

# **Australian** **Hot Rodder**

Number One  
\$29.95

***Dedicated to Australia's Hot Rod Heritage***

**Buried Treasure Found: Pirotta/Caruana Model A**

**Restored: Ash Marshall's AA/FD**

**California Cool: Norm Longfield's T-bucket**



# Australian Hot Rodder

Number One

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*Publisher and Editor:* **Graham Smith**

*Senior Editor:* **Geoff Paradise**

*Contributing Editor:* **David Cook**

*Copy Editor:* **Dr John Wright**

*Photographers:* **Ellen Dewar, Mark Bean**

*Contributing Photographers:* **David Cook, Ray Finneran**

*Art Director:* **Helen Wilson** ([www.logopogo.biz](http://www.logopogo.biz))

*Advertising Sales:* **Peter Shields** (0414 324 902)

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Phone: 0409 705 062 Email: [info@australianhotrod.com.au](mailto:info@australianhotrod.com.au)

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[www.australianhotrod.com.au](http://www.australianhotrod.com.au)

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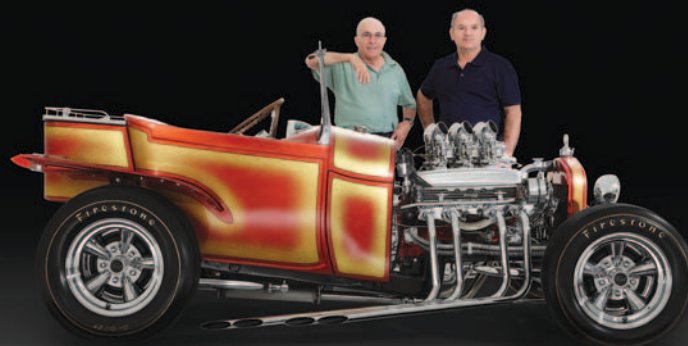




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## KING PIN

As often happens with great ideas the seeds of what would become *Australian Hot Rodder* were sown over a glass or two of red late one night a few years ago when Geoff Paradise and I were swapping tales about hot rodding.

It quickly became clear that we shared a long standing love of the hobby going back more decades than we cared to remember, way back to when we were teenagers rarin' to hit the road for the first time.

It turned out that we'd both discovered hot rodding through the pages of the American hot rodding bible, *Hot Rod Magazine*, which began to appear in local newsagents in the 1950s, and we'd maintained our passion for the hobby through the years, not only through *Hot Rod*, but also the local magazines that sprang up over time to service the appetite hot rodders had for news and information on the local hot rodding scene.

A love of magazines, as it also turned out, was something else we shared. We were both working as professional journalists in the motoring field and had over the years written for and even edited many of Australia's top car magazines and newspapers.

But it was the arrival of *The Rodders Journal* in 1994 that was responsible for reinvigorating our passion for the hobby.

*TRJ* took hot rod publishing in a new direction, and importantly raised it to a whole new level of professionalism with a quality of journalism and photography the hobby hadn't been seen before.

Every issue was filled with great stories on hot rodding heroes and their hot rods, brought to life with equally fabulous photos.

Geoff and I would eagerly await each new issue of *TRJ*, much as we had done years earlier when we couldn't wait

*(Australian hot rodding) has its own story that deserves, indeed needs to be told just as TRJ is telling the story of American hot rodding, and that's our aim here at Australian Hot Rodder.*



to get hold of the latest issue of *Hot Rod* magazine when it hit these shores.

But, like *Hot Rod*, *TRJ* only serves American hot rodding, and while there are clear connections with the American scene Australian hot rodding has its own unique history, with its own characters and cars. It's a story that deserves, indeed needs to be told just as *TRJ* tells the story of American hot rodding, and that's our aim here at *Australian Hot Rodder*.

Before you get the idea that we are setting out to mimic *TRJ*, we're not, but what we are doing is using it as our benchmark for quality and professionalism.

To achieve our goal we've assembled a small, but well respected and enthusiastic team of writers boasting years of experience in the hobby, and backed them up with some of the most talented photographers in the game.

There's Geoff, of course, who cut his hot rodding teeth writing for *Australian Hot Rodding Review* and *Australian Hot Rod* before going on to edit *AHHR* and other notable titles, including arguably Australia's most successful car magazine *Street Machine*.

As well as Geoff, there's also David Cook, who's been writing and photographing hot rods and drag racing since the 1960s and continues to do so with great authority.

Ellen Dewar and Mark Bean are both highly regarded photographers who have been shooting cars for years, and

they are responsible for the majority of the great photos you see in *AHR*.

With our declared dedication to Australia's hot rod heritage it's fitting that the first issue of *Australian Hot Rodder* is filled with stories on some of the legends of the Australian scene.

There could be no better way to kick off the new publication than by having the Model A pickup built by Joe Pirota and Charlie Caruana (below) back in the 1960s on the front cover.

It was a milestone hot rod back in the '60s when it set a new benchmark for hot rodders to aim for.

With the first issue of *Australian Hot Rodder* completed we're on the hunt for other great hot rods and customs, old and new, that have been built, driven, drag raced and shown since hot rodding began in this country and we plan to feature those we find in future issues of the book.

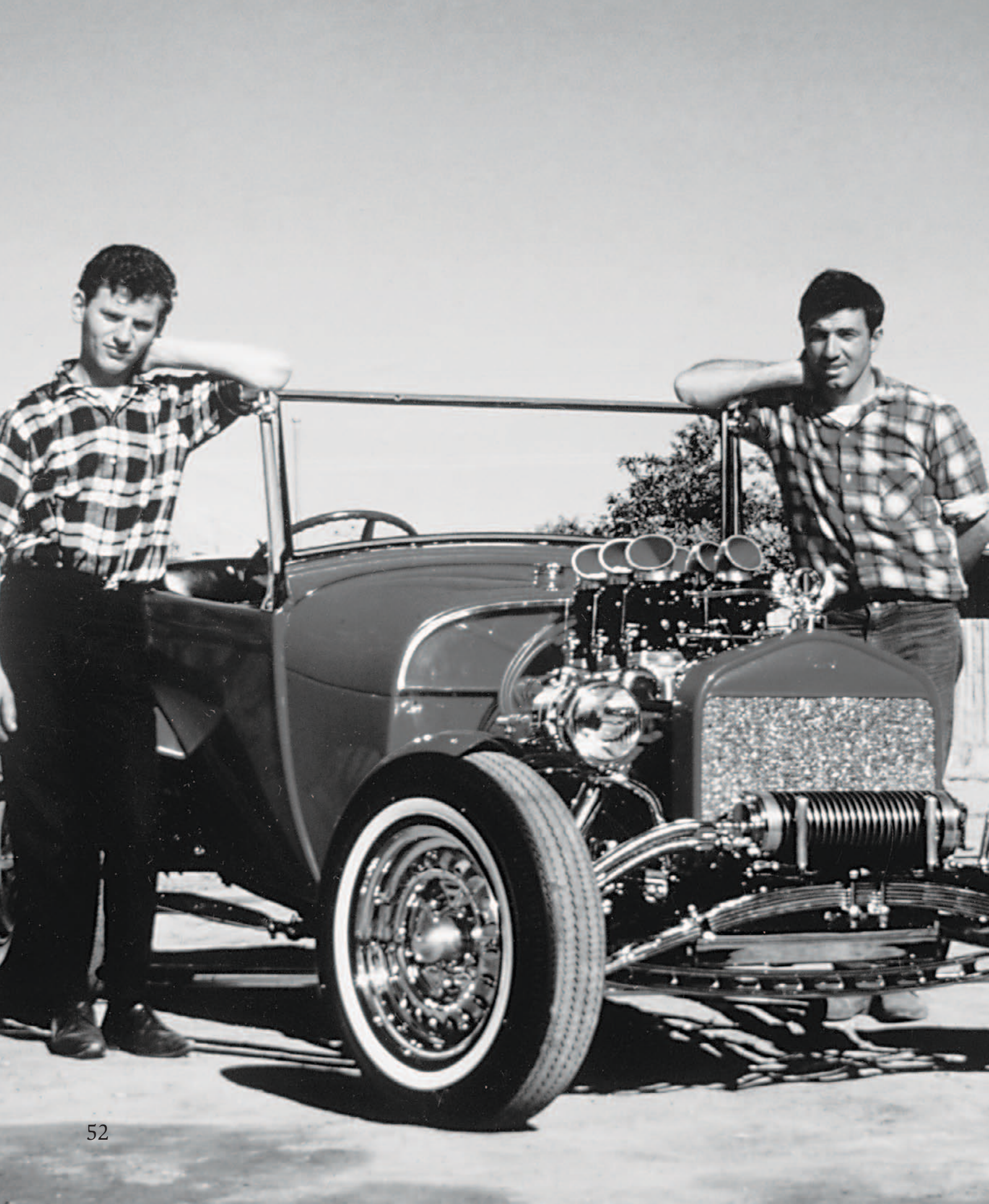
Australian hot rodding has a great history full of great cars and great characters and we plan to tell it in a way that has never been told before, so sit down, settle back, and enjoy the read.

We hope you like it and come back for the next issue, and many more after that. We're already hard at work on issue Number Two and it promises to be even better than this one.

**Graham Smith**







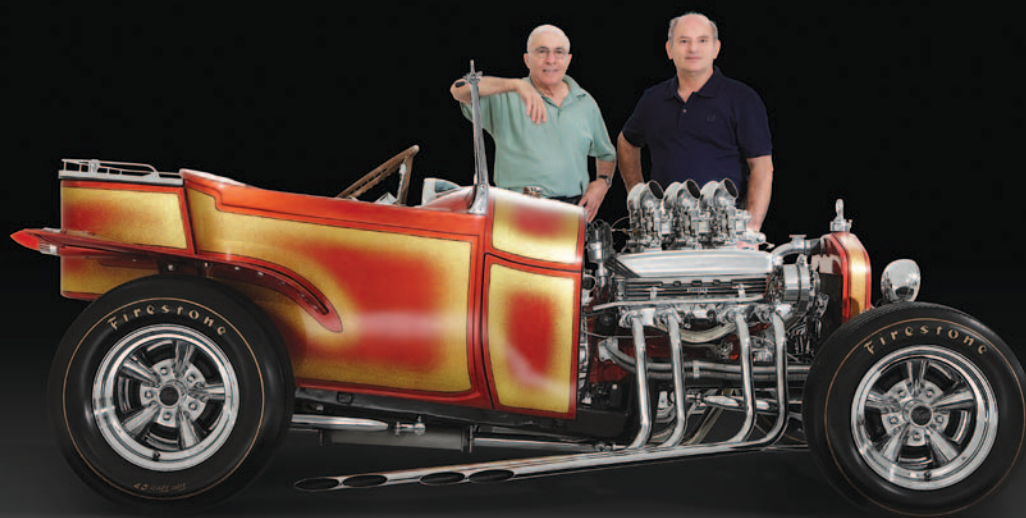




# BURIED TREASURE FOUND

After being *lost* for 30 years  
Australia's winningest show  
rod is back on deck.

*By Graham Smith*  
*Photography by Ellen Dewar*



**A**t a time when rods were often screwed together in a weekend or two Joe Pirotta and his brother-in-law Charlie Caruana invested six years and countless thousands of hours in their stunning Model A pickup and it showed.

Swathed in gleaming chrome and sparkling crimson and gold metalflake the Model A they called *The Crimson Pirate* set the Australian hot rodding world alight when it burst on the scene in 1967. Nothing like it had been seen before.

For the next five years or so it plundered the national show scene, making off with top awards at shows in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia. It even crossed the Tasman where it wowed New Zealand rodders.

Joe and Charlie stopped counting trophies a long time ago, but reckon it racked up more than 70 in the years it was shown.

In the space of just a couple of months in 1969 alone it won awards for Best Paint, Best Engine, Top Show Car, Top Car and, best of all, People's Choice at the Gold Coast show in Queensland, then backed up in Sydney where it swooped on the Best Engine Compartment, Best Metalflake, Top Car and People's Choice trophies.

Of all the trophies it won it was the 'People's Choice' awards they most treasured, because they represented the tick of approval from ordinary show-goers who were swept away by what they saw.

"We won lots of awards, too many to count, but my biggest thrill was always when it won the 'People's Choice' award," Joe told *AHR*. "The other awards were nice, but the 'People's Choice' came from the people who visited the shows."

So complete was the Model A's command of the show scene at the time that other trophy hopefuls would resign themselves to scrapping for the minor spoils when they saw *The Pirate* roll off the trailer. It was a foregone conclusion that it would take the top awards.

"You could sense people were getting jealous because it was winning so much," Charlie said. "You could hear them saying 'that car is here again, it will clean us out', but why shouldn't it win if it was that nice."

Talk among disgruntled rivals looking for a chink in its glittering armour was that it wasn't actually a runner, that it was all *show* and no *go*. But Charlie soon learned to deal with them in his own way by firing up the gleaming V8 at show's end and driving it away.

"It was just magic to watch the reaction," Joe says.







“You could  
sense people  
were getting  
jealous because  
it was winning  
so much.”

*Charlie Caruana*

*Charlie Caruana (left)  
and Joe Pirotta with the  
glittering creation they built  
way back in the 1960s.*

# FROM THE ASHES

Like the proverbial Phoenix, a major piece of Australia's drag racing history has arisen from the scorched remains of a once-proud racecar.







*By David Cook*  
*Photography by Mark Bean*

**I**n the small single garage of a modest double-fronted red brick home in western Sydney sat what was once the core of the most exciting racecar ever to have come to Australia.

Driven by legendary drag racer Ash Marshall it had become the first Australian race car to exceed 200 mph and pushed the standard of local competition up a major notch. And now there it sat, shining like it hadn't done for over 40 years, complete with an iron blown 392 Hemi and the other mechanicals that had once been its beating heart.

I was standing in the garage of George Bukureshliev, keen drag racer and chassis fabricator. The car we both looked on so fondly was once, and was now once again, The *Scorcher*, a front-engined Top Fuel dragster that had wound a long trail of competition both in the USA and then around Australia before commencing its climb back to pristine originality.

The car had come into George's hands — temporarily — through a long and tortuous path.

What George was caring for was first unloaded from the USA in 1968 as a state-of-the-art Top Fuel dragster, fresh from original owner Leland Kolb.

The *Scorcher* was built on a chassis reported to be 177 inches, but now thought to be more like 160, which Marshall thought would be more robust than the then evolving 200-inch cars and better withstand the rigours of towing around Australia's rough roads of the late '60s.

It has previously been reported as being a Woody Gilmore chassis, but it is believed that it was actually built by Race Car Specialties. The original body was a full Tom Hanna piece.

*Scorcher's* fire was lit by a 392 Chrysler, dressed up to 400 cubes, with the nation's first Crowerglide (slider) clutch and first set of inner liners for the Goodyear slicks.

The claimed horsepower was 1250, a far cry from the estimated 8000 horsepower nitro engines of today.

Marshall had launched the car in a major public fanfare, but crunched it into the Armco fencing at Calder, mangling everything forward of the engine after the

steering wheel came off the shaft in the lights at only its second Australian appearance.

*Scorcher* was rebuilt and by mid-1969 Marshall was pushing to 7.40 seconds, and by the end of the year to a 7.34 with a best speed of 213.26 mph.

The 7.34 ET was the best Marshall would achieve in the *Scorcher*, but by the time he sold the car in 1970 he had pushed the top speed to 214.28 mph.

In June '69 he set the CAMS NSW Sprint Championship outright record at 7.87 seconds, averaged off two runs, one in each direction, the second being the most "interesting" in that it meant running back up the Sydney International

Dragway (Castlereagh) strip towards the pits, and having to thread his way through large iron fence posts at the back of the property.

