

ENGAGING '32

One-Off Parts Were Instrumental to This Coupe's Design

Story by **Josh Kaylor**

Photography by **Josh Mishler**

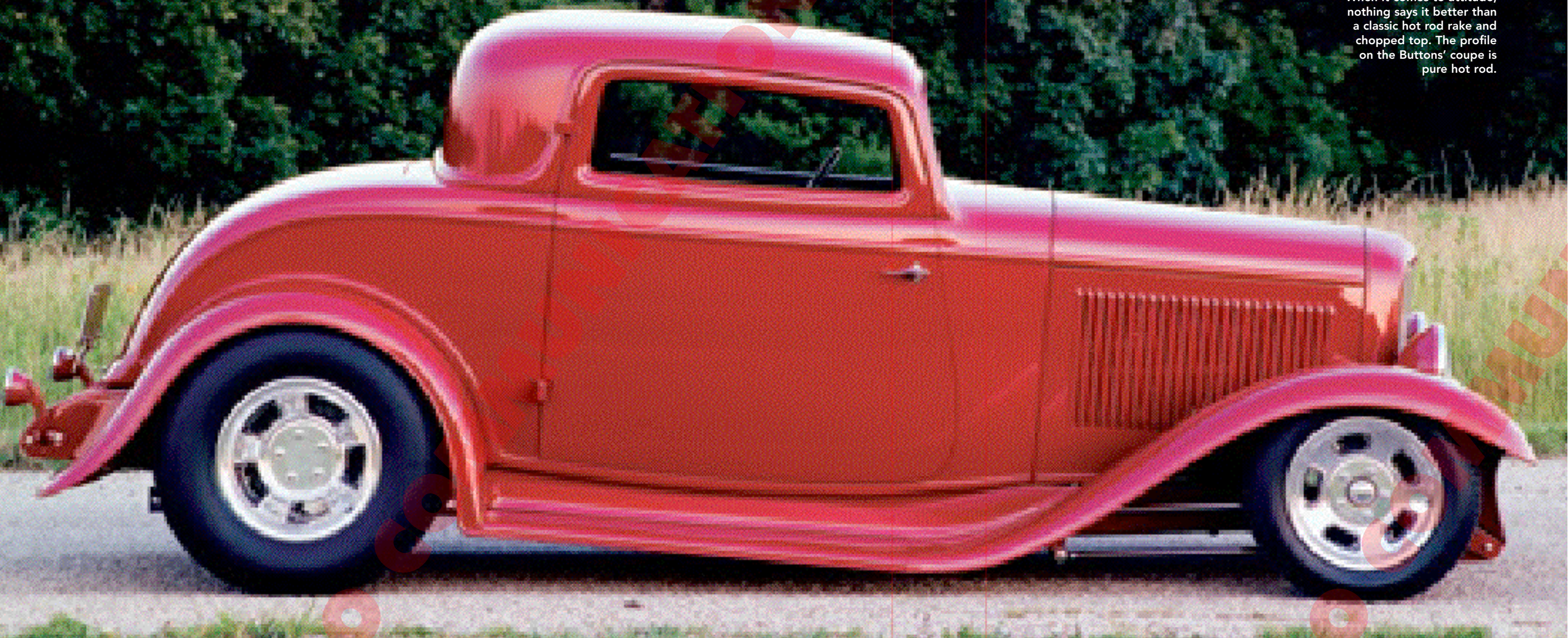


Loving street rods while growing up is something that we can all relate to, and it was no different for Alan Button. Growing up in O'Fallon, Missouri, one of Button's neighbors influenced him more than he could have ever imagined. After school, Alan would occasionally go to visit Tom Elkholdt, who always had some kind of hot rod project going on. Button met Tom and Jerry Elkholdt through Button's father's machine shop (now there's every hot rodder's dream—a Dad with a machine shop!), where Tom Elkholdt drove his big block-powered '37 Chevy coupe. That's where it all started, and it never left Button. Fast-forward a few years, and Button now owns and manages his own bodyshop. Meanwhile,

Elkholdt let Alan and his wife, Connie, know that he was moving to Arizona and wanted to sell a mint '32 Ford three-window coupe before the big move. He wanted to give Button the first shot at the coupe, and Button jumped at the chance to buy the Deuce. After striking a deal, the coupe came home to the Button garage, and they enjoyed the coupe for a few years before it was time for a serious build. That's where Dave Lane of Fastlane Rod Shop in Donahue, Iowa, enters the picture.

