

C5 Z06 HID (Xenon) Headlight Upgrade

by Wayne Rentoul

I love my Z06, it is a beautiful car to drive, perfect in nearly every way! One of the little niggling things that annoyed me from day one was the headlamps. Not being able to see at night on a run up Mt Nebo is not my idea of fun!

The factory setup allows for only the high beam or low beam lamps to operate at any one time. This is not an issue with the factory headlamps (although still not great according to our cousins in the US), but part of the conversion process is to install new "Euro style" fittings that take a H4 bulb. Correct "high beam" operation of a H4 bulb need both high beam and low beam filaments to be on at the same time, and the factory system is not designed to provide enough power to operate this way.

I searched the US for options to upgrade from the H4 lamps. I considered all of the following options:

1) Re-install the "factory" system

The cost of the "factory" fittings was nearly equivalent to a HID upgrade and I don't believe they were that good to start with. Many guys in the US are upgrading to "Euro style" headlamps and saying what a great improvement they are over "factory", so I discarded this option.

2) Install "non pop-up" HID system

These are readily available in the US and are the "preferred" headlamp to upgrade to at the moment. These are reasonably priced, are available with dual HID lamps and by removing the "pop up" mechanism also offer a weight saving of around 10 kilos.

KB Car Stuff has a system like this for around US\$500, delivered. I learned to be cautious when shopping in the US as I have seen identical systems offered for as much as US\$1,400!



The disadvantage with this system, in my opinion, was losing the "C5" look, so I kept searching.

3) Install a "pop up" HID system

After several months of trawling the internet and many dead ends, I finally found "the system". At about half the price of a "non pop-up" system, I decided to install these and go on a diet to save the 10 kilos!

I purchased my system from "KB Car Stuff" - www.kbcarstuff.com. The system was only US\$817.00 delivered. Delivery was by DHL Worldwide, and I had them in my hands within a week of placing the order. My sales contact, Mike was really helpful, and he even emailed after I had confirmed delivery to check if I had any installation problems.

The system comes with everything you need. If you are not auto-electrically minded, you can simply plug and play with the looms provided. However, being a perfectionist, I was not happy with that look and cut up the supplied looms (and the factory wiring) to make my own. The install took around 25 hours and looks "factory". Installation is in two distinct parts:

- 1) Upgrade the power supply to the headlamps, and install an extra earth from each headlamp, so both high beam and low beam can be on together - Technically challenging.
- 2) Installing the new headlamp fittings - Relatively easy, but labour intensive.

Scariest part - Placing the engine bay fuse box on the garage floor, and thinking "What have you done!"

Most difficult part - Working out where to install the ballasts for the Xenon lamps.

Most gratifying part - Having the system work FIRST time!

Most frustrating part - Finding out too late that someone swapped the "high beam" and "low beam" circuits when the conversion was done.

If anyone else is thinking about doing this upgrade give me a buzz, I have a full set of wiring schematics (before and after) and can show you the ropes, or even lend a hand.

Where to next? Kooks exhaust system; headers, high flow catalytic converters, so stay tuned!

Here are some install pics...



Ready to start...



Fuse box back in again, phew!



Re-wired connector with extra earth wire for high beam



LHS ready to go in...



RHS ready to go in...



The "factory" look



All back together again



Low beam works!



High beam works!