Less enticingly the *Scorcher* also became just the second race car in Australia to suffer a serious fire, at the Surfers Paradise track, when the engine blew at half track in a race in April 1970, causing second degree burns to Marshall's hands and feet.

Not long after the spectacular Surfer's blaze Marshall sold the car to Brisbane speedway racer Blair Shepherd, who went on to win the 1971 Nationals with a career best 7.72s and 205 mph.

Through all the owners who followed Marshall — including the Brisbane team of Rod Farrell and Peter Dykes/Roy Smith, the far North Queensland team of Reece Davies and Noel Horton, back

to Brisbane with the team of Lester James and Graeme Scholes, then to Les Winter — it had undergone a number of changes, especially in the front end. Braces had been welded in, and old ones cut out, often crudely, with rough ends left in position. In one place a weld had been ground so far the tube itself was down to paper thinness.

What George sweated over was not his own car, but now belonged to Dennis Young, long an active racer in a variety of cars through the 1980s, before he acquired the *Scorcher* in 1988. He decided this old racecar needed a major rebuild before he could commit to racing it again with a small block Chevy.

... there it sat,  
shining like it  
hadn't done for  
over 40 years,  
complete with  
an iron blown  
392 Hemi  
and the other  
mechanicals that  
had once been its  
beating heart.





*Scorcher back in all its 1960s splendour complete with the beautiful Dennis Braid body built after Marshall's huge crash at Calder on only its second run in Australia.*

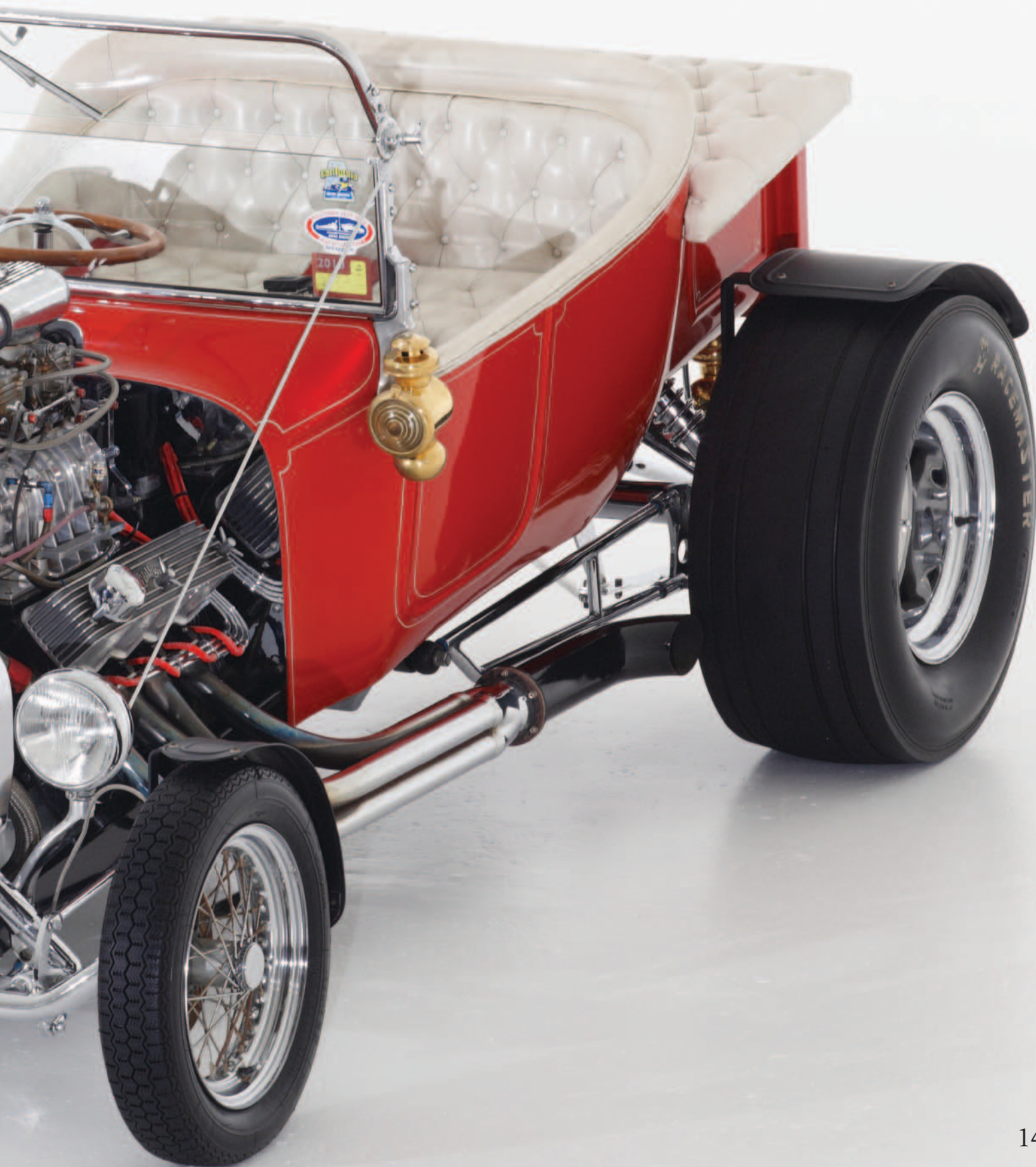
# ACCIDENTAL HERO

**Norm Longfield never set out to build Australia's best T-bucket, it just turned out that way.**

*By Geoff Paradise  
Photography by Mark Bean*







**F**orty-plus years ago hot rod shows were major events on the Australian hot rodder's calendar.

If we ever came close to having a national show circuit then it was surely in the late '60s and early '70s when seemingly, every few months it would be time to hit the road, attend these events and stand in awe amidst the metalflake, chrome, disco lights and glamour.

Holidays, weddings and christenings were planned around the annual shows in Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne and Brisbane. There were also annual shows in Adelaide and Perth.

Hot rod shows had the same effect on people as a bright light has on a moth; the brighter, shinier, more glittery the event, the more people would turn up.

There was always something new, something more colourful or bizarre that would make its debut. This was the era of lace painting, multi-coloured swirls and psychedelic lettering.

It was also a time when anything went; ridiculously big engines in small British cars, slicks outside the guards and no front brakes.

Mind you, for the most part these creative liberties only applied to show cars and like many one-hit wonders on the Top 40 they disappeared as fast they arrived.

But that was the fun, the attraction. You never knew what was going to turn up at your local hot rod show. Sydney and Melbourne rivalry was alive and well in those days with both cities laying claim to a 'National' hot rod and custom car show.

The scene-stealers in the late-'60s were just two cars – one of which appears on our cover and is covered in wonderful detail on these pages – the Pirotta/Caruana '28 Model A and the other is the Buhagiar/Azzopardi '32 roadster. They were the headline acts of the day and only heightened the inter-city rivalry.

The former of course was, and is, from Melbourne, the latter was a Sydney car, and one we'd like to know the whereabouts of today.

Between them, they stole not only the show, but the trophies alternatively, like a pair of heavyweight boxers trading body blows.

And then something totally unexpected happened.

Unbeknown to them a kid from the western Sydney suburb of Guildford and his father and a mate had been beavering away in their suburban garage for more than two years building what was to become an instant show winner.

That kid was Norm Longfield, his dad, Stan and his mate was Mal Lewis.

Longfield debuted his T-bucket at the 1970 National Hot Rod, Dragster & Custom Show at Sydney's Burwood Westfield Shopping Town and scooped the pool by winning Top Show Car and People's Choice.

The response to the car, both at the show and later in the magazines of the day, was phenomenal.

It had all the hallmarks of an Oscar-winning Hollywood blockbuster; a trophy that was half the size of Norm, contingency prizes and immediate national recognition by way of exclusive covers on *Australian Hot Rod* in September and *Australian Hot Rodding Review* a month later.

Headlines in *RODsports*, the fortnightly drag racing/hot rod tabloid cried 'National Show Sensation!' and the opening paragraph of the event coverage declared that "Norm Longfield shook up the big names of the show car class at Westfield..."

It continued "...no one expected a new car in show circles to come out on top over such jewels as the Pirotta/Caruana '28 Ford, Ron Wickham's '52 Ford F100 and the ageless Buhagiar/Azzopardi '32 roadster." It was perfection with a capital 'P', it said.

Marti Dunstan, writing in *AHRR* in the same issue that had Norm's car on the cover said "It is a mind blower almost without equal in every department."

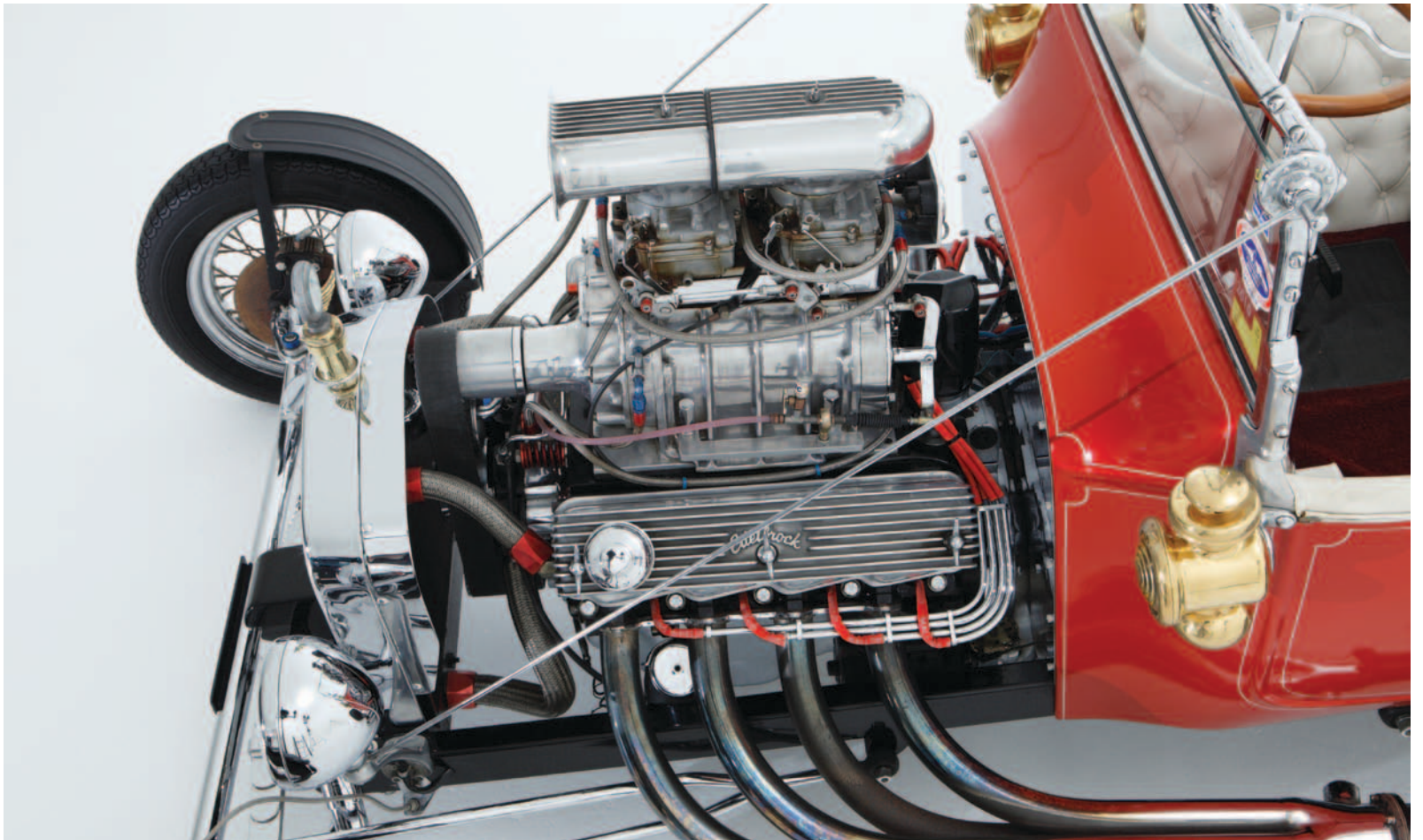
Marti, never known to back away from hyperbole, went on to say – and rightly so, that "its success is no surprise. It's just beautiful."

Like it or  
not, Norm  
Longfield was  
an immediate  
national  
celebrity but he  
didn't set out to  
become one.

---

*With its white, button-studded diamond vinyl trim (top right), Smiths dials, push-button transmission shift and wooden Model T wheel Longfield's T-bucket was stunning. The blower (right) was added in 1971 for a renewed show attack.*





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**Hot Rodder**

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# **Australian** **Hot Rodder**

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**80 Years Young: Deuce Tribute**

**Eddie Thomas: Drag Racing Legend**

**Classic Beauty: Colin Bates' Cool '36 Coupe**



# Australian Hot Rodder

Number Two

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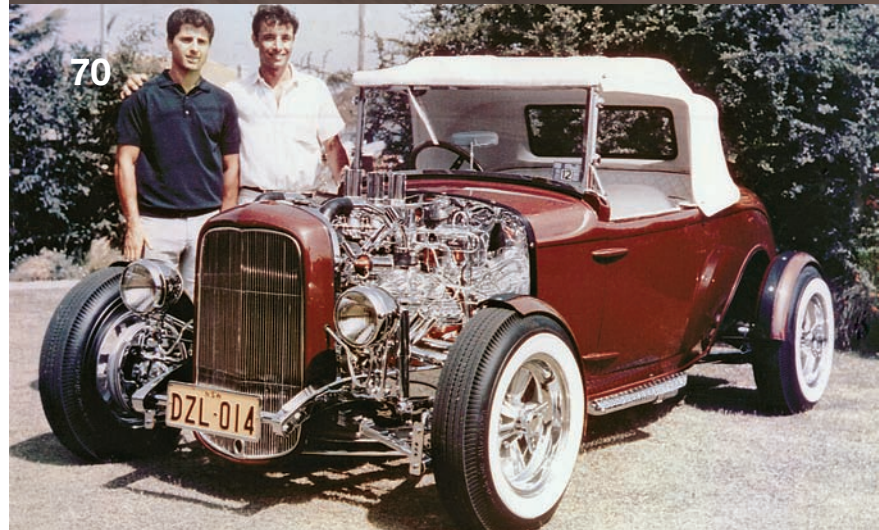
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Leo Spessott has been to every Nationals staged to date, and all in his flamed '40 Ford convertible.



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## DEPARTMENTS

### 4 KING PIN

It's thought hot rodding started here when *HOT ROD* magazine arrived in the 1950s, but did it really start before that?



124







A white 1936 Ford coupe is shown from the front-left, driving on a dark asphalt road. The car's distinctive vertical grille, round headlights, and chrome bumper are visible. The background consists of a green grassy field and a line of tall, dark evergreen trees, all of which are blurred to convey a sense of motion. The sky is overcast and grey.

# CLASSIC BEAUTY

Colin and Kris Bates'  
gorgeous '36 Ford coupe  
drives as good as it looks.

*By Graham Smith and Colin Bates  
Photography by Ellen Dewar*



Now cleaned up, the shell was sent off for sand blasting, this time to Masterblast in Bayswater and thankfully this time it didn't get rained on.

On return all the seams were treated with rust preventative and then a few heavy coats of etch and 2K primer. Once the primer had cured, all the seams were carefully tapped down and spot welds re-done, and it was then primed again. The original floor was still in mint condition, so seam sealer was applied to all joints to keep any moisture out.

The patch panels that were fitted back in '75 were pruned off and new, more accurate panels, were made and fitted to give crisper definition to the body lines and door gaps.

Another area that needed attention was the rumble seat opening. The rain gutters had always been a bit average, so new ones were formed and fitted, and much of the surrounding body was replaced as well.