Once commissioned for the project, Dave Lane and the crew at Fastlane Rod Shop began the project by modifying the original frame. Since it was originally built by Bob Rothenberg and Boyd Coddington some years back using quality components, freshening up the frame was all that was required. The frame features American Stamping rails riding on a 4-inch dropped Super Bell axle, which is held in place by a chrome Pete & Jake's four-bar. A Durant mono-leaf spring combines with chrome shocks to provide a more enjoyable ride and better appearance. To keep the coupe headed in the right direction, Vega cross-steering was mounted and

raised in the frame for a little extra ground clearance. Everything up front received a coating of show-quality chrome done by The Chrome Shop in Rock Island, Illinois. Out back, a narrowed 9-inch Ford truck rearend carries 3.55 gears and is mounted using ladder bars. Pete & Jake's Viper coilover shocks provide rear suspension while the Total Cost Involved rear sway bar aids in the handling department. All the wiring for the coupe is routed through the framersails to keep everything clean. Wilwood cross-dilled brakes were outfitted on all four corners. To get the chassis rolling, a set of Eric Vaughn Real Wheels in vintage sizes was mounted. The



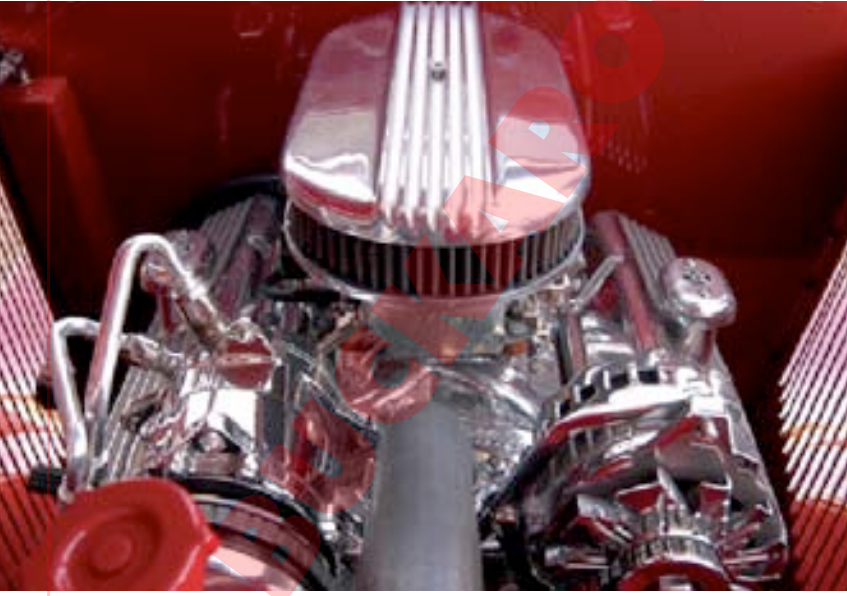
When it comes to attitude, nothing says it better than a classic hot rod rake and chopped top. The profile on the Buttons' coupe is pure hot rod.



TOP - Styled after the Ford V-8 of the early '30s, these gauges are the epitome of form and function. BOTTOM - Look closely at the V-8 emblem as it also functions as the speedo and tach needles. Josh Shaw and Dave Lane handled the design while Classic Instruments built the gauges.

wheels measure 14x6 inches up front and 15x10 inches out back with BFG rubber providing ample grip and that great big-'n'-little look.

When it came time to build the engine, Alan Button knew just which machine shop to use, and if you were thinking this was a family affair, you'd be correct. Amos Button of Button Machine, located in O'Fallon, Missouri, took a '70 Chevrolet 350 and punched it out to a 355. The block was stuffed with only the best, including TRW forged pistons, a 350hp Comp cam, and Chevrolet "pink" rods. The machine shop ported, polished and milled the heads 0.030 over to arrive at a final compression ratio of 10.5:1. An Edelbrock Air-Gap manifold delivers the air and gas mixture received from a Barry Grant Demon 650 carburetor. Ignition comes from Mallory, and the burnt exhaust gasses exit through HPC stainless block-hugger headers. A baffled Z28 oil pan was bolted to the underside of the motor, ensuring an ample supply of oil under all conditions. Button used a set of Moon polished valve covers and



BOTTOM LEFT - Under the hood, you'll find a clean and subtle engine with plenty of power on demand. This 355ci small block provides an impressive 375 hp that helps get the '32 moving down the road. BOTTOM RIGHT - Steve Pearson custom-made the seats specifically for the Buttons' coupe, and they provide ample comfort for the long drives to and from rod runs.

