

Australian **Hot Rodder**

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Dedicated to Australia's Hot Rod Heritage



80 Years Young: Deuce Tribute

Eddie Thomas: Drag Racing Legend

Classic Beauty: Colin Bates' Cool '36 Coupe

Australian Hot Rodder

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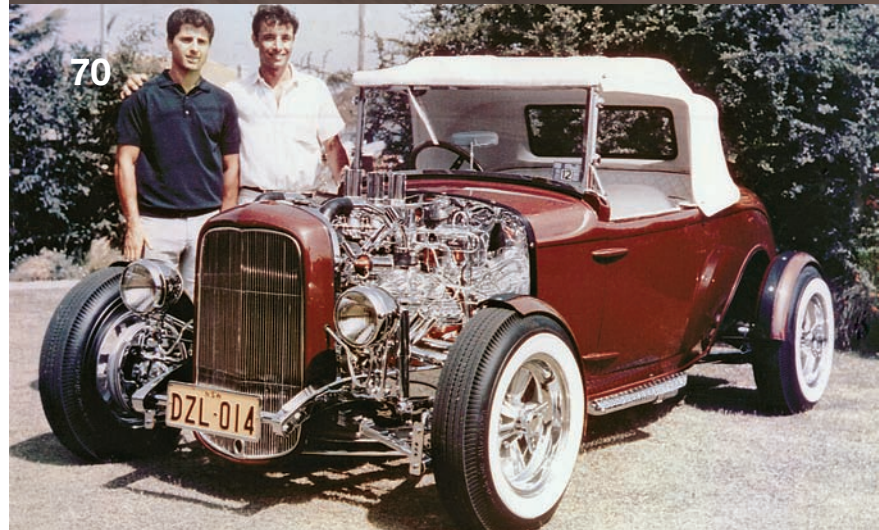
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DEPARTMENTS

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



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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.

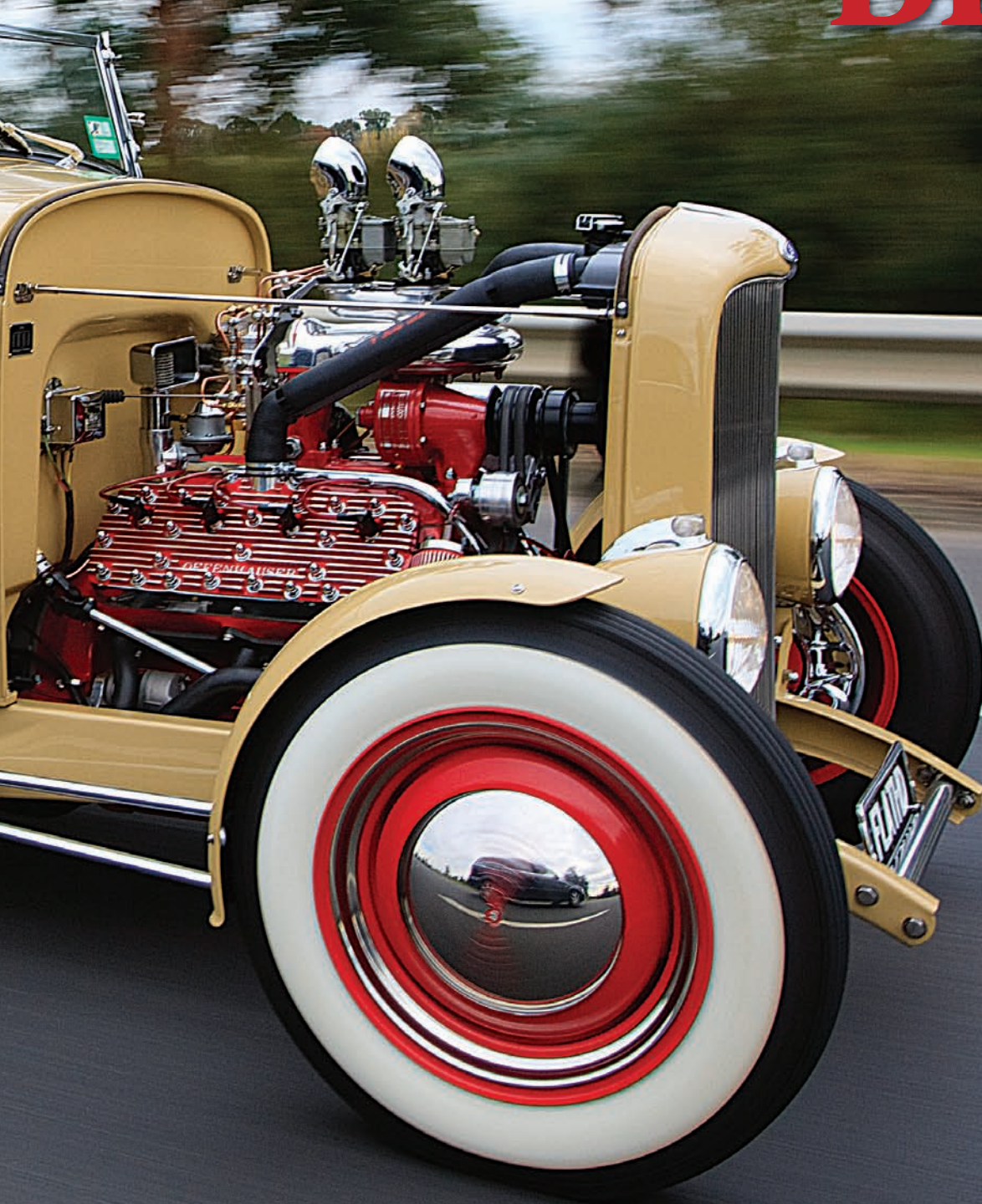
The '36 Ford appealed to Bates long before he bought the coupe in the 1970s. Three decades on it's still a favourite.