Stress cracks above the doors and in the corners of the

rumble seat that plague '35 and '36 coupes had always been a problem, so this time steel tubing subframes were installed inside the body for greater rigidity.

One tied the door frames together and ran around the back of the roof to pick up the rear window lift mechanism and parcel shelf as well. Another ran from about the middle of the door pillars back to the very rear of the body and crossmembers tied the rumble seat opening to the inner subframe structure, and they also provided more than adequate mounts for the inertia reel seat belts.

Next Colin decided that it would be good to treat the floor and inside of the body to a full gloss finish, so a few coats of 2K primer and lots of blocking back by hand had the inside ready for colour, this time in 2K.

Choosing the colour proved to be one of the biggest challenges in the rebuild. It had always looked good in white, so good that it had been widely copied by other





hot rodders and Colin and Kris considered painting it another colour this time just to be different. In the end they decided to stick with white, it just seemed the car's rightful colour, but settling on the right shade of white also proved something of a headache.

"We toured around dealers, used car yards, car parks, even followed cars up streets, everywhere we went we'd check out the white cars we saw," Colin says. "But everything we saw either glared or looked yellowy."

That was until one day they spotted a Holden Camira in a scrap metal yard and liked the colour. That colour was *Alpine White*.

Colin again did the paint preparation and application of the acrylic, although his mate Brendan Burke helped out by doing the final rub-out and compounding when Colin tired of rubbing the coupe's complex body lines.

In a neat connection with the past, Burke had worked

with Peter Leech in the 1970s, the same Peter Leech who applied the original white enamel for Bill Barling.

It was then time for the chassis to get some attention, and after it was stripped and sand blasted the frame was fully boxed for maximum rigidity, and a new centre X-member was made up in 5 mm steel to match the appearance of the original member.

The Customline rear springs were de-arched and shortened at the rear so the shackles could be mounted in tubes set into the frame rails, new shorter shocks were sourced, and all rear-end components were rebuilt and finished in black powdercoat.

A '39 axle, dropped by Gary Page, was installed at the front with stock radius rods, new steering arms were fitted, and again everything was rebuilt and powder-coated in black.

All fasteners were zinc-plated to contrast with the gloss white chassis.

Choosing the colour proved to be one of  
the biggest challenges in the rebuild.

*The '36 Ford appealed to Bates long before he bought the coupe in the 1970s. Three decades on it's still a favourite.*



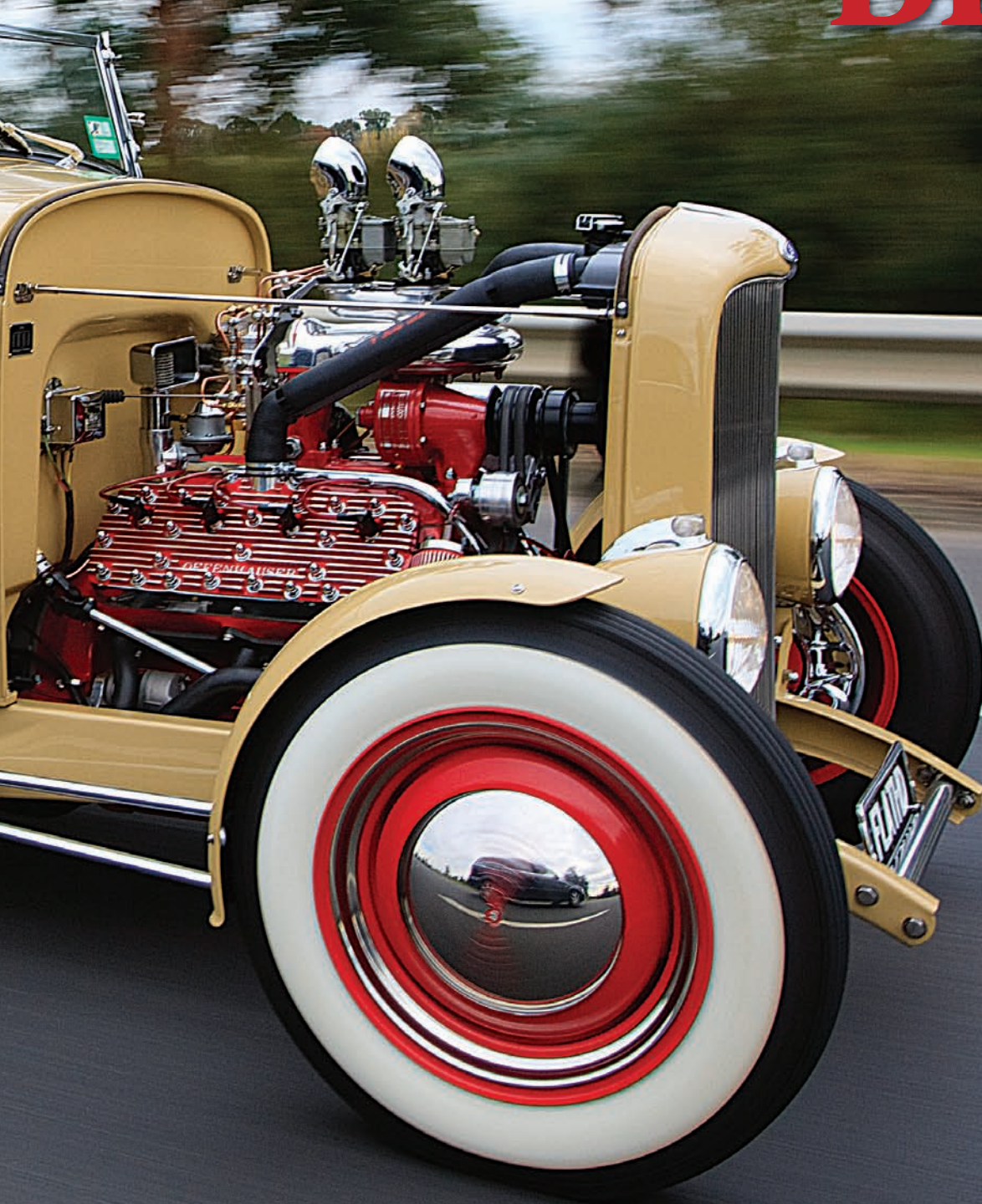


**Some hot rods are tough, others are cool,  
the Lil' Brown Deuce is simply sweet.**

*By Graham Smith and Geoff Paradise  
Photography by Ellen Dewar*

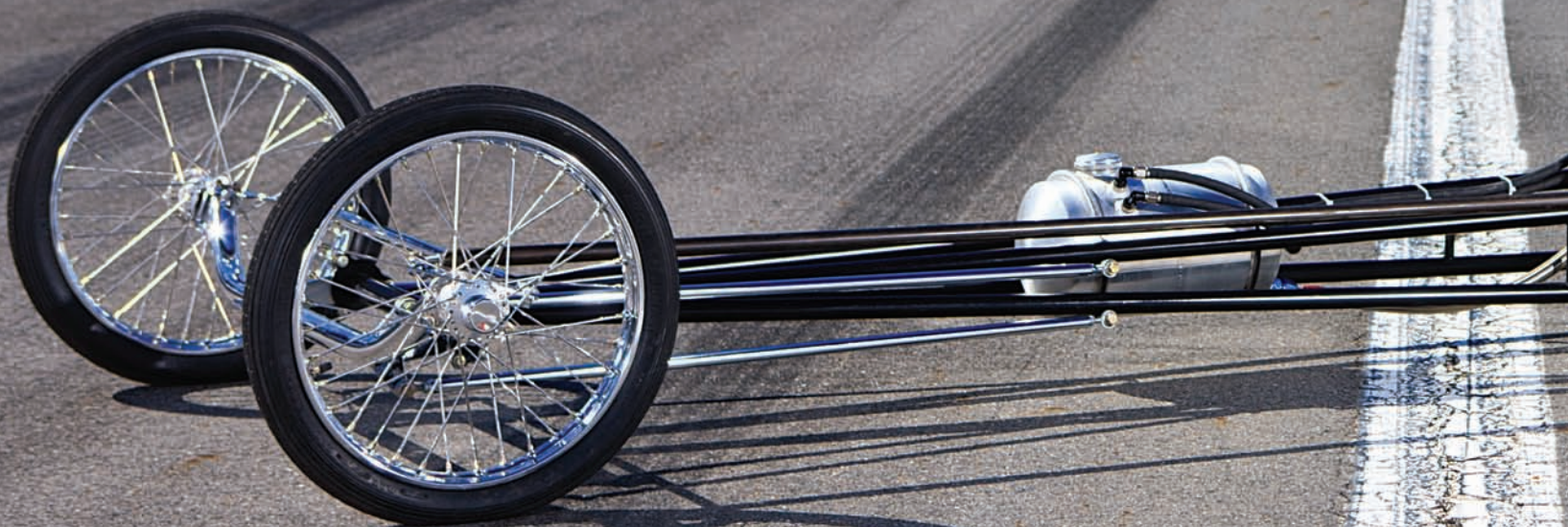


# LIL' BROWN DEUCE

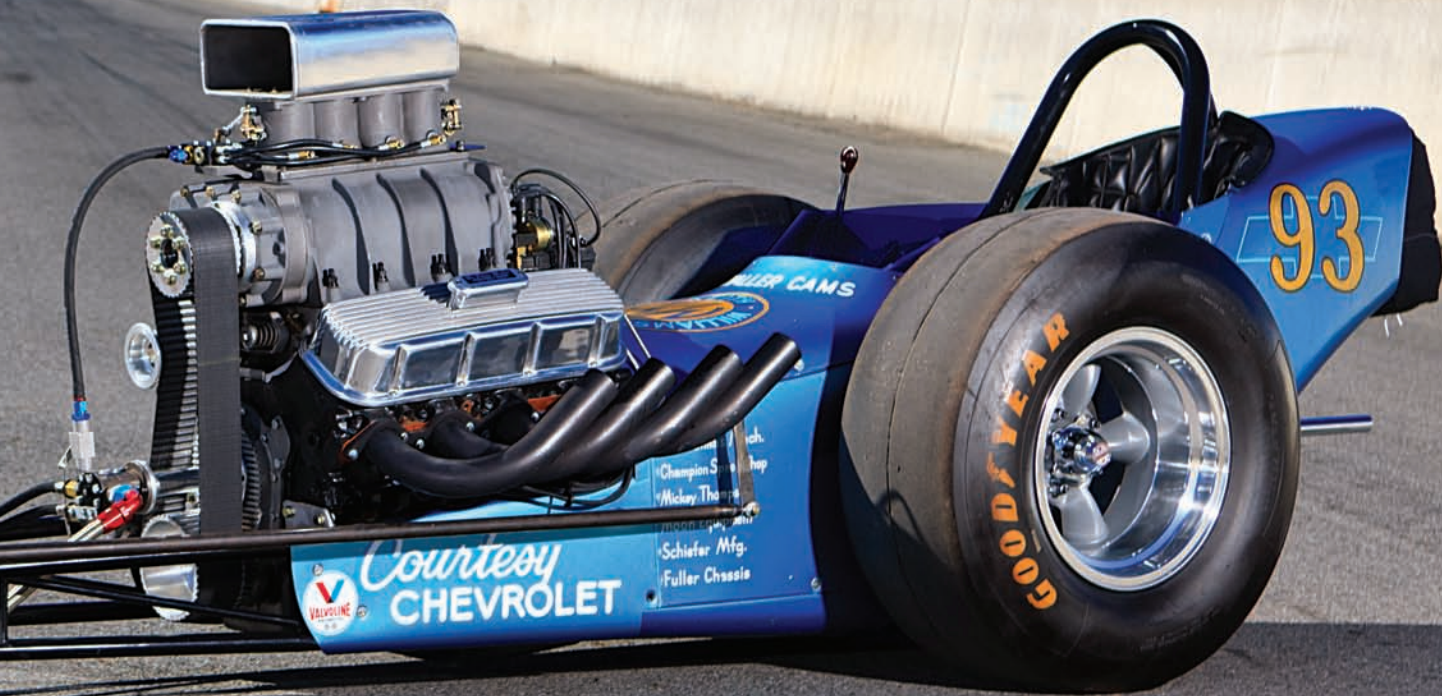




# TIME MACHINE







Bob Keith's re-created dragster transports us  
back in time to 1966 and the first Dragfest.

*By David Cook*

*Photography by Ellen Dewar and David Cook*



splash up on the headers and turn to steam so I couldn't see where I was going, and I didn't have any goggles on so I kept having to close my eyes because of the water.

"I ran 163 mph (262 km/h), with my eyes mostly closed, which was quicker than anything they'd run over there.

"Anyway, as the day progressed the weather got better and everybody got to make runs and it turned out well.

"Wally was pretty smart in setting that thing up. He had two Top Fuel cars (Ivo against Garlits), two Top Gas cars (me and Tony Nancy), two blown AA/Gas Supers (K.S. Pitman against 'Ohio George'), two stock cars (Sox and Martin against Jenkins), and they took two motorcycles and the little Porsche-powered car. It was quite a group of guys.

"The British had no idea how big our trailers were. We had to bring spare motors, and parts and tyres and blowers, at least two of everything; there were no parts over there.

"And here they come to the docks to pull these big trailers with Hillman Minxes and Cortinas and God knows what. So Sydney Allard went to some war surplus place and bought these World War II 4WD trucks. They even had gun turrets on top. They were slower than the seven-year itch but they had the horsepower to pull the trailers.

"There were quite a few English cars, some of the most oddball things you'd ever want to see. They had Jaguar engines in ugly looking frames. One had a Buick straight-8 and there was some crazy stuff, but that kicked off drag racing in England on that one trip.

"We went back a second time in 1965 with just some Top Fuel cars. That trip was pretty much a disaster because it rained so much and we didn't get in a lot of runs.

"I was invited back as team captain, but Wally told me they only wanted Top Fuel cars. That's when I built the Fuller car and I put a Chrysler in it. I'd driven fuel cars and I was never keen on it. I always thought gasoline was much more of a challenge than nitro.

"So, we built the Fuller car with the Hagemann body and Arnold Chaves built a Chrysler for it. It was a 392 and by the time we got done it was 484 inches, I think.

"I had Hilborn set it up for alcohol. I thought they aren't going to know the difference between alcohol and nitro.

The little blue  
dragster is race-  
ready, able to do  
a skid, just as  
it did a lifetime  
ago, and that's as  
it should be.

I made, I think, three passes in the US and then shipped it to England. We fired it up on alcohol for the first time over there, and I had 'Bones' Carroll of Carroll Brothers and Oxman – they had a really good Top Fuel car – come over to adjust the barrel valve and the car ran flawlessly the whole time I was there."

When the NHRA and the new British Drag Racing Association decided they didn't want the financial gamble of shipping in US racers any more Keith was reluctant to see something that had been so much fun die, so he wrote to a name he'd picked up for Australia. That name was Tom Floyd, the editor of a new magazine called *Australian Hot Rodding Review*, who was also writing articles for the US magazine *Drag News*.

The next thing was another phone call from Wally Parks seeking the Keith/Williamson/Goodnight team's participation in a tour to Australia in 1966.

That led to a conversation with the owner of Courtesy Chevrolet, a Chevy dealership in San Jose where Williamson worked.

The owner, Bob Hamilton, sight unseen, offered a sponsorship of the car if the team would run one of the new 396 Chevy big block engines.

When Keith said that there were no speed parts available yet Hamilton retorted, 'Well, can't they be made?' and then made the dangerous (for a sponsor) statement that "money was no object".

So the guys set off around LA, talking to people like Mickey Thompson (valve covers, blower scoop and magnesium Olds diff centre), Cragar (blower manifold and blower drive), Joe Hunt (magneto), Mondello (heads) and Dean Moon (timing cover and fuel tank).