Anyone who has ever owned a coupe knows that space is at a premium. With that thought in mind, custom inserts were built into the side panels to make extra room inside the car.



Style flows throughout the car, and while the coupe remains somewhat understated, the attention to detail is second to none.

matching air cleaner to dress up the engine in traditional fashion. Putting dyno-proven 375 hp to the ground is a '69 Muncie four-speed built by Rob Jackson of O'Fallon, Missouri. A McLeod clutch and Dave Lane-modified Hurst shifter complete this real hot rod driveline.

With a completed chassis and potent engine between the rails, attention turned to massaging that '32 vintage sheetmetal. The three-window body was the original piece of the puzzle, and working with mint sheetmetal really helps when building a winning street rod such as this one. The coupe was treated to a 2-1/2-inch chop in the front, along with 2 inches taken out of the rear, which left just enough headroom but still provided a very cool look. Marcel's in Corona, California, filled the top. The hood received attention by being pie-cut 3/8 inch up front for a streamlined look. The rear of the car was cleaned up with a custom-built splash apron. The center door hinge was also removed, proving that less can be more. After all the modifications were completed, the team at Fastlane Rod Shop applied a slick coat of DuPont custom-mixed color and clearcoat. Larry

Utsinger at Kryger Glass installed all-new glass in the '32. In order to light the way ahead, a set of '33 Ford commercial-style head lamps by Jesse Greening was installed atop a chrome dropped headlight bar. Proving that some things simply can't be improved upon, the '32 Ford taillights are still in service.

With the body painted, attention turned to the interior, which carries the same level of detail as the rest of the car. Steve Pearson at Upholstery Unlimited built and upholstered the seats with beautiful pleated brown leather. The stock dash remains in the car but now features a set of one-off gauges by Classic Instruments with the famous Ford V-8 logo. The cool thing about the custom gauges is that the gauge pointers actually form the V-8 logo. Josh Shaw and Dave Lane collaborated on this design.

The '33 Ford column uses a modified '33 column drop for mounting. Topping off the column is a modified '36 Ford steering wheel, which has been cut down and dished thanks to Pearlcraft Steering Wheels in Victoria, Australia. Fastlane Rod Shop then painted the rim to match. The Vintage Air Super Cooler remains hidden,

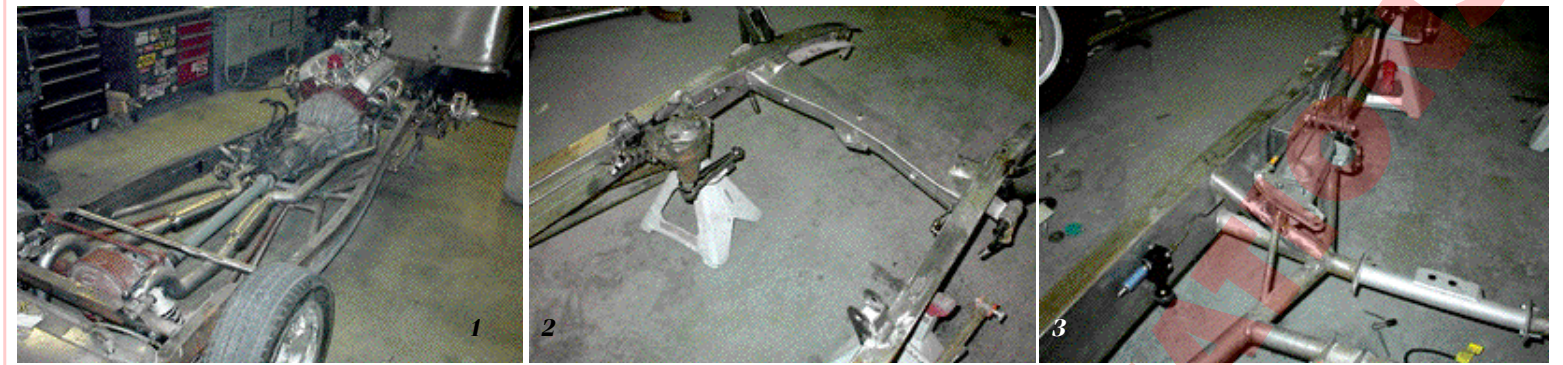
and the special ductwork hidden in the headliner distributes climate control throughout the cabin. The nicely designed air vents were all fabricated by Fastlane to keep a constant flow of comfortable air. Spreading power throughout the coupe is handled by a Centech stainless wiring panel that is installed and connected to Fastlane Rod Shop wiring.

