

Australian **Hot Rodder**

Number Six
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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

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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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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.

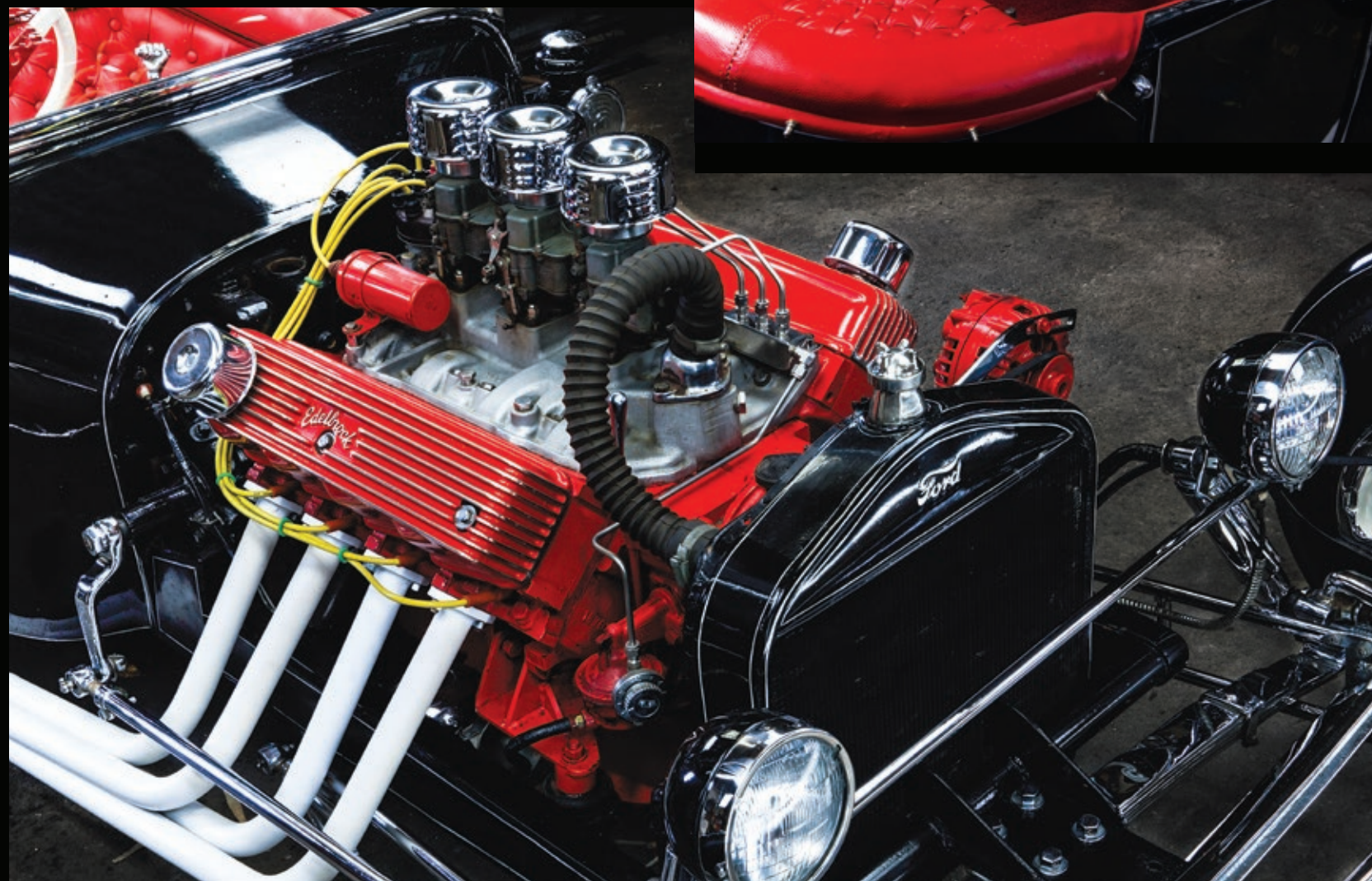
But it wasn't until he got to America in 1966 when he, Eddie and Barry Fletcher went on a six-month journey of discovery to see hot rodding in its heartland that he realised just how good the bucket was.

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*.

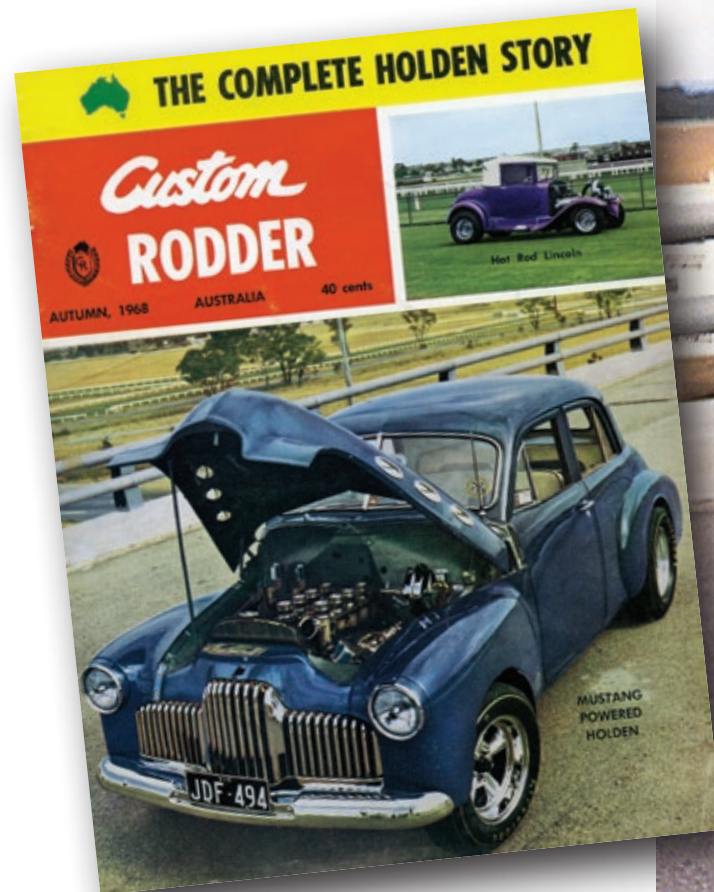
After six months touring America Eddie was all keyed-up to get going on the magazine when he landed back home in January 1967.

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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