Arnold Chaves bolted it all together, along with a stroked crank and bored the block to achieve 502 cubes and it became the first blown big-block Chev ever built.

"We only made two or three passes with that car at Pomona before we shipped it to Australia," Bob recalls. "It was the Winternationals, and they wanted us to compete but I said 'No' because I was afraid we'd tear something up and wouldn't have time to rebuild for the Australian trip.

"It ran some pretty good speeds and ETs and I said to



*The re-created Bob Keith rail will remain in Australia despite the desire of the Don Garlits and NHRA museums to have it in their collections in America.*





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**Hot Rodder**

*Dedicated to Australia's Hot Rod Heritage*



# **Australian** **Hot Rodder**

Number Three  
\$29.95

*Dedicated to Australia's Hot Rod Heritage*



**Pure Nostalgia:** Graeme Blaby's '33 Coupe

**Pass Master:** John English

**Found:** Mitchell Brothers' Surf Buggie



# Australian Hot Rodder

Number Three

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David Cook looks at the impact of the 1966 Dragfest tour of American drag racers.

Publisher and Editor: **Graham Smith**

Senior Editor: **Geoff Paradise**

Contributing Editor: **David Cook**

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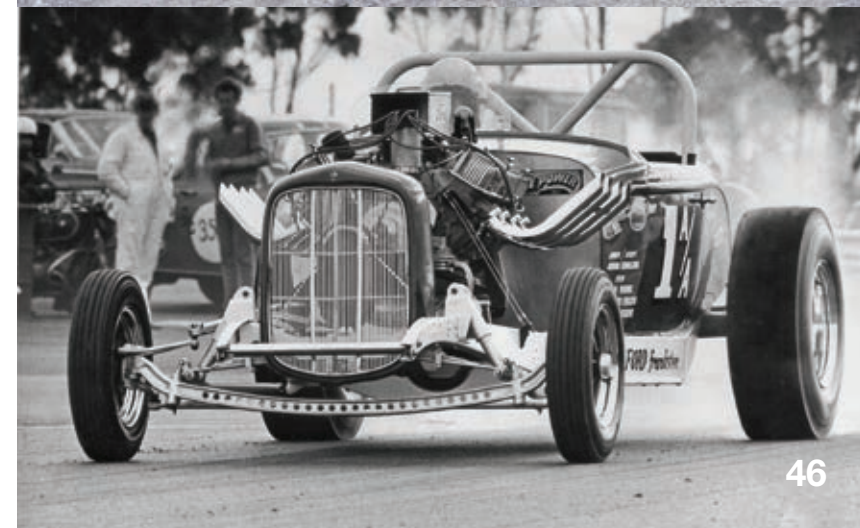
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# RACE 'N' ROAD STAR

Tony Mullen's Deuce roadster was one of the fastest hot rods around in the 1960s.

*By Graham Smith  
Photography from Tony Mullen's collection*



In 1965 there was no faster hot rod in the country than Tony Mullen's little red roadster, it was unbeatable on the street and almost as unbeatable on the strip as well. Only John English and his lightweight altered roadster regularly had his measure at the drags.

In a showdown on the road Mullen says he could easily reach 90 mph (145 km/h) within a single city block. He never discovered what the Y-block Ford-powered Deuce roadster would ultimately do on the open road, he says he wasn't game to fully open it up, but he regularly pushed it to 120 mph (193 km/h) and on those occasions he did he reckons it still had plenty left.

It was so fast that he never had any fears about the police catching him. "They never had anything fast enough," he told *AHR* with a wry smile.

It's not surprising really, the Victorian police at the time were mostly driving six-cylinder Falcons and Holdens, which wouldn't reach 100 mph (161 km/h) even with a tail wind, and needed 18 or more seconds for the quarter-mile. The hottest car they had at their disposal was the lumbering V8-powered Studebaker Lark and even that would have had a tough time catching Mullen and his little roadster.

If Mullen's roadster was the king of the road, it was just as much at home on the drag strip where the young Geelong-born electrician would regularly make 14-second runs with terminal speeds of 100 mph (161 km/h) or more.

The other road-going hot rods and sports cars he came up against at Riverside Dragway rarely troubled him. He remembers Darryl Harvey beating him a couple of times in his Y-block powered '34 Ford roadster, but the only car that really gave him any grief was John English's lightweight altered roadster when they met up during the elimination run-offs.

"I always seemed to come up against John in the eliminations," he said. "It was usually in the final."

Mullen began going to the drags when he first got his driver's licence in 1959. They were then staged at Pakenham and whenever they were on Tony and his mates would pile into his VW Beetle and head down the old Geelong road to take in the wheel-spinning action on the mostly dirt strip on the other side of Melbourne.

"There was a 50-foot long concrete pad at the start," he said. "You'd see the cars take off, but then they'd disappear in a cloud of dust."

But there were times when the two hour long trip turned out to be for nothing after rain or something else caused



*Mullen's roadster in its ultimate form with heavily modified Y-block V8 and four Holley 94 carburetors mounted on a homemade MAN-A-FRE-style intake.*

The roadster was so fast that he never worried about the police catching him.



# CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

Graeme Blaby built his California dream car, but found the reality of life in Australia made it hard to enjoy.

*By Graham Smith  
Photography by EDP*





and another 80 in the top of the bonnet, enough to inspire members of the Slingshots to dub it the “Cheese Grater”.

When it came time to paint it he turned to Greg Curtin to apply the acrylic. The chosen colour was British Racing Green, but when that turned out to be a little murky they added some extra green and it became Curtin Green.

A lighter green was chosen for the wheels and suspension components underneath the car.

“Those early Fords all had contrasting wheels, so I mixed up a lighter shade of green using a lot of little touch-up cans of paint until I got the colour I wanted and then got it mixed,” he said. “The guy who mixed it called it Jag Wheel Green.”

Marine five-ply was used for the floor; it was also used for the panel in the roof, which was trimmed in black vinyl.

With the body removed, the chassis could take shape. There’s no boxing, and the front crossmember is stock ’33, but Graeme modified the centre crossmember to accept the Aussie four-speed and made up a new rear crossmember, which had to accept a Model A buggy spring needed to clear the quick-change. He tack-welded it together himself, but got a licensed welder to come in and complete the job.

The Super Bell tube axle was hung at the front using a Ford 10-10 van spring and the telescopic shocks and four-bar ends and bushings Ewing had supplied. The only modification Blaby made was to lengthen the four-bars to prevent bump steer.

Having got the quick-change home he took it and everything else needed to put it together to a local toolmaker to assemble it and convert it to Customline axles.

While everyone else was polishing the quick-change centre and painting the side bells, Graeme did the opposite by polishing and plating the bells and painting the centre, apart from the rear cover that was polished.

It was then mounted on a chromed buggy spring with telescopic shocks, and reinforced ’36 Ford radius arms to locate it.

The Super Bell Super Stopper disc brakes Ewing provided were fitted at the front and Customline drums were fitted to the rear axle.

The original side-steer set-up was retained, but the old Ford steering box was replaced with one from a VW Kombi he found after searching local wreckers for one that was compact enough to fit where it needed to go.

First up, 16-inch Plymouth wire wheels were mounted at the corners, they were stock at the front, but widened to eight inches at the rear, and then finished off with ’33 Ford hubcaps and polished trim rings. Graeme’s treasured Firestone dirt track tyres were fitted at the rear, and some Avon motorcycle tyres were fitted at the front.

Later, the wheels were changed to 15-inch ‘Fish’ reproduction Halibrands Brian Bauer had bought in the USA with money Graeme got from the Model A doors he

“You didn’t have to be a genius to get it right, it was kind of like joining the dots.”

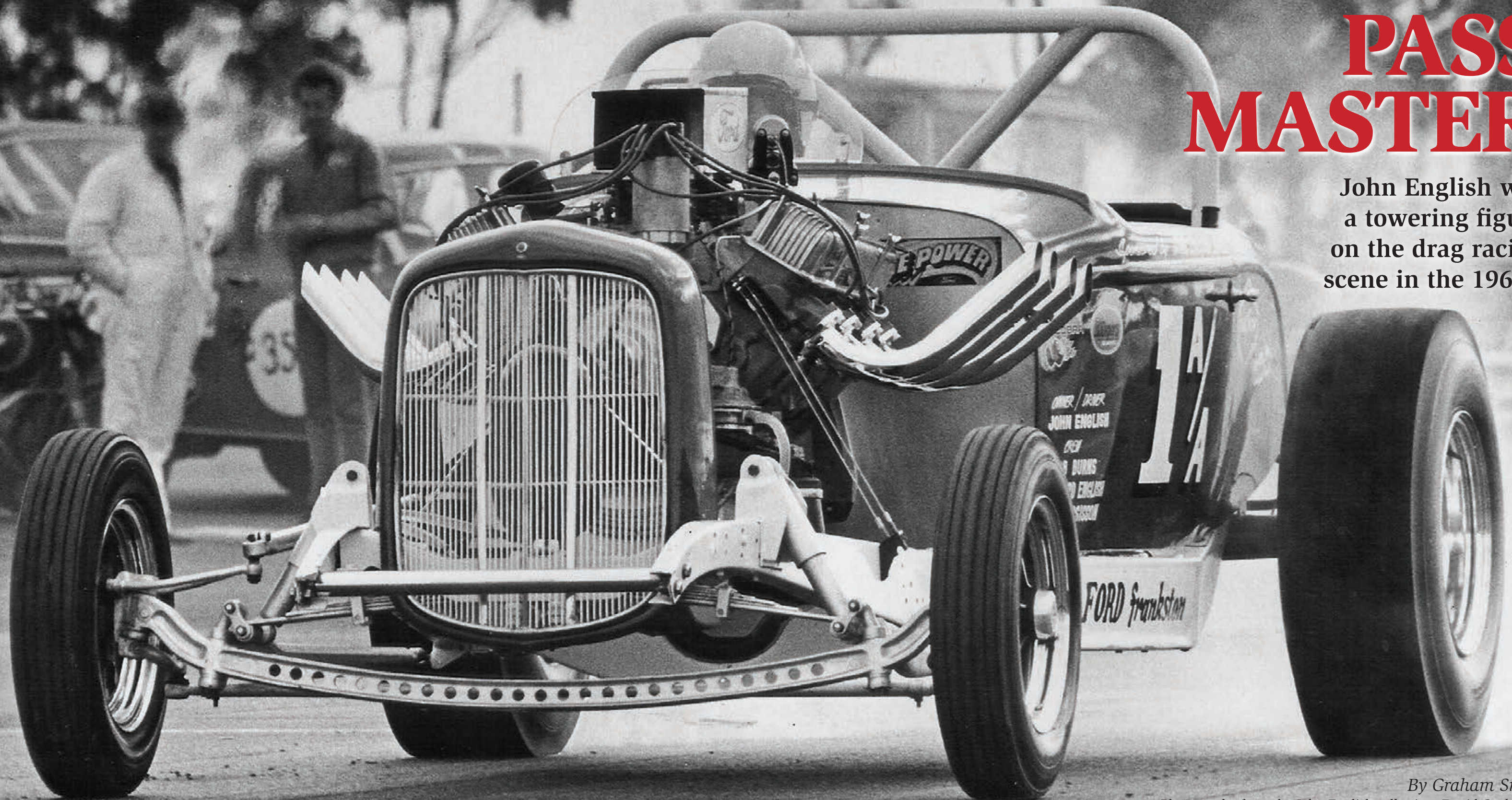
*Graeme Blaby*





# PASS MASTER

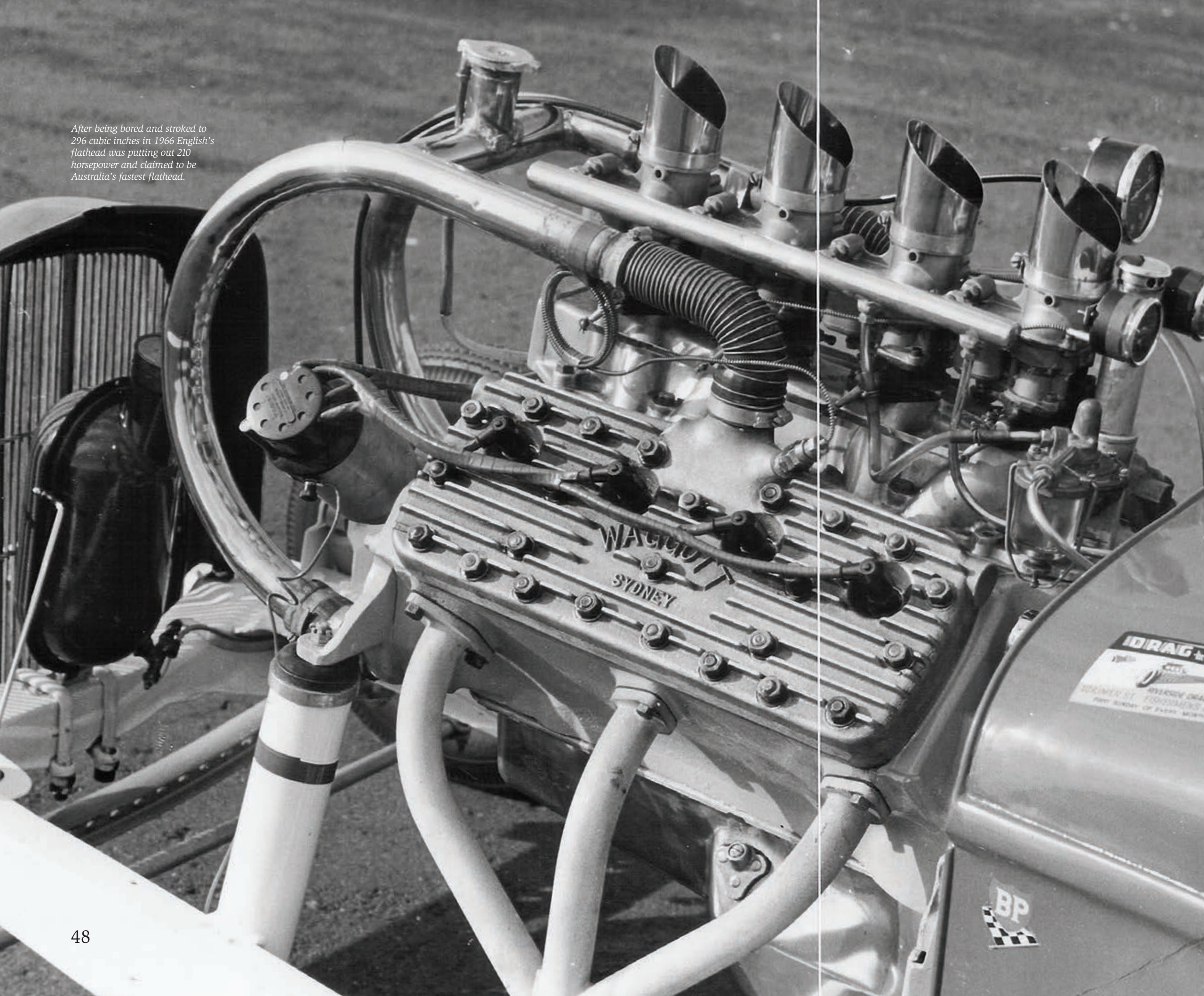
John English was  
a towering figure  
on the drag racing  
scene in the 1960s.



By Graham Smith  
Photography from the John English collection, David Cook, EDP



After being bored and stroked to 296 cubic inches in 1966 English's flathead was putting out 210 horsepower and claimed to be Australia's fastest flathead.



They were the sort of parts you'd find in any hot rodder's shed, a flathead V8, an old Ford front axle that had been drilled, a split front wishbone, an early V8 Ford diff, but these weren't just any old Ford parts, they were parts of John English's racing Deuce roadster, perhaps the only parts of the car left.

