



Torqueback

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CHRYSLER CAR CLUB OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



RODDING



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Luke Balzan

Contributors
Luke Balzan
Sarah Mitchell
Andy Miller
Damian Tripodi
Iain Carlin

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Custom Rodder
JuxtaPoz
SMASA
NHRA
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Enquiries

Club Mobile

0412 426 360

www.cccsa.net.au

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CHRYSLER CAR CLUB OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC

Torqueback

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G'day there.

Welcome to our latest installment of **Torqueback** magazine, namely issue 33 – with the theme of **Rodding**. I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I did putting it all together. Not to mention that the magazine is now in full colour every issue!

OK, so the **Webster American Dictionary** says this:
Rodding - 1. to drive a hot rod.
2. Informal. to drive very fast.

I've called the theme of this issue *rodding* because that's the closest historical descriptive around that kinda relates to what all of us folks do. That is, drive and *appreciate* a certain kind of car – and by nature most of them are in fact to some degree, a *custom* car. Even if we don't realise it...

I'll explain that later.

So what is a *hot rod*? What is a *street rod*? What's the difference?

And what is a custom? How are they different to rods? What is a *street machine*?

Good questions – especially to ponder over a bourbon – that many of us aren't too clear about. Yet you see and hear these terms everywhere where car lovers might go – as a manifesto on a car club banner, as a category featured at a carshow, as some judging criteria for a trophy, as a rule or regulation in law, or even just as a pop culture reference in the background of a story in movies and books.

But what exactly are they?

Well in this issue I've set out to try and provide some definitions and examples of the various genres of rodding (and also touch on the culture around them) throughout history. An objective illustrated catalogue if you will.

It's been a real challenge and a lot of work to put this together as it's quite a subjective topic. I've probably missed something too, so I'll apologise here in advance if I have.

So to me, a beautiful car is *art*.

A design classic is like a mobile sculpture.

Yeah, OK. I know it's not a **Mopar**.
It's a '34 **Ford** coupé, sorry!
But this was the first rod I ever
drew for a professional gig...

And the act of painstakingly restoring a classic old car or frankensteining some new fire-breathing monster out of one is *creative*.

The creativity of an artist.

I am fascinated by all of the imagination and problem-solving it requires to build a car, and I'm in awe of the skill, patience and resolve in doing so. The *commitment*.

I like to categorise things too. Keep a record of what they are and when they were. Discover what their context is. If I really like something I enjoy reading and writing about it. Who doesn't?

I once studied art history at an academic level towards becoming a curator in an art gallery. Believe it or not, I find lots of really interesting parallels in the history of hot rodding and customising cars to that of the fine visual arts.

Art appreciation is the ability to look at a painting or a sculpture or whatever, and understand what it is about and where it came from. During these studies I had to develop my art appreciation into a *connoisseurship* – so I was especially competent to pass critical judgments on something, particularly when it came to officially recording it as history or making a valuation of it. To do this right, to be a reliable connoisseur, you need track the *provenance* of a piece of art. And to do that you need to explore its *context*. So you look at lots of this art to analyse and compare, and read up on the history around it to navigate who and why. You then soon become familiar with the styles, trends and technologies.

I reckon it's exactly the same with custom cars.

Just like there are art movements that have come and gone over the centuries, with folks embracing new technologies, reacting against the establishment, or taking some influence off in a completely new direction than before – so it is with all the scenes building custom cars over the last hundred years!

I've said this before but a car can be much more than a machine. More than some disposable mod con. Way beyond any inanimate object. Almost family.

For people like us, a car really becomes an expression of our personality. A part of our identity.



Even the most precious memory key...

There's so much more to a car than what rolls off the assembly line and sits in a showroom. This becomes even more evident if that car is somehow saved over time. It gains even more context. It captures a history. And as soon as we choose our **Mopar** we make some kind of statement. As soon as we choose a colour (back in the old days, anyway) or hang those fuzzy dice, or put those alloys on – we've stamped our personality upon it. We are in fact *customising* that car in some way – large or small.

We are making our *own hot rod*.

It's just a matter of how much commitment...

Of course it's perfectly cool to just like something and not know why. By all means question what is the point of having all these genres and categories. Why analyse it? Sure, we don't have to pigeonhole everything – even if I have a hangup about it!

But I'm hoping that this issue of **Torqueback** will maybe help you with your own connoisseurship – of customs and rods, as it did mine. So that you can decide what you dig and what you don't, with some kind of informed opinion – even if you don't realise it.

Cheers,
Dave H





G'day all.

It doesn't seem that long ago that I typed the last **CarLine** – this year is zipping past. I really must start making some progress on Project **Galant** before we get to December and it's still attached to a rotisserie!

It's nearly **AGM** time again (it may even be past once this magazine hits the printers), so timely to thank all the Committee for their hard work over the past 12 months. I'd especially like to thank **Evan Lloyd** for his stellar work on Sponsorship and Marketing. He has put a lot of effort into standardising the process of onboarding and renewing sponsors. Evan is stepping down this

year, but his legacy is a slick machine that can be handed over to the next occupant of the position.

Also, it has been great having **Andrew Ingleton** on board to bring some fresh ideas and interesting interviews to meetings. It's good having new blood to ask those difficult "*Why DO we do it that way?*" questions that can often lead to useful change in an organisation.

Speaking of change, one project the committee has been working on this year is to upgrade our Constitution. By now you should be aware that we have based the new version on a modern set of model rules provided by the **Office for Consumer and Business Services**. As part of this we have broken out some items into a set of Regulations, thereby making it easier for us to change some of the rules. We hope to ratify the new rules at the AGM – if you haven't already seen them they are available on the club website.

I was really pleased with the way our second **Membership Day** at Tonsley turned out. We didn't keep official attendance numbers, but I'd stake vital body parts on there having been twice as many classic **Mopars** this year compared to 2017.

It turned into a mini-show really with quite a few people spending the whole day there. Thanks very much to the committee, authorised officers, traffic marshals and other volunteers that made the day flow very smoothly for everyone.

Stuart was over the moon not to have to process a single log book the week following the event – a great outcome all round.

