You wouldn't think that a carbureted 2F and sprungover Land Cruiser axles would work so well on the trail, but they do. Utley goes every place the rest of the Homegrown Crew goes without a problem.

It is easy to see why they call Brian Sandoval "Sir Dents-a-lot". He likes big rocks and he cannot lie. Years of abuse have taken a toll on Sandoval's extra cab and he is in the process of converting to a Toyota based buggy like much of the others in the crew.

TJ Briscoe is the duct tape that holds the Homegrown Crew together. He throws parties, plans trips, and bends tube 24/7.







#### Clockwise From Left:

Ben Swain's Raisin gets rode hard and put away wet. Once the doors came off, they didn't fit back on! Swain ended up selling them to pay for broken output shafts and diffs.

After one too many hard rolls, the Raisin was chopped up and the Pipe Bomb emerged from the ashes. In addition to the new tubework, a 2UZ Toyota V8 and rear Diamond Axle using a Land Cruiser third were also added.

Joe Rivisi's Spitwad has a 3.4L engine, dual cases, and an FJ80 front axle. With 42-inch IROKs the drivetrain holds up, even if the sheetmetal doesn't. Rivisi is currently in the process of transferring all of the components in his truck in to a new tube chassis.

Boasting 1,200 square feet of space, a tube bender, a welder, and a kegerator, most of the Homegrown Crew's creations come out of TJ Briscoe's shop.

The fun doesn't stop when the Homegrown return home. Whether it is late nights around the campfire getting rowdy or parties at Briscoe's shop, these guys are all about having a good time.