There, in a shed in the old gold town of Ballarat an hour or so west of Melbourne lay the remains of one of the most famous, and revered, drag racing cars ever to burn rubber in this country.

When John English retired his hard charging roadster in the early 1970s he didn't just sell it like most people would, instead he broke it up and disposed of it part by part. Why? Simple really, he didn't want anyone else to own it and that was his way of ensuring no one ever would. "It was mine and I didn't want anyone else to have it," he bluntly told *AHR*.

He got his wish, for while a number of parts have survived, no one has yet been able to reassemble the famous roadster. Instead, those who have parts of the car tucked away in their sheds prize them as mementos of one of the all-time greats of drag racing.

It's not surprising they're so highly valued, for between its winning debut at Riverside Dragway at Fishermans Bend in 1964 and its final gearbox-busting blast down the quarter-mile at Adelaide International Raceway in 1972 English's roadster was rarely beaten.

Such was his drawing power that John Fleming, the promoter of the Sydney International Dragway at Castlereagh would phone him in the week leading up to a meeting at the Sydney strip to make sure he would be making the trip up from Melbourne. English was one of the big drawcards of the day and promoters knew he would pull a crowd to their drag strips, they also knew he would attract other racers eager to try and beat him, ensuring spectators would see a full entry.

"John's car was good looking and always well presented," Fleming told *AHR*. "It was also reliable and ran well, and almost always won its class, so we were keen to have it."

Before one such meeting at Castlereagh Fleming let it be known that anyone who reckoned they could beat English and his little red roadster was welcome to try. According to the veteran racer 14 hopefuls put their hand up.

When he found out about the plan he told Fleming to run them off against each other to whittle it down to the seven fastest and he would run against them. He duly did, and beat every one of them.

Remarkably, for most of the period he dominated the



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*Dedicated to Australia's Hot Rod Heritage*



# **Australian** **Hot Rodder**

Number Four  
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**Class A Tub:** Bob Bowman's Model A

**Warren Wilkie:** True to Tradition

**Deuce Daze:** Peter Leech's '32 Roadster

**Hot Rod Heaven:** Narrandera Nationals



# Australian Hot Rodder

Number Four

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Sitting down with Andy Morris and Bob Bowman, two of the legends of hot rodding.

### 6 STRAIGHT LINES

David Cook answers the question of who was our first drag racer.

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ISSN 1839-0803



# CLASS A TUB

Bob Bowman used whatever he had in his shed to build his ultimate hot rod.

*By Graham Smith  
Photography by Mark Bean*





What do you do when you find yourself with a shed full of cool bits and pieces accumulated over a lifetime in hot rodding? You could load them all on a trailer and take them to a swap meet, you could sell them on eBay, or, as Bob Bowman did, you could build your ultimate hot rod.

When Bowman looked around his shed he found an old Chevrolet chassis, there was also a fibreglass two-door Model A phaeton body he and Bob Cain had moulded back in the days he ran Street Rod Accessories in Sydney, and a small-block Chevrolet V8 that had once powered the bus he and his team travelled in when on their annual pilgrimage to Lake Gairdner for the salt racing. As well as that he found a genuine Halibrand quick-change rear axle he'd bought on a Valla Rod Run many years earlier, and a set of Kelsey Hayes wire wheels, and heaps more, including a cool old Oldsmobile instrument panel.

Assembled in his mind they formed a picture of a very cool car, one, with the urging of his wife, Sandra, he decided to build.

The picture in his mind's eye was of a '29 Model A Deluxe Phaeton, much like the one Ford had built in 1930, but updated with modern technology and given a 1960s hot rod treatment.

Ford's original '30 Deluxe Phaeton was a sporty two-door model with a touch of luxury. It sported a lower windscreen than the Standard model, and had luxury features like leather upholstery, a folding front seat and a rear bench seat with armrests.

But Bowman's car would have luxuries that Ford never thought of, things like roll-up windows, a heater-demister, and lockable doors that would make his Deluxe Phaeton a comfortable and secure long-distance cruiser with all the amenities of a closed car.

The build began in 2008, but it wasn't until 2011 that he really got cracking on it, and he spent the next two-and-a-half years completing it.

To most weekend hot rodders two-and-a-half years might not seem like a long time to build a car, but Bob says it was one of the slowest he's ever done.

"It was out of the box, different," he explained. "It wasn't straightforward, there was a lot of intricate stuff in it that needed working through."

One of his first steps was to set down the basic parameters of the car. He decided the wheelbase would be 103.5 inches, the same as the Model A, but the proportions would be dramatically different to create a longer, more elegant look befitting a high-class car of the period.

To achieve his desired look he added four inches to the length of the hood, the hood was then the same length as a '32 hood, and he shortened the tub by an equivalent amount and narrowed it two-and-a-half inches at the rear for a smoother, curved shape.

Further, he decided that the doors would be the same length as those of a Model A Tudor.

On Sandra's instructions it had to have the comfort of wind-up windows.

The need for the windows to be able to be wound up and down meant it couldn't have rear wheel arches; they would have impeded the movement of the windows.

Bob's plan at the outset was to use the fibreglass body and a 'glass grille shell he already had. The only steel panel he planned to use was going to be the hood, simply because that had to be made of steel for strength and stiffness.

But modifying the cowl of the 'glass body so it resembled a '32 inside proved difficult and more than a little tiresome, and one thing led to another and before he knew it he'd decided to build the whole thing in steel.

The switch from 'glass to steel began when he bought a smoothed Model A cowl top and sides from Brookville Roadster, he then bought a steel '32 grille shell, and then having those panels in steel it wasn't such a stretch to the decision to build the rest of the body in steel as well. Before he knew it there was a pile of flat sheet steel in his workshop and he was at work forming them into the panels he needed.

There are 36 panels in total, including the hood and the doors, the tub sides and rear, and the belly pan that encloses the underside of the car from the front to the rear.

---

*The elegant proportions and low-slung lines of Bowman's hand-built Deluxe tub are more in tune with the '30s than the '20s when the original Model A was conceived.*







# TRUE TO TRADITION

With cars like his '36 three-window coupe Warren Wilkie is helping to keep the tradition of hot rodding alive. *By Graham Smith*



In the years that Warren Wilkie has been around hot rodding he's seen plenty of fads come and go, from resto to rat and plenty in between, but for him nothing beats a traditional hot rod.

Warren is today one of Australia's foremost hot rod builders, he's renowned for the cool traditional style hot rods that come out of his Toowoomba shop.

"We've built a lot of traditional hot rods," he told *AHR* when we dropped into his shop, "and that's what I'd like the shop to be known for."

When Warren talks tradition he's talking about the cars built in the '50s, '60s and '70s with lots of genuine early Ford parts, dropped axles, chopped roofs, and flathead, small-block Chevrolet or Hemi engines.

That doesn't mean that he's stuck in the past and building cars the same way they were built back then.

"It has to look right," he says. "The key to that is to select the right parts to start with."

"It also takes skill and passion, and a lot of hard work."

Warren has always had an innate ability to pick the right

parts to make a killer hot rod, as anyone who saw his 1930 Model A roadster at the 1<sup>st</sup> Street Rod Nationals at Narrandera in 1973 would attest.

By the early 1970s the era of the channelled hot rod was coming to an end and hot rodders were turning their attention to stock-bodied rods. Warren's immaculate Model A was one of the first, and it was stunning.

Not only was it complete with all its fenders, it also had all of its original jewellery, from its stock bumpers and rear luggage rack to its genuine taillights and cowl lamps, there was even an old winged Motometer temperature gauge on the radiator cap.

Such was its impact at the Nationals that Warren left Narrandera weighed down with the prized hardware that came with the Rodders' Choice award for the top hot rod on the run. If that wasn't enough he went back to Narrandera in 1975 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Nationals and repeated his success.

"Warren's car was a real game changer," says Peter Leech, the builder of a well known channelled '32 roadster in the 1960s who remembers seeing the roadster at Narrandera.

"Before Warren came along we thought guys who drove full-fendered cars were just too lazy to take the fenders off their hot rods, but he showed us how good a full-fendered car could look."

"It started a new trend and everyone started building full-fendered cars."

From time immemorial hot rodders have mostly learnt about hot rodding through hot rod magazines and Warren was no different. For him it happened in the late-1960s when he was still a teenager attending high school in Toowoomba.

By his own admission he probably spent too much time reading magazines in class.

He would flick through the Australian magazines, but he preferred the American ones, particularly *Rod & Custom*, which featured more of the hot rods he liked.

In particular he remembers a 1929 Model A roadster that was featured on the front cover of the June 1969 issue of *Rod & Custom* and described by the magazine's editors as "the cleanest '29 Ford of them all!"

"It was Candy Red with white walls and Mercury wheel caps," Warren clearly recalls.

So taken with it was he that he decided to build his own hot rod in a similar style.

He was just 16 years old at the time and starting a panel beating apprenticeship at the local Ford dealership in Toowoomba when he saw an advertisement for a 1930 Model A Ford roadster in the local newspaper.

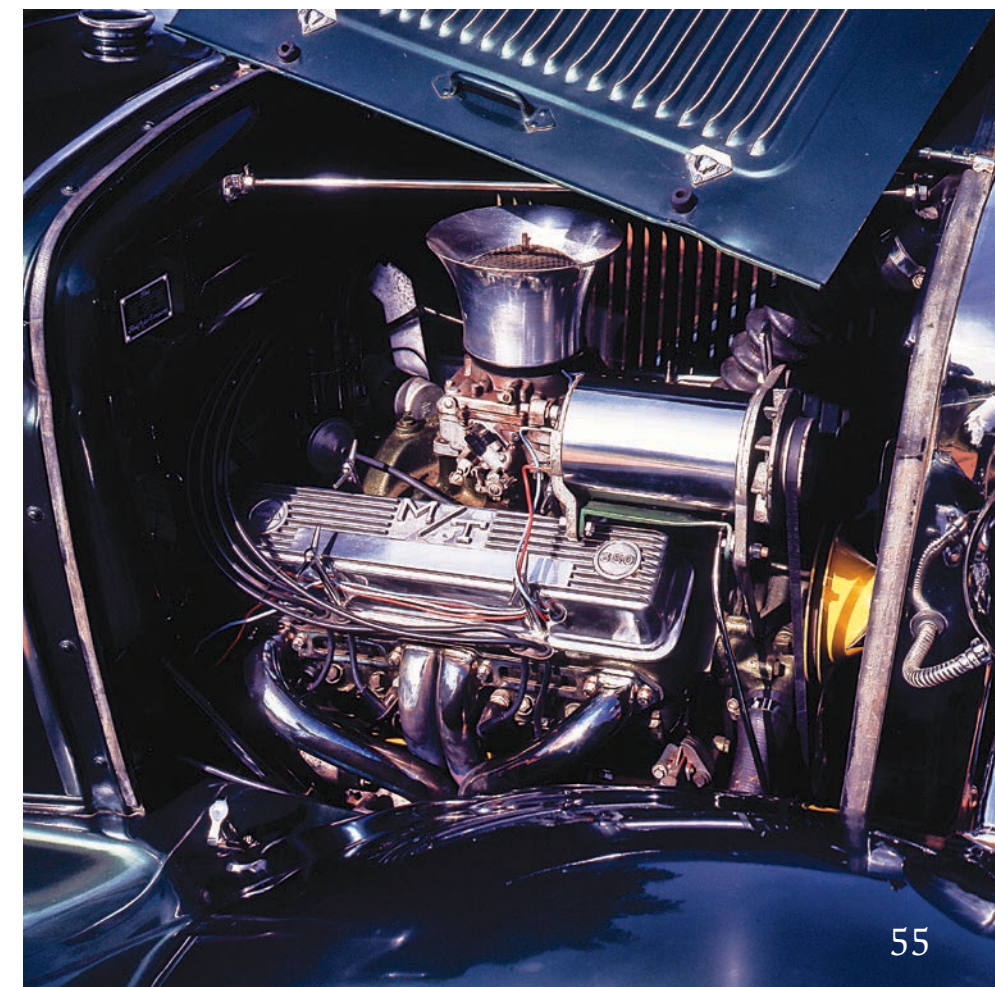
In those days it was common for advertisers to include their address in their advertisements as well as their phone number.

Too young to hold a driver's licence, Warren mounted his bike and pedalled across town to the address in the advertisement, but left disappointed when he found no one was home. When further attempts also proved fruitless he decided he'd probably missed the boat.

But a few weeks later at technical college when telling his good friend Les Winter that he'd missed out on a Model A roadster, Les owned up and told Warren that he'd actually bought the car himself.



Warren Wilkie set the rodding world on fire in the 1970s with his resto-rod styled, small-block Chev-powered '30 Model A Ford.





# ROADS TO GLORY

Against the odds a humble Ford V8 beat the best that road racing had to offer in 1934 to win the Victorian Centenary Grand Prix.



By Graham Smith  
Thanks to Kevin Oates for his inspiration  
and help in researching this story.



**I**t was 1934 and Victoria was in party mode as it celebrated a centenary of European settlement.

Prince Henry, the Duke of Gloucester, dropped in for a look around and was welcomed by a crowd half a million strong, Bairnsdale's Ted Stubenrauch overcame a shattered shoulder and a star-studded field that included the legendary Sir Hubert Opperman to win the 1100-mile Centenary 1000 cycling road race, C.W.A. Scott and T Campbell Black flew for 71 hours from Mildenhall aerodrome near London in England to Melbourne to win the Centenary Air Race in their single-engined de Havilland 88 Comet, 90,000 turned out at Flemington to see Darby Munro ride top-weight Peter Pan to an easy win in the Centenary Melbourne Cup, kids ran and jumped, bands played, choirs sang, and a couple of complete unknowns won the Centenary Grand Prix driving a humble Ford roadster.

The win by rookie racer, Mick Smith, and his best mate, Lindsay Terry, rocked the motor racing establishment of the day to its very core.

Rubbing salt into the wound was the knowledge that it was not only Smith's first ever race, but the roadster was

his parents' regular road and car he'd borrowed for the day.

Just days before the race at Phillip Island on October 27, 1934 the car had been a stock standard 1934 Ford V8 De Luxe roadster like any other.