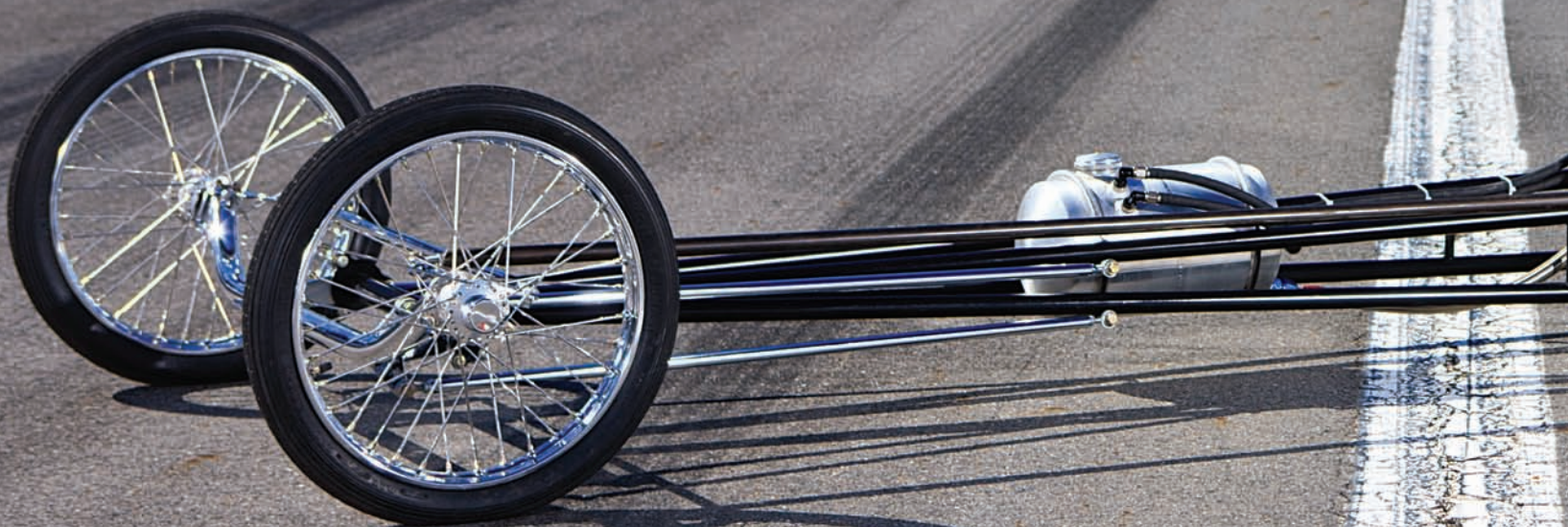
Some hot rods are tough, others are cool,
the Lil' Brown Deuce is simply sweet.