The Buttons have owned this car for over 20 years, so it's safe to assume that it won't be going anywhere anytime soon. The coupe has taken its fair share of awards, grabbing one of the America's Most Beautiful Street Rod Top Five picks at the Goodguys Pleasanton show in 2004, along with the U.S. Radiator Coolest Rod pick at Goodguys Des Moines, among others. We hope to see more of Alan and Connie Buttons' cars out soon as we know there are more great cars lurking in their garage just waiting to be converted into world-class street rods. We're certain that Alan's son, Evan, has first dibs on whatever leaves the garage, but should the time come for a good garage cleaning, we're hoping Alan won't forget to give us a call.

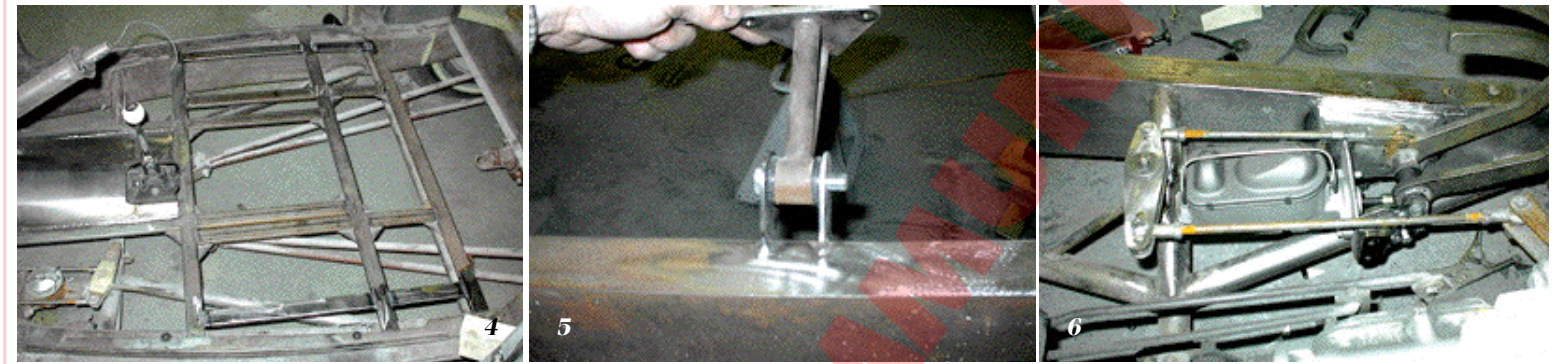
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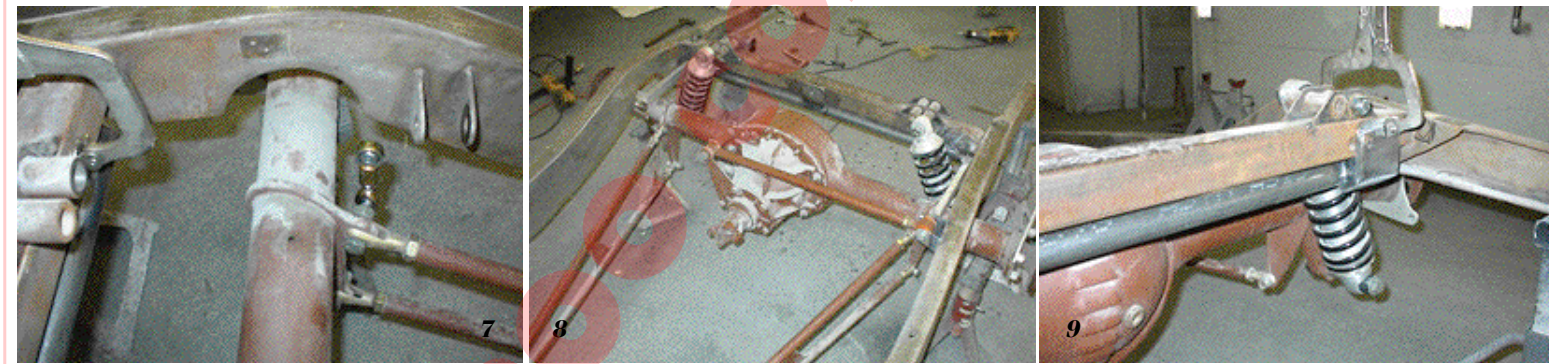
Button Build : The Chassis



1 This is where the project started. The frame was originally built by Boyd years ago, but it received a full freshening-up at Fast Lane. 2 Dave Lane and his skilled crew of craftsmen began by modifying the chassis. New crossmembers were fabricated and installed. The steering box has been installed for the Vega cross-steer unit. 3 Here you can see the tubular brackets and framing that hold the necessary components in place.