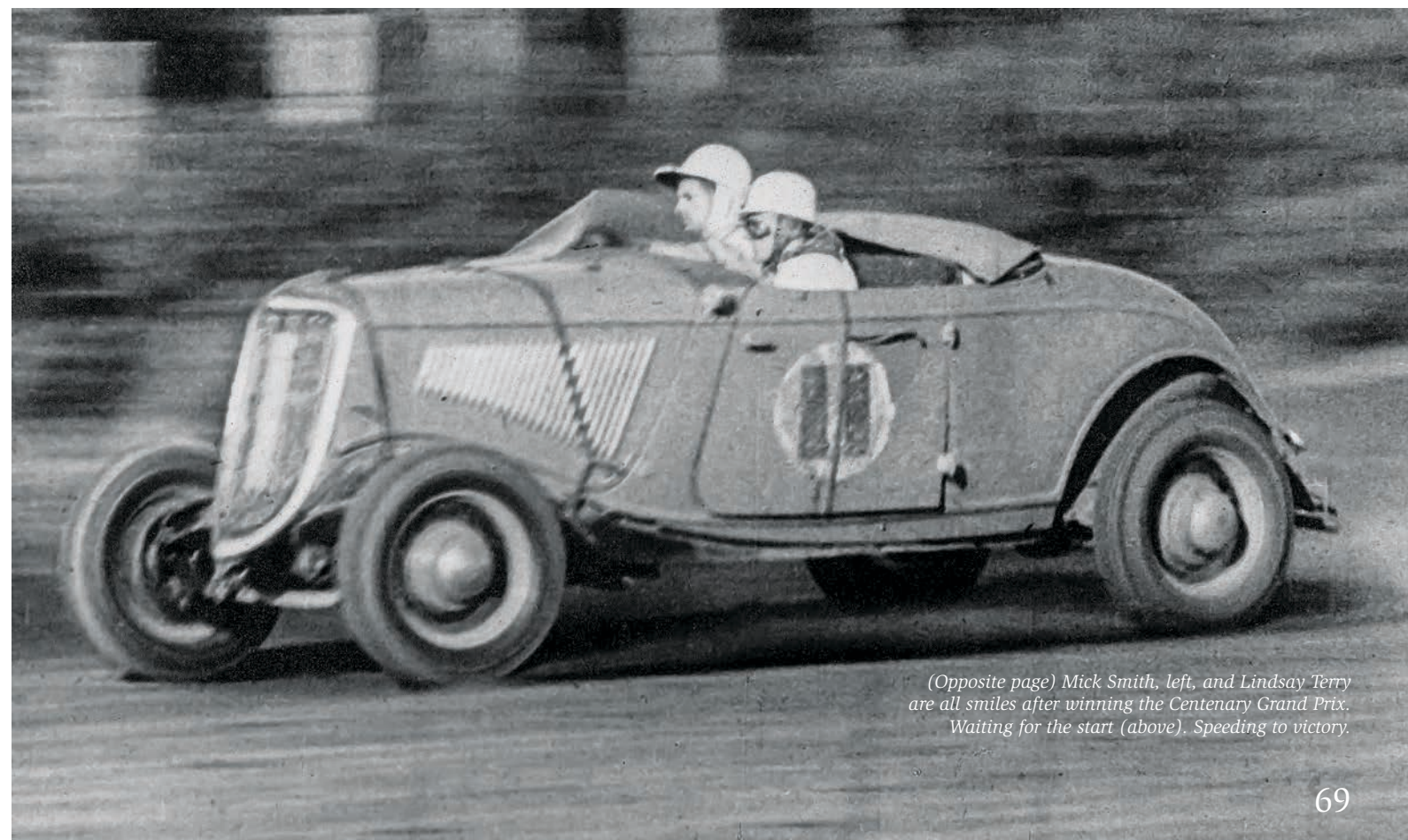
But after being stripped of its mudguards, running boards, windscreen, roof, bumpers, rear-mounted spare wheel, rumble seat, headlights and taillights it was transformed into a race winner.

The Victorian Centenary Grand Prix was an official event on the centenary program commemorating the landing of the Henty family who crossed from Tasmania and settled at Portland in the state's west in 1834 becoming Victoria's first settlers.

It was a one-off race, not to be confused with the Australian Grand Prix, which was an annual race also run at Phillip Island from 1928 to 1935.

Run over 35 laps of the same rough and rutted 6 ½-mile (10.5 km) rectangular public road circuit as the Australian Grand Prix, a total distance of 235 miles (378 km), the race was 35 miles or 5 ½ laps longer than the AGP, which made it the longest and toughest road race in Australia.

**The win by Mick Smith and Lindsay Terry rocked the motor racing establishment to its very core.**



*(Opposite page) Mick Smith, left, and Lindsay Terry are all smiles after winning the Centenary Grand Prix. Waiting for the start (above). Speeding to victory.*



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**Rare Metal Beauty:**  
Mark Koster's '34 Plymouth Coupe

**Deuce of Hearts:**  
Steven and Kathleen Alldrick's '32 Tudor

**Eddie Ford:**  
Rod Father





# Australian Hot Rodder

Number Five

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Before the arrival of the digital age hot rodders in the 1950s and '60s corresponded with letters.

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Publisher and Editor: **Graham Smith**

Inspirator: **Geoff Paradise**

Contributing Editor: **David Cook**

Copy Editor: **Dr John Wright**

Photographers: **EDP, Mark Bean**

Contributing Photographers: **David Cook, Ray Finneran**

Art Director: **Helen Wilson** ([www.logopogo.biz](http://www.logopogo.biz))

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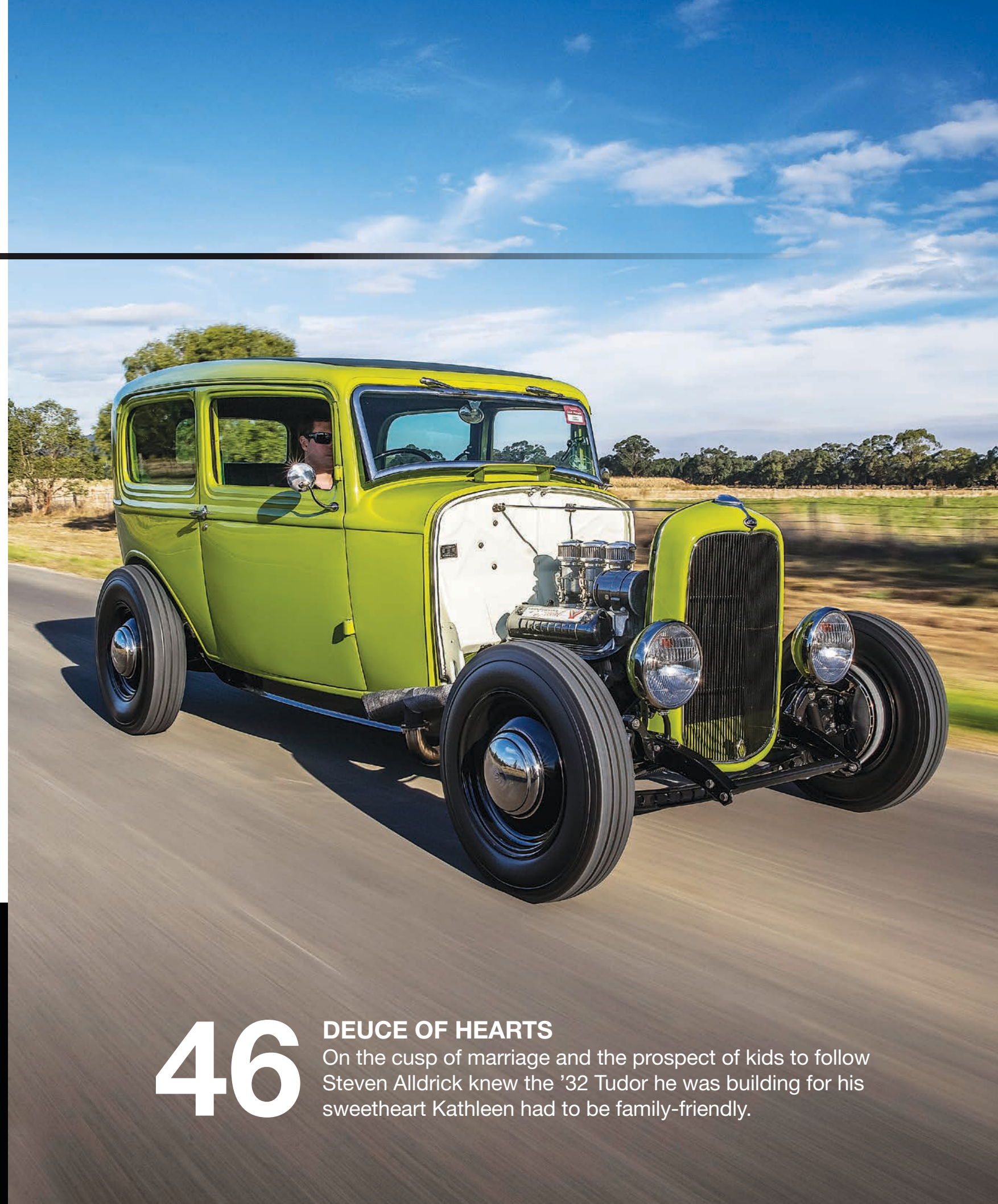
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# 46

## DEUCE OF HEARTS

On the cusp of marriage and the prospect of kids to follow Steven Alldrick knew the '32 Tudor he was building for his sweetheart Kathleen had to be family-friendly.



# RARE METAL BEAUTY

Some might think Mark Koster's '34 Plymouth isn't finished, others reckon it's perfectly finished.

*By Graham Smith  
Photography by EDP*





People regularly ask Mark Koster when he’s going to paint his coupe. The short answer is that he isn’t, the longer one is that he might ... well, maybe ... perhaps ... one day.

It was never his intention to leave the rare ’34 Plymouth three-window coupe in bare metal, he was going to finish it in gold metalflake like a ’60s show car, but it looked so good when the bodywork was done that he just couldn’t bring himself to cover it up.

And why would you when you and your mates have just spent months painstakingly massaging and smoothing virtually every panel, transforming it into a stunning beauty.

The Holden-bodied PE Plymouth first appeared on the 45-year-old building contractor’s radar in 2010 when he saw it advertised for sale in *Just Cars* magazine. He liked ’34 coupes, both Ford and Chevrolet, but the Plymouth was different, and that appealed to him.

“I loved the ZZ Top Eliminator coupe when I was a teenager and I was looking for a ’34,” he told *AHR*. “But ’34 Fords were common, and there were lots of ’34 Chevs as well.”

In contrast, the ’34 Plymouth was rare, particularly the three-window Deluxe coupe, which was only made here in Australia. Not even the Americans had them; they had to make do with a five-window coupe.

Adding to its appeal was the knowledge that only 94 of them were originally made. Koster has only been able to locate one other restored car in Victoria, and he believes there could as few as three or four left in total. In hot rodding terms it appears his is unique.

A previous owner had hot rodged it back in the 1980s, but it was never finished and when Mark went to look at it in Hastings on the Mornington Peninsula near Melbourne it was in bits and pieces.

It had a 350 small-block Chev V8 and THM400 auto transmission, the chassis had been modified to suit, and the suspension was a mix of Holden front-end and Jaguar rear.

It was all there, Koster was told, and all he had to do was to put it back together. “I thought I was onto a rare thing, so I thought I’d give it a go,” he said.

Subsequent research told him that it had once been cut down into a ute and used as a farm workhorse before Melbourne hot rodder John Bacon bought it and began rebuilding it into a hot rod.

Bacon happened to live near Koster’s factory in Melbourne’s north, and he couldn’t believe his eyes when he saw his old coupe for the first time in more than 20 years after the two met.

Not only was Bacon able to tell the Plymouth’s new owner that he was the one who had fitted the small-block, auto, and Holden and Jaguar suspensions, but he was also able to give him a couple of photos of the car taken at the 1986 Victorian Hot Rod Show when he had shown it unfinished.

After the show Bacon pulled it apart again and painted and detailed the chassis, but before he got it finished he swapped it for another car and it disappeared off the radar for a number of years before resurfacing in *Just Cars* magazine.

The new owner did little on it in the 10 years he owned it before putting it up for sale.

Unfortunately, his claim that it only needed putting back together fell well short of reality as Koster soon discovered when he began pulling it down.

“I really learned a valuable lesson about buying someone else’s project,” he said. “Other people never do things the way you would do them yourself.”

There was no option, he soon realised, but to start again and do it his way.

Although he’d never owned a hot rod before, Koster wasn’t a rookie when it comes to hot cars.

As a kid he’d dreamt of having a T-bucket like those he’d seen in TV shows like *The Munsters*.

“The T-bucket was my idea of a hot rod when I was a kid,” he said. “I was always drawing them and wanted to do one when I was old enough.”

By the time he reached driving age the ’56 Customline had replaced the T-bucket as his dream car, but his father thought it foolish to sink money into old cars and instead encouraged him to buy something more modern, something ‘sensible’ like a HZ Holden Premier wagon.

After a general clean up, an engine rebuild, and a new paint job the HZ was a nice tidy cruiser.

Next came a street driven turbocharged Holden Gemini coupe that turned 11-second quarters and regularly thrashed V8s when he came up against them.

“It was a quick car,” he said. “No one believed that a four-cylinder car could smash a V8, but it did.”

A hopped-up EK Holden wagon followed the Gemini, but when family became his priority after the EK was sold he had to sideline his interest in cars.

Just 94  
three-window  
’34 Plymouth  
Deluxe  
coupes were  
made in total.



Bare metal finish is carried over to interior where it's complemented with black trim, cool shift lever and original Art Deco Plymouth dials.





The only engine that could adequately fill the Plymouth's huge engine bay was a Hemi.

*Original Enderle stack fuel-injection gives the 392 Hemi the vintage look Koster wanted, while electronic conversion gives it modern convenience. Mickey Thompson rocker covers add to the old-time appeal.*



# ROD FATHER

In Part One of our  
Eddie Ford story we  
look at his start in hot  
rodding and two of his  
early hot rods.

*By Graham Smith  
Photography by EDP, Eddie Ford collection*





local wrecking yard and brackets were used to attach it to the wooden body frame.

The cowl was smoothed and extended and the cowl sides were filled, and a new, flat firewall was fitted.

A '32 grille was considered essential for any hot rod, but they weren't easy to find then and it took Eddie three years to track one down. Having found one he took a slice out of it to match the coupe's low profile and filled it with a custom grille made up of fine horizontal bars and a '58 Edsel grille.

Fred Steele, an American hot rodder Eddie corresponded with sent it out as a joke, but it looked so unique when it was hung in front of the grille it was decided to adapt it to fit.

Small Jeep headlamps fitted with 5-inch sealed beams were mounted on the front shock absorber brackets and a short nerf bar was run across the front of the car.

A couple of '58 Chevrolet taillights were mounted on the rear and the registration plate was set into the panel between them.

After having problems with the Kelly Green metalflake following the first attempt at painting it John Norton was enlisted to successfully paint it at the second attempt.

The steel wheels were reversed and chromed. They were

13-inch at the front and 14-inch at the rear with 6.40 x 13 and 7.50 x 14 whitewall conventional tyres respectively, and fitted with baby Moon caps.

Cycle guards were mounted at the front and the rear guards were new trailer units modified to fit.

Inside, a '54 Customline dash and dials were set into the original '34 panel and the panel was chromed, the trim was done in rolled and pleated white doehide vinyl, the floor covering was gold nylon carpet, and the roof opening was filled with green tinted plexiglass.

The coupe was essentially ready for the road in mid-1966, but registration was put on hold while Eddie and his mates, Peter Swift and Barry Fletcher, went on an extended six-month tour of America.

When he returned early in January 1967 he brought with him a Thunderbird four-barrel manifold and carburettor and they were fitted to the Y-block, along with a bug catcher air cleaner, and custom exhaust headers.

The coupe was registered later that year, but just three years later it was sold when Eddie needed cash to help fund the purchase of an adjoining farm with his brother.

## THE AMERICAN CONNECTION

In the 1950s you had to go to specialist bookshops like the Technical Book & Magazine Company's store in Melbourne to buy hot magazines, but by the early-'60s they were more widely available through newsagents and Eddie was eagerly devouring every issue as they appeared at his local store.

