

Australian **Hot Rodder**

Number Five
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Dedicated to Australia's Hot Rod Heritage

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

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DEPARTMENTS

4 KING PIN

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

FEATURES

6 RARE METAL BEAUTY

Mark Koster's '34 Plymouth coupe appears unfinished to some, but to others it's perfectly finished.

20 EDDIE FORD: ROD FATHER

Part One of our Eddie Ford story looks at his start in hot rodding and his early hot rods.

34 FLAT OUT

Mike Davidson aims to rewrite the flathead record book in his twin-engined streamliner.

46 DEUCE OF HEARTS

Building their '32 Tudor was a labour of love for Steven and Kathleen Alldrick.

58 INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

Peter Eames defied many of hot rodding's conventions in building the Green Hornet.

72 FIRST ELIMINATOR

It's 50 years since Jack 'Fizzball' Collins became the Top Eliminator at the first national drag racing titles.

86 RAZZLE DAZZLE

Charlie Pirotta took a new '56 Customline and turned it into a stunning work of art.

100 FAMILY TIES

Building their *American Graffiti* look-alike coupe was a bonding experience for Peter Leech and his daughter Jane.

114 TIMELESS TREASURE

Bill Wickes's Model A has been a hot rod for longer than it was a Henry Ford stocker.

126 TRAIL BLAZERS

Adelaide duo Alf Mullins and Ian Bell raised the bar in drag racing in the 1960s with their blown Chrysler rail.

140 ROARING '40

Neville Anderson's love for the '34 Ford knows no bounds.

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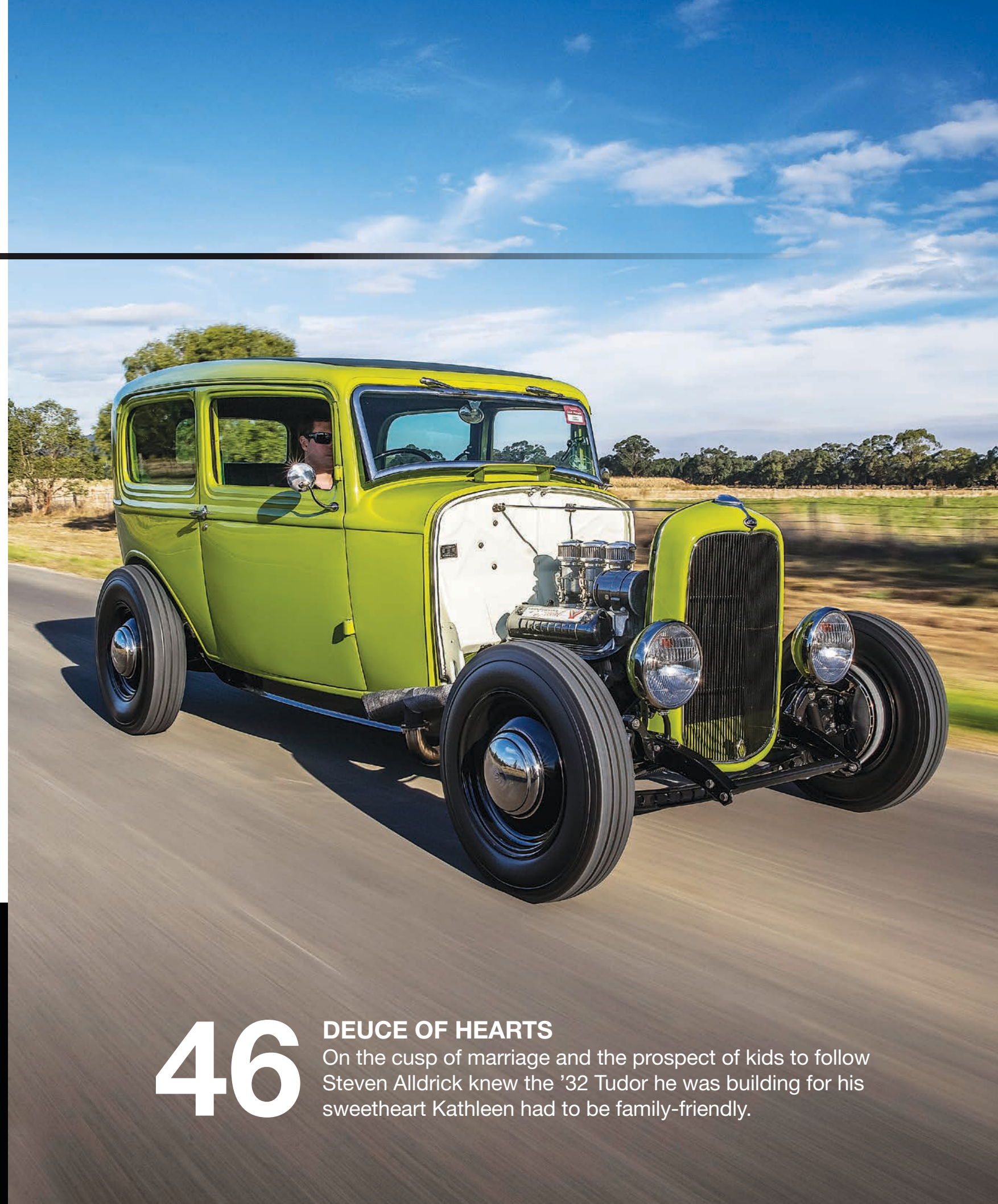
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46