4 This custom square tube structure gives the body support and adds to the structural integrity of the chassis. 5 The tubular motor mounts have been raised to allow for the ground-scraping stance. This provides plenty of clearance for the oil pan. 6 This is the bell crank-style clutch linkage designed by Dave Lane. Look at the engineering and design work that provide access to the master cylinder.



7 The chassis has C-notches, allowing the coupe to achieve a super-low, in-the-weeds stance. 8 The 9-inch Ford is held in place by the custom four-link and Panhard bar. The coilovers provide suspension and are mounted with some trick brackets. 9 Here the rear sway bar is being mocked into place for mounting. Dave Lane added sway bars to the chassis to improve the handling of the coupe.



10 Wilwood disc brakes were bolted up to the dropped axle to improve stopping power on the '32. Note the craftsmanship on every inch of this car. 11 Dave Lane, being the perfectionist he is, took the 9-inch rear, removed the hump and smoothed the entire housing prior to paint. 12 Here you can see the 9-inch rear after it has been painted. This thing is ultra-slick.

Button Build : The Chassis

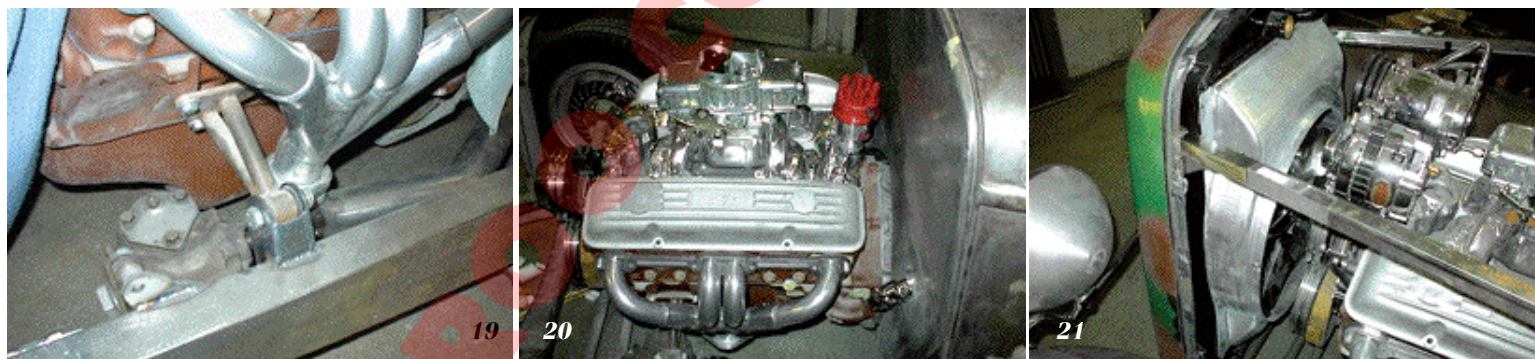


13 Once the chassis had been completely mocked up, it received a coat of primer. The next steps will be more sanding and the application of beautiful red paint. **14** This is the newly sprayed chassis in all its red glory. The detail work on the chassis is as nice as the topside. **15** The chassis has now been reassembled and awaits a set of rollers and a drivetrain.