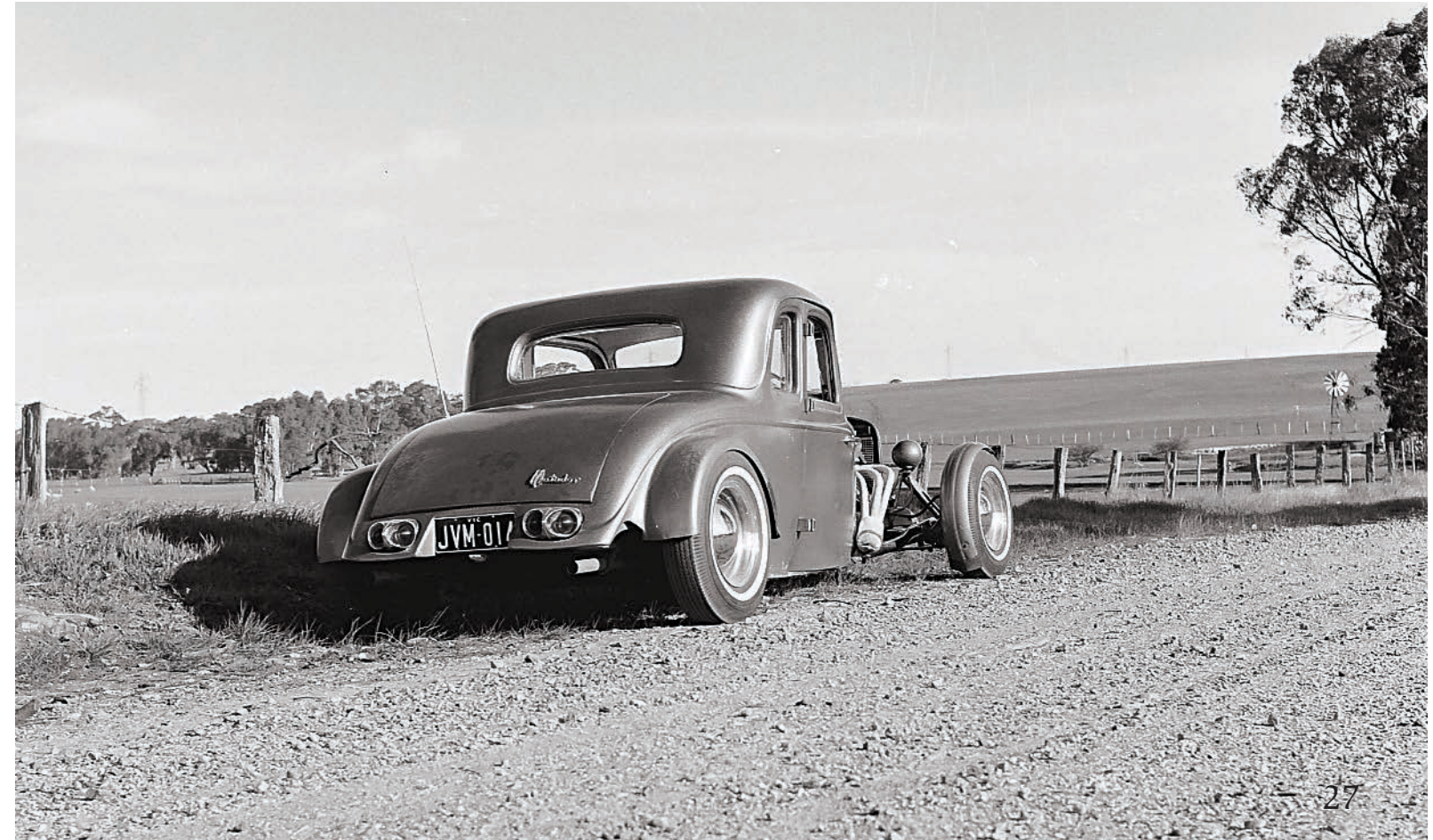
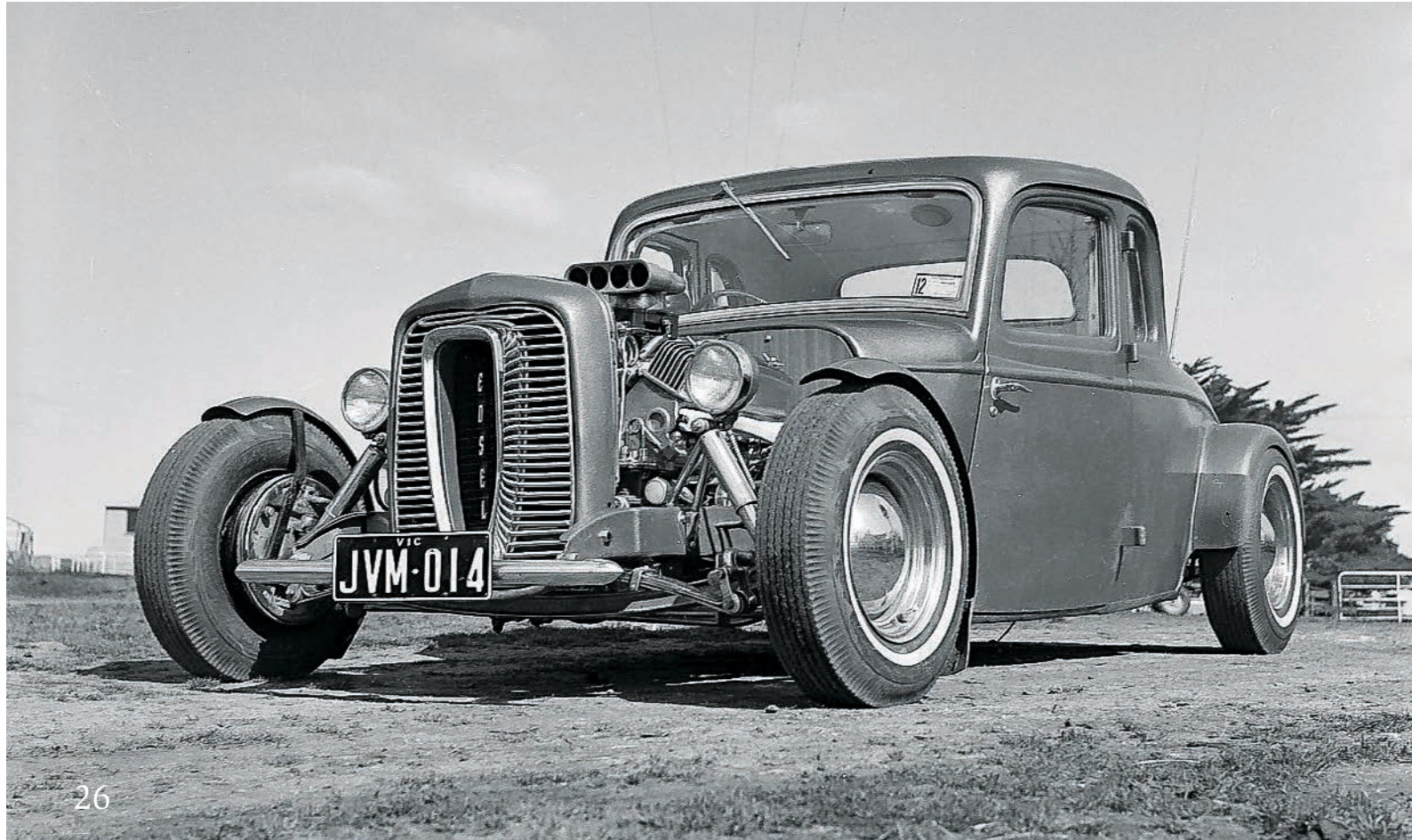
But while the magazines were good they didn't show the sort of detail Eddie wanted to see, the sort of detail that showed him how Americans built their cars and what they used to do it.

A new magazine titled *Popular Hot Rodding* arrived in 1962 and gave him an idea. The photographs in the magazine, particularly the colour shots on the cover, were much clearer and showed the cars in much greater detail than any other magazine at the time, which gave Eddie the idea of finding an American hot rodder who would be willing to swap colour slides with him.

"You could project colour slides really large on the wall and you could see incredible detail," he said.

From the moment he saw his first hot rod magazine in 1957 Eddie wanted a '32 coupe.

*The '34 coupe shortly after it was registered. Note the Edsel grille (opp. page) that was fitted as a joke, and the '58 Chev taillights.*





# DEUCE OF HEARTS

Steven and Kathleen Alldrick were looking to the future when they decided to build their family-friendly Tudor.

*By Graham Smith  
Photography by EDP*





His mother, Barb, came to his aid and helped out with the bond on his factory and paid the first two months rent, and friends gave him work to get started.

That was 2010 and the Deluxe Rod Shop was born in a small factory in Lilydale.

At first he was totally focused on building the business and repaying his mother, working long hours and weekends building hot rods for customers, but in 2011 he decided it was time to build Kathleen's dream car.

His plan was to have it finished within a year, which would have seen it on the road by the end of 2012, but with more and more paying customer work arriving at his shop, and a move to new, larger premises, work on the Tudor stalled and it became clear that he wouldn't meet his self-imposed deadline.

Feeling like he was letting Kathleen down he made a new vow to have the car ready in time for their wedding, then only a few months away in the following April.

At that time the car was little more than a rolling chassis, there was no engine, and the body was sitting in the corner of the shop in primer.

"I told myself I had to get it done, no matter what," he said. "So for the next few months we didn't go on any rod runs or swap meets, we just stayed at home and spent every spare minute working on the car."

The weeks leading up to the wedding became frantic, and friends and family pitched in to help get it finished in time. Everything was looking good, until he went to start the engine for the first time and discovered it was terminally unwell.

It turned out that there were problems with the machining of the engine and it locked up. If that wasn't enough to ruin his day the screws securing the butterfly in one of the carburettors came loose and the butterfly and screws all dropped into the engine, damaging the heads.

Steven was gutted, his dream of Kathleen being driven to the wedding in the car and stepping out in her wedding dress was apparently in tatters, and he eased up on the build.

"I told the boys just to put it together so it looked right instead of trying to make it a driver," he said.

But all was not lost and while Kathleen arrived in Steven's '34 roadster, the Tudor was there too, sitting silently in the background.

While he might be the son of a gun hot rod builder and the proprietor of one of the hottest new rod shops in the land with a growing reputation for building award-winning cars, it doesn't mean Steven has money to burn on his own cars. Building the Tudor was a labour of love and had to be done on a shoestring budget and out of shop hours so it didn't impact on the business.

There was no money to spend up big on new repro parts or splash out on cool bits and pieces on eBay, he had to spend his money wisely on parts he could afford, or sell or trade parts for those he wanted.

The concept of the Tudor was simple, it had to look and sound like a hot rod, but with an underlying old-time theme.

It was also important to him that it was seen as genuine factory steel, that it couldn't be mistaken for a repro.

To achieve that it had to be as true as possible to what would have come from the Ford factory in 1932, and things like chassis rivets, visible spot welds, body joins, swages, and drip gutters all had to be there to be seen.

"People ask me why I didn't bog up the joins in the sills," he said. "I purposely left them in because that's the way Ford did it."

It's pretty obvious that the doors aren't a perfect fit, but that's not because of shoddy work, it's because he was happy for them to reflect the factory fit.

"I wanted all the unevenness that it would have originally had," he said.

The end result is that some might dismiss the car as less than perfect, but those who know understand the thinking behind it. Its flaws give it an appealing authenticity. "I was hell-bent on keeping it Henry Ford," he said.

The body was in such bad shape when he got it that few thought it could be fixed when they saw it.

"When Dean (Bassett) picked it up with a forklift to load it on the trailer it was flopping all over the place," he said. "Even Kathleen doubted I would be able to fix it."

To the surprise of many the body was soon taking shape; the floor was fitted, so too were the wheel arches, new inner sills were bought and fitted, the crushed rain gutters were repaired, new door skins were wheeled up, new bottoms were made for the doors, the right-hand side of the cowl was replaced, and a new reproduction stock firewall was in place.

The body had to appear stock, so there was no thought of

**"Everyone  
sells their  
roadsters  
or coupes  
when they  
have kids."**

*Steven Alldrick*



*Late model 5.0-litre V8 has cool old-timey look with Edelbrock alloy heads, a trio of Edelbrock 94 carbs on an Edelbrock manifold, wrapped headers, and look-alike Y-block rocker covers.*



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**Australian**  
**Hot Rodder**

*Dedicated to Australia's Hot Rod Heritage*



# **Australian** **Hot Rodder**

Number Six  
\$29.95

*Dedicated to Australia's Hot Rod Heritage*



**Ace Of Tubs:** Peter Ingram's Deuce Tourer

**Swift Tee:** Peter Swift's Classic Bucket

**Ross Supple:** A Quiet Achiever

**Eddie Ford:** Custom Rodder



# Australian Hot Rodder

Number Six

# 118

## OLD SCHOOL COOL

'glass is fine for some folks, but when Leigh Priggen set out to build his old school Deuce coupe it just had to be genuine Henry Ford steel.

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Few cars attract as much attention as Len Case's cute little T-bucket.

*Publisher and Editor:* **Graham Smith**

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# SWIFT TEE

In Australia in the mid-'60s there was no finer example of the hot rodder's craft than Peter Swift's T-bucket.

*By Graham Smith  
Photography by EDP, Eddie Ford collection*



inside of the tub was done in the same colour and pattern, and red carpet covered the floor.

A white-rimmed Covico steering wheel was bought from Bill Warner's Sydney speed shop and mounted on the '38 Chevrolet steering column.

An array of dials – ammeter, coolant temperature, oil temperature, oil pressure, vacuum, speedo and tacho – was spread across the woodgrain-veneered plywood fascia. Had he been able to afford them they would have been Stewart Warner gauges, but he had to settle for a mix of Smiths and VDO dials.

The '39 shift lever snakes up out of the floor and back towards the driver, and it's topped with a knob in the form of a clenched fist that came off a slow combustion stove on a neighbouring farm to Ford's.

With the car close to being finished it was time to start and tune the engine, but apart from once when they did manage to get it running when they towed it around the Ford farm no amount of trying could coax it into life again.

Even though it wasn't a runner, and the clutch and brakes weren't working, it was still judged the Top Roadster and the Best Engineered hot rod in the 1965 Victorian Hot Rod Show.

With its slick black paint, white pin striping, extensive use of chrome, brilliant red trim, and Dodge engine it was a cut above the regular hot rod of the day.

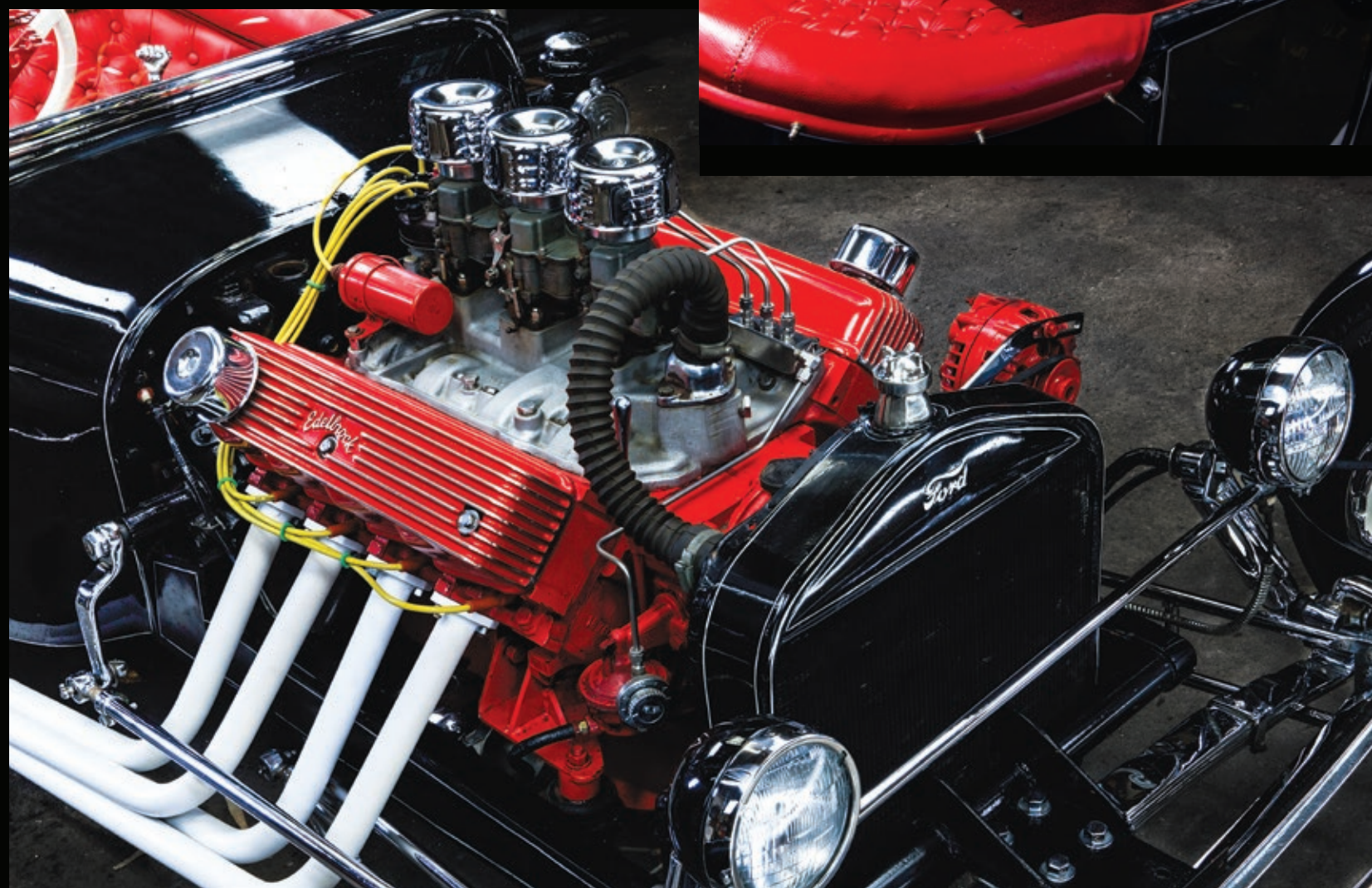
But it wasn't until he got to America in 1966 when he, Eddie and Barry Fletcher went on a six-month journey of discovery to see hot rodding in its heartland that he realised just how good the bucket was.