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.

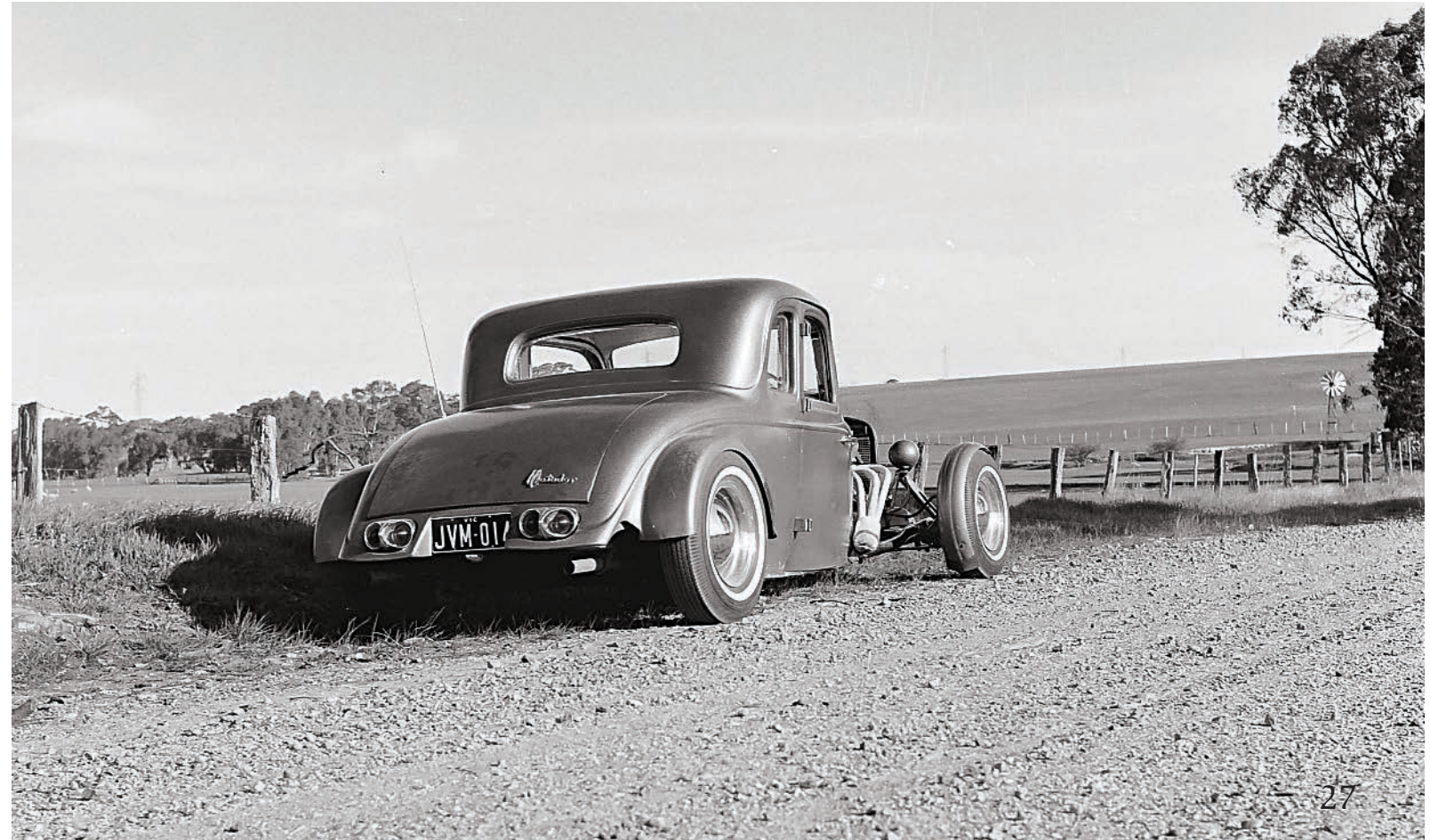
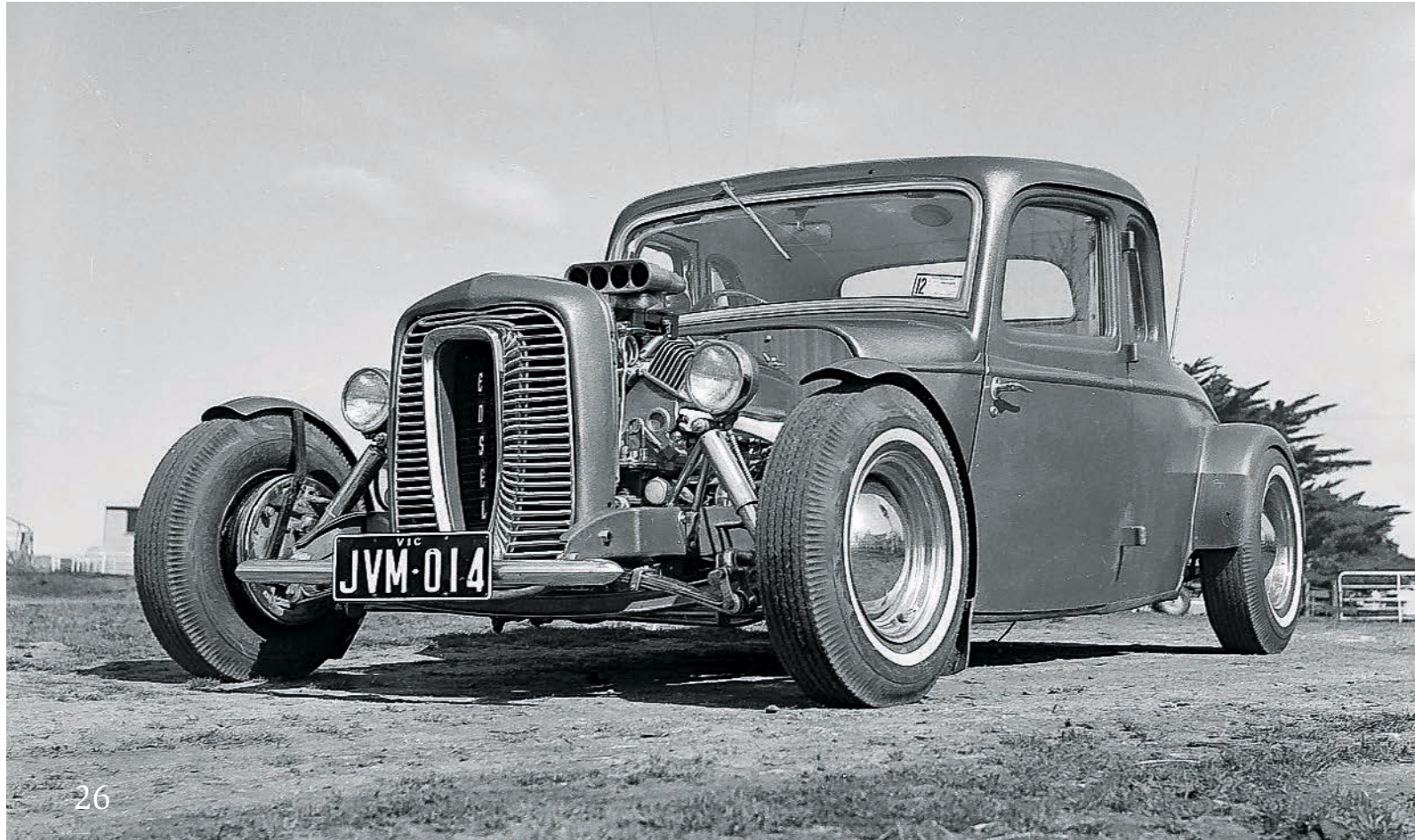
But while the magazines were good they didn't show the sort of detail Eddie wanted to see, the sort of detail that showed him how Americans built their cars and what they used to do it.

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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