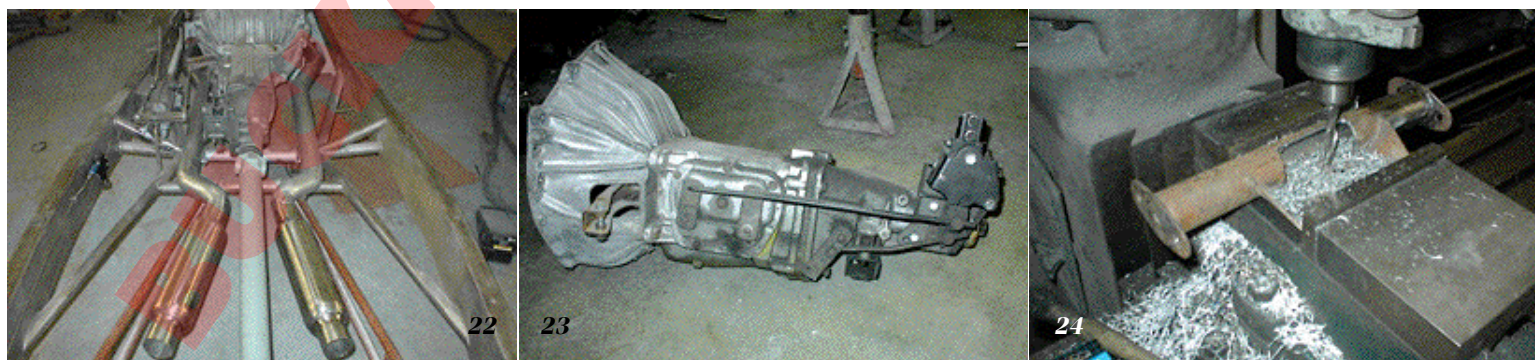


16 The new axle has been installed along with the brakes. Once again, attention to detail is everywhere. **17** The body welt has been laid down on the chassis, awaiting the body. **18** This has to be one of the slickest fuel tanks ever. The fuel neck has been custom-built to allow for a cleaner fuel-entry point.

Button Build : The Drivetrain



19 Here is a close-up of the raised engine. Dave Lane wanted plenty of ground clearance after adding the 4-inch drop axle. **20** The engine has been mocked in place, and everything is ideally located. This is an important step that must be taken before any paint can be applied to either the engine or chassis. **21** The radiator, grille and shroud have been bolted up, and any modifications that were needed are now complete.



22 The exhaust and driveshaft are complete, and the drivetrain is ready to be disassembled and painted. **23** Here is the tranny that will move the '32 down the road. It is a '69 Muncie four-speed. **24** This tranny crossmember was modified to fit the four-speed. It bolts into the tubular crossmembers.



25 The transmission received the same amount of high-quality detail seen throughout the car. **26** After the mock-up was complete, the engine was torn down and prepped for paint. **27** When it comes to detail, there is none better than Fastlane. The engine block has been ground smooth, making it void of any rough casting marks. **28** Seen here, the engine is now complete, and the paint and polished goodies look great.

Button Build : The Body



29 There were many subtle modifications performed on the body, and it takes a real Deuce expert to find them all. **30** Here is a shot of the steering column exit hole through the firewall. **31** The door handles were removed, contributing to the smooth look of the car.



32 The old floorboards were cut out and replaced with new units, ensuring that there was no rust left in the car. **33** Every part on the coupe received hours of labor to finish it to perfection. **34** The fabricators at Fastlane built the custom three-piece hood for the '32.



35 The hood side panels were also fabricated at Fastlane. Here they are built and await welding. **36** A new windshield frame was fabricated for the Deuce. There are so many little modifications that it's tough to notice them all. **37** The headlight bar was cut, and the mounting flanges were flipped to achieve a lower look.

Button Build : The Body



38 You can see the difference here after the headlight bar is complete. **39** This is the final headlight assembled. Note how the bracket isn't as raised and the headlights seem to fit closer to the fenders. **40** The body mods are complete, and the sheetmetal is mocked up for a perfect fit. This is a very important process that should never be overlooked when building a car.