Believing the cars featured in the American hot rodding magazines were just regular, everyday hot rods Eddie and Swifty set out to build their cars to the same standard, but little did they know until they got there that they were actually the top hot rods of the day, that the average American hot rod was much rougher.

"We were striving to build cars like those we saw in the American magazines," Swifty said. "When we got to America we realised they were the cream of the crop,"

Before leaving on their trip in the middle of 1966 the bucket was moved into the garage at his parents' home and it remained there until his return early in 1967.

*Having an overhead valve engine like the tri-carb Chrysler V8 was rare for a cash-strapped hot rodder in the 1960s.*



*"Eddie (Ford) and I were striving to build cars like those we saw in the American magazines."*

*Peter Swift*



When he did return home he brought with him an intake manifold Phil Weiland had given to him, an Autolite four-barrel carburettor, Cal Custom scoop, and a W&H Du-Coil dual-coil distributor he also got from Weiland.

Off came the Edelbrock manifold, triple 97s and progressive linkage and they were sold, on in their place went the Weiland manifold and Autolite carburettor.

The original Mopar distributor also came out and was replaced by the Du-Coil distributor. Again he attempted to start the engine, but again it refused to fire.

"We towed it all around Castlemaine behind a mate's HD Holden Premier, but we couldn't get it going," he said.

It was decided then to take the heads off, when to his horror he discovered a hole in the top of one of the pistons. The engine had clearly been hammered in the truck, it was very tired and a rebuild was in order.

A call was made to Fred Steele, a hot rodder Swifty and the crew met on their American trip, asking him to help find a set of replacement pistons and rings.

Peter tried to order them direct from JC Witney, a well-known auto parts and accessories supplier in the USA, but they wouldn't ship to an address outside America. The solution was to have them shipped to Steele in Massachusetts and then somehow get them sent to Australia.

That problem was solved when Peter's father, Bob, also a Thompson's employee, went to the USA on a fact-finding mission for his employer and was able to pick them up from Steele and bring them home in his luggage.

The pistons were stock for a 318 poly head V8 bought with the idea of boring it out to 318 cubic inches in the rebuild.

A mate, Geoff Randall, was working at Motor Improvements in Melbourne, and he took the block, crank and heads to work with him where he rebored the block to 318 cubic inches, ground the crank and refurbished the heads.

But even with all that done little progress was made on





# ACE OF TUBS

It is hard to imagine a more perfect expression of the hot rodder's art than Peter Ingram's Deuce tub.

*By Graham Smith  
Photography by EDP*





HQ Holden steering box and Rod City linkage.

The rolling stock consisted of 15-inch LTD steel wheels painted red and wrapped in whitewalls, and finished with chrome Moon spinner caps.

The tourer's body was in pretty decent shape considering its age, but there was a little rust at the bottom of the centre pillars, and the lower sections of most of the panels were peppered with tiny rust holes.

Deuce Custom's Ken Brownlee was given the task of doing the bodywork. Ken was just starting out making fibreglass bodies at the time and was steeling them out, so it seemed logical that he should steel out the tub body and do what repairs and modifications were required.

Peter's guiding image throughout the build was the Doane Spencer highboy roadster, but being a tourer he reckoned the body had to be channelled to get a low-line look and stance similar to Spencer's car.

Consequently it was channelled 2 ¼ inches at the firewall and 1 ¾ inches at the rear of the tub, but channelling it wasn't simply a question of lowering the body over the chassis until it was at the height that gave him the look he wanted.

Once it was lowered the lower swages that ran around the bottom edge of the body had to be reworked or remade so they all lined up again.

The swage over the fuel tank across the rear of the tub, for instance, disappeared altogether and had to be remade. Then the swages around the rear wheel arches had to be remade higher so they mated with the new swage on the rear.

It was a similar deal at the front where the original '32 grille shell was cut away at the sides so it could be lowered to match the new lower profile of the body.

Then the bonnet sides had to be pie-cut to suit the new body profile, but that raised the swages along the lower edges of the bonnet sides, causing a mismatch with the swages on the lower edges of the cowl. To fix that the cowl swages were kicked up so they lined up with the swages on the bonnet.

A DuVall windscreen was a fundamental part of the build, Doane Spencer's roadster had one and it was one of the things that grabbed his attention when he saw the Vicky in the magazine that inspired him to build the tub.

Major surgery was required on the cowl to fit the DuVall



windscreen. It had to be filled, the swage across the top where the original windscreen butted up against it also had to be taken out, so too did the mounting pads for the windscreen posts.

It was one of the first, if not the very first, hot rod in Australia to have a DuVall windscreen. It was so rare at the time that people thought it was a speedboat windscreen.

The doors were also smoothed and the original handles removed.

There are two floors, the main floor panel that sits on top of the support framing, and a false one between the floor frame and the chassis that hides the frame from view, and the gap between the floors is filled with insulation.

With the chassis and bodywork completed the tub was returned to Albury where it went to the late Alex Maric to complete the build.

While he'd built plenty of cars in the past Peter felt that the tub warranted a more professional finish than he could achieve.

"My level of hot rodding was angle iron and stick welding," he said. "I did what I could do, but with this being the car of my dreams I thought it needed something better, and Alex

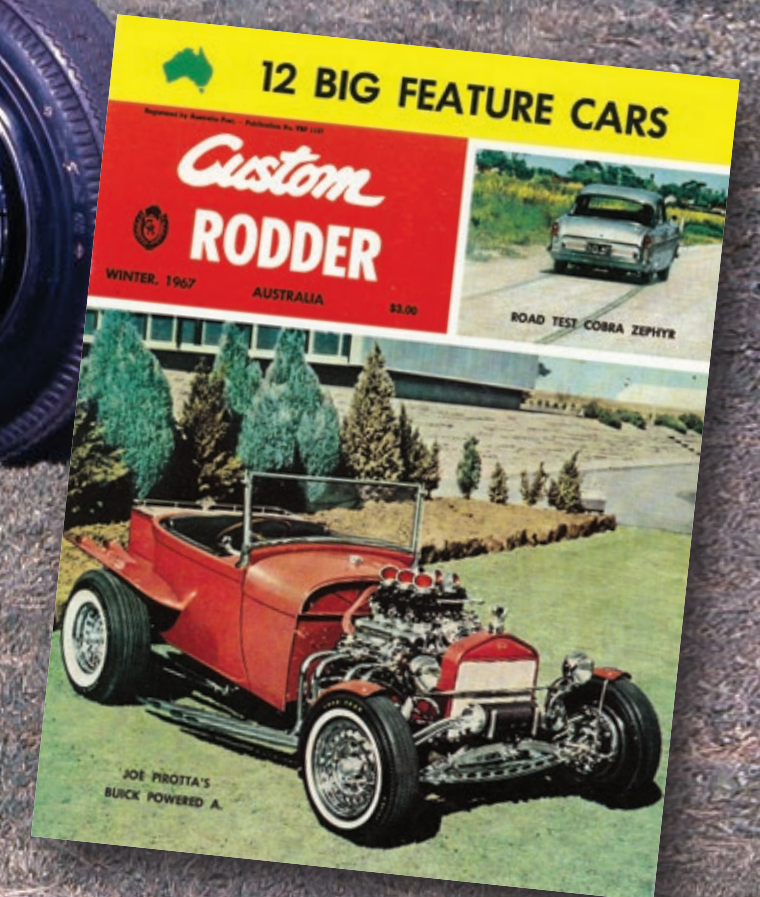
*Everything on the tub blends harmoniously into a perfectly balanced whole with nothing out of place.*



# CUSTOM RODDER

Writer, photographer, illustrator, cartoonist, hot rodder, Eddie Ford was perfectly qualified to publish a hot rodding magazine.

*By Graham Smith  
Photography by EDP, Mark Bean, Eddie Ford collection*





cartoons, illustrations, and feature reports on hot rods and drag racing in Victoria. He and Swifty also began selling the magazine at Riverside when the drags were on.

While he credits Crouch with giving him his start in magazines, he lost interest in the *Digest* when it became clear to him that it was more focussed on speedway than hot rodding.

“I was more interested in hot rodding, so I didn’t think there was much future in it for me,” he said.

When *Australian Hot Rod* magazine appeared on newsstands in May 1964 Eddie was named as its Victorian representative, but he soon lost interest in that too.

“I worked for them for a couple of years, doing cartoons and sending them features on the drags, but I never got paid for anything,” he said.

After the disappointments of *Australian Hot Rod Digest* and *Australian Hot Rod* Eddie thought he’d finally struck gold when Jeff Dellow told him of a printer in Sydney who was keen to start a hot rod magazine, and that he could be the editor if wanted to be. Even better, he was told, he would be paid for his efforts.

The magazine was *Australian Rodding World*, but unfortunately it was a similar tale of all work and no pay.

“It sounded better, but it was the same old story,” he said.

Meanwhile, in Melbourne a car enthusiast named Craig Milne was equally frustrated with the standard of the magazines being produced here and was keen to do something himself.

He’d gone so far as to make a mock-up of the magazine he planned to call *Australian Rodder* using a story he’d written about Neil ‘Ned’ Kelly’s ’35 Ford coupe as a sample.

Having seen Eddie’s name in *Australian Hot Rod* Milne thought he might be interested in getting involved in the project. Eddie didn’t know Milne, or anything about him, he even now doubts that he was a genuine hot rodder, but what Milne had to say interested him.

“Hot rodders switched to us because the other magazines weren’t giving them what they wanted.”

*Eddie Ford*

“He called in to see me at the farm one day and said the other magazines weren’t doing it right,” said Eddie. “He said that we should do a magazine ourselves, and that I could be the editor.”

It sounded good to Eddie, but with one stipulation, it had to be modelled on the American hot rodding bible *HOT ROD Magazine*, even down to using the green coloured pages in the middle of the magazine.

As well as that, he told Milne he was about to leave on a six-month trip to America and it would have to wait until he got back.

“I couldn’t do anything immediately because I was going away,” he said. “Besides I knew I’d learn a whole lot in America, which would be invaluable when I got back.”

Eddie was well placed to learn about publishing hot rodding magazines. A couple of years earlier he had made contact with Dick Scritchfield, a Los Angeles hot rodder and founder of the L.A. Roadsters who worked at Petersen Publishing, the company that published *HOT ROD Magazine* and regularly corresponded with him. When Scritchfield heard Eddie and his mates, Swifty and Barry Fletcher, a member of the Melbourne Thunderbirds Rod & Custom Club,

were coming to California he invited them to come and stay with him.

When Eddie called in at the *HOT ROD Magazine* offices he was somewhat taken aback. Far from the grand operation he expected to find each of the many Petersen publications were contained in tiny cubicles within the large Petersen Building, with little more than a typewriter and a filing cabinet, and the staff shared the photographic darkroom with every other magazine in the group.

Visiting the companies that were advertising in Petersen’s publications further served to put it all into perspective for him.

“Many of the companies that ran large advertisements in the Petersen publications were little more than a hole in the wall when you called in at their premises,” he said.

With what he saw at Petersen’s and their advertisers he figured he could do something similar in a spare bedroom in the farmhouse on the family’s farm back home at South

Muckleford. In fact he reckoned he would have more room than the guys working on *HOT ROD Magazine*.

After six months touring America Eddie was all keyed-up to get going on the magazine when he landed back home in January 1967.

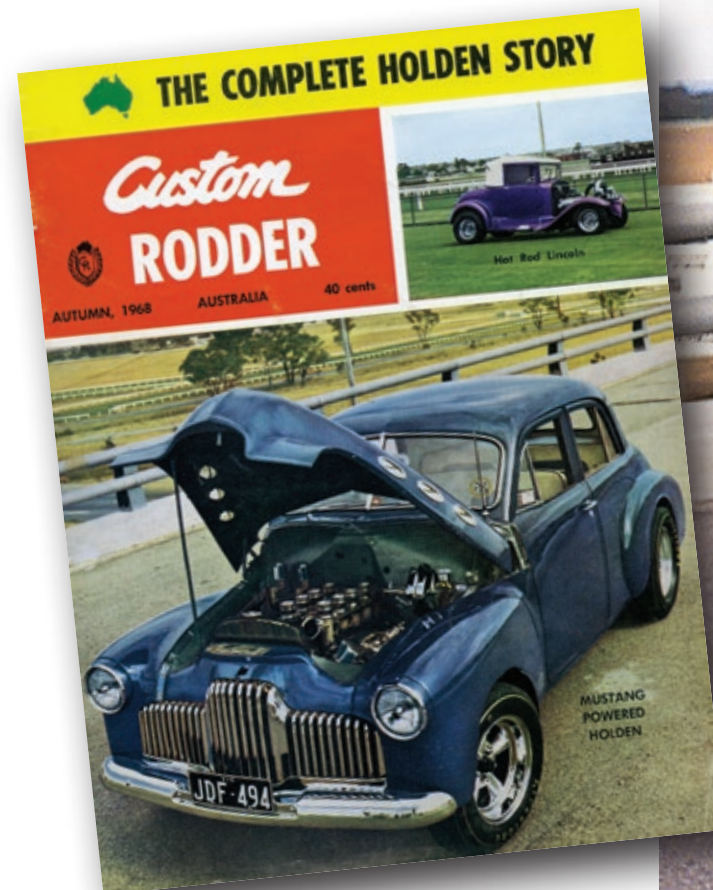
Unfortunately, he found he was on his own. Craig Milne, his partner-to-be had vanished and to this day Eddie doesn’t know what happened to him.

Peter Swift was initially interested in getting involved, but he wanted to buy a farm and didn’t have enough cash to do both, so he settled on the farm.

Jeff Dellow was also keen to come on board, and even better his father, Les, would help out by loaning them the money to pay for the first couple of issues, and they could pay it back as and when they could.

With the backing needed they went ahead with the first issue of what would be a called *Custom Rodder*.

*Sales of Custom Rodder soared when the V8 Holden of Joe Pirotta and Charlie Caruana appeared on the cover of Issue #4 in 1968.*





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