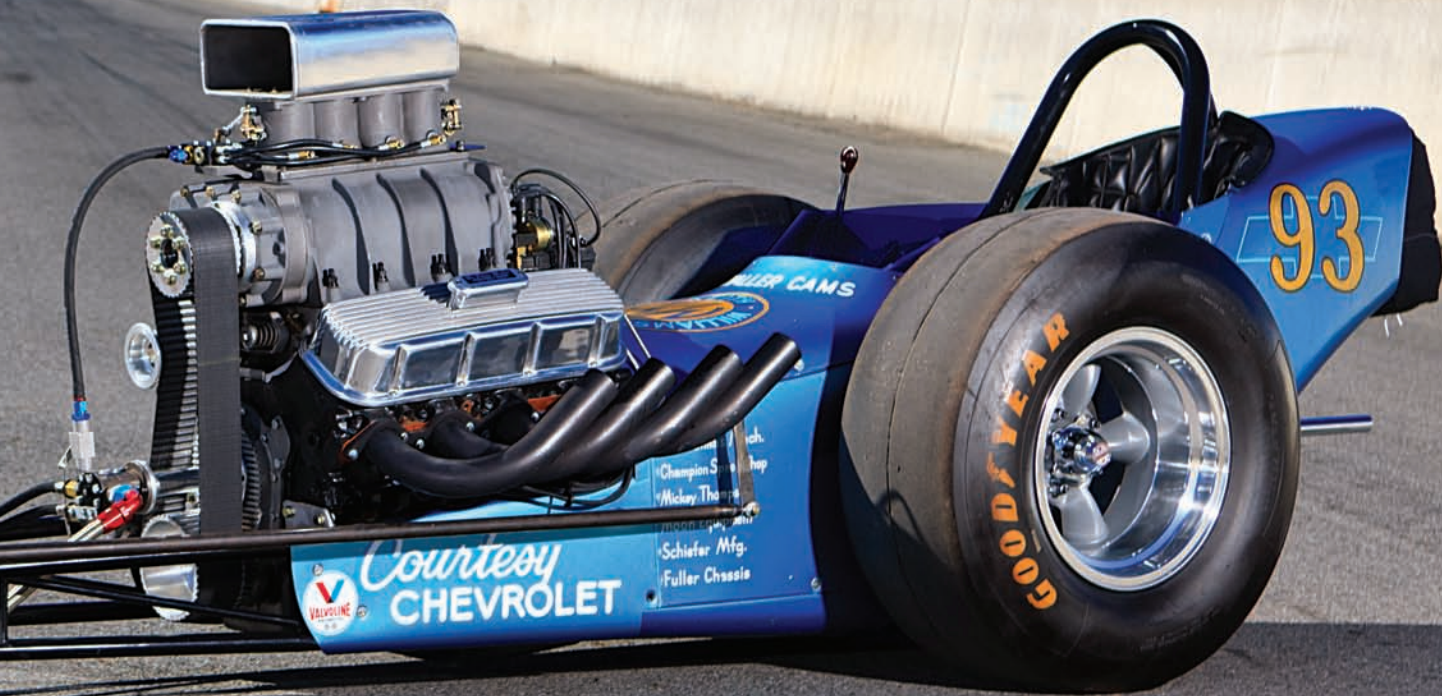
*By Graham Smith and Geoff Paradise
Photography by Ellen Dewar*

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.

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 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.

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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