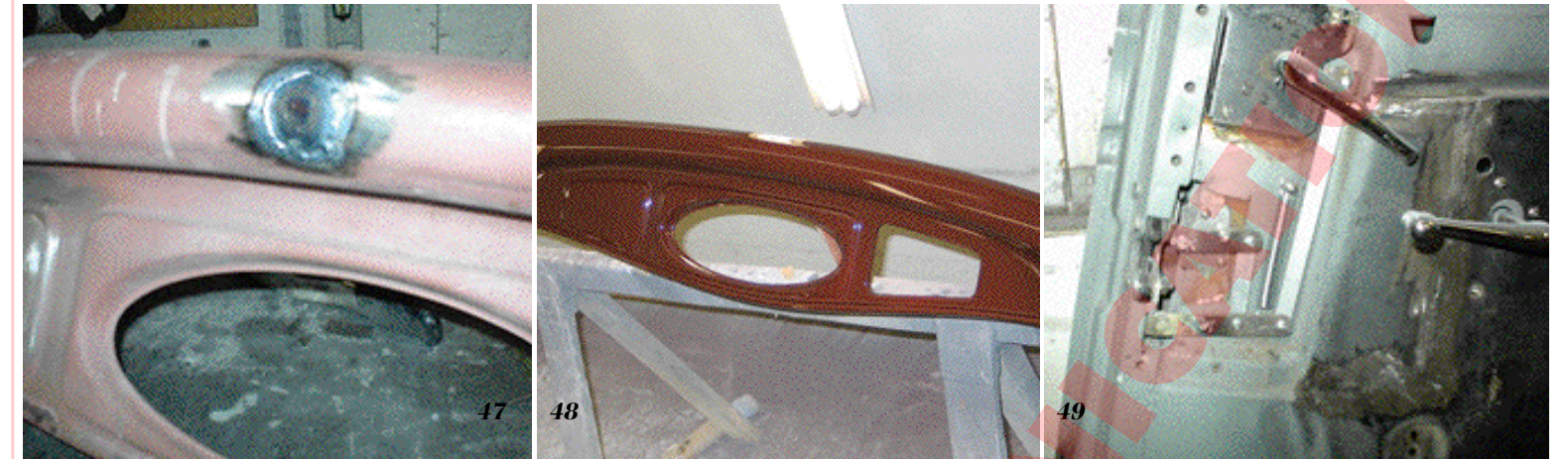


41 The Buttons' coupe would have looked good as a highboy, too! **42** After being assembled and checked for any minor problems, it's off to the paint booth. The coupe is now in its first coat of primer. **43** Every time the body received a coat of primer, the underside was shown the same amount of attention.

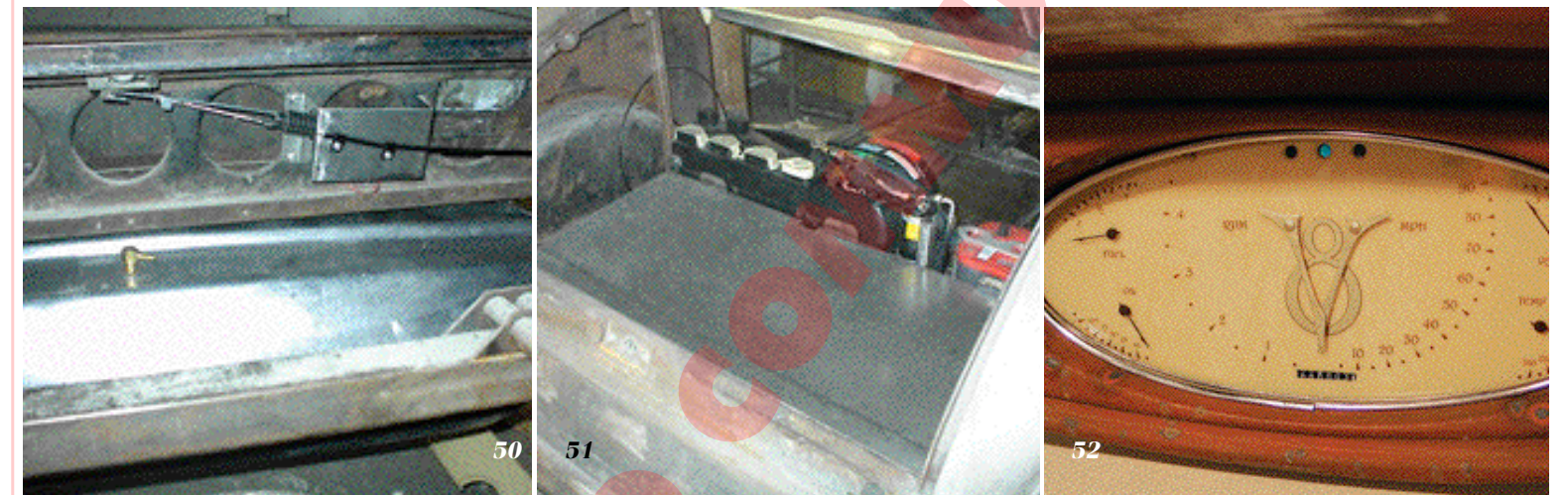


44 The underside of the body was the first in a long line of parts to be sprayed. **45** Here is a shot of the body after paint; Fastlane Red gives the car a whole new appearance. **46** Every part of this coupe was worked to perfection prior to receiving the final coats of paint.

Button Build : Interior Fabrication



47 The entire dash was filled and smoothed. **48** When the dash fabrication was complete, it was painted in order to match the dark leather interior. **49** The stock interior door handles were modified to relay a spring that operated the bear claw-style latches.

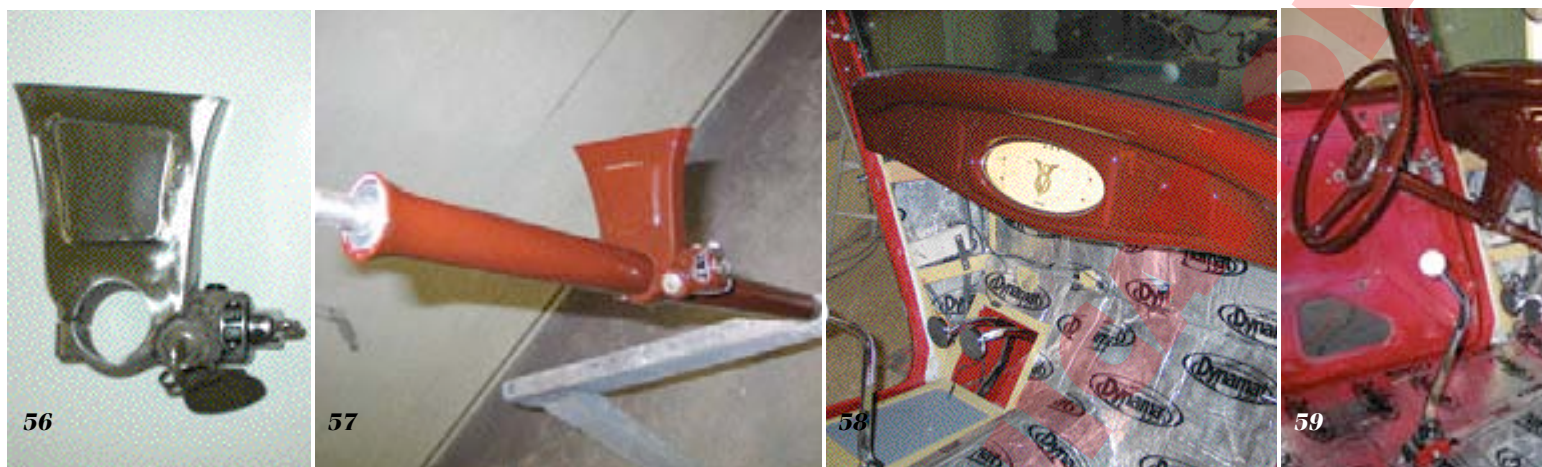


50 The solenoid that pops the trunk assembly open is mounted in the framing of the car. **51** Hidden compartments are located between the seat and trunk panels. **52** The gauge panel was designed by Josh Shaw and Dave Lane, and it was built by Classic Instruments.



53 This mechanism is a suicide-door safety latch that is electronically operated and ejects a pin when the door is shut. It is hidden behind the kick panels. **54** The steering wheel is a '36 Ford unit that had to be modified. It was narrowed and dished to fit the '33 column. **55** Drilling out the center of the wheel for the new hub that will be able to fit the modified column takes hours and specialized tools to complete.

Button Build : Interior Fabrication



56 The drop is a '33 Ford unit that was modified to work with the new parts. 57 Here the column is complete and awaits a steering wheel. 58 Here is the new gauge pod in the dash. 59 Finally, the column is finished and assembled, as are the gauges.



60 The interior is in the process of being completed. 61 The trunk panels are being assembled, and even the luggage compartment is perfectly finished on this car. 62 Here's the finished interior. All that's needed inside is a driver!

Button Build : Final Assembly



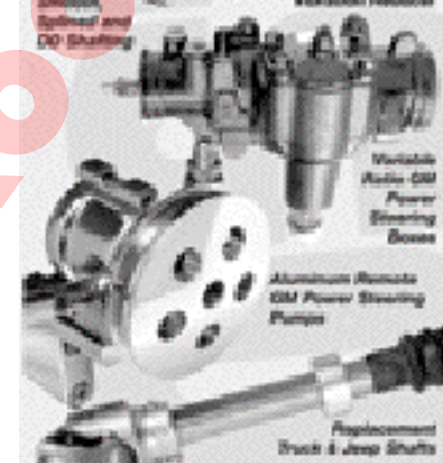
63 The color is Fastlane Red, and the body has been reunited with the chassis and drivetrain. 64 The insulation, pedals and shifter have found a home in the coupe. At this point, the wiring is a work in progress. 65 The radiator, shroud and electric fan are the next pieces to go into place.



66 The grille is bolted in place, and the support rods stabilize the radiator. The car is starting to look like a Deuce three-window again. 67 Anybody remember these? This is a set of vintage Eric Vaughn Real Wheels. 68 In order to keep plenty of room in the car, the A/C unit is placed behind the seats in the front portion of the trunk. 69 This is one of the finest Deuces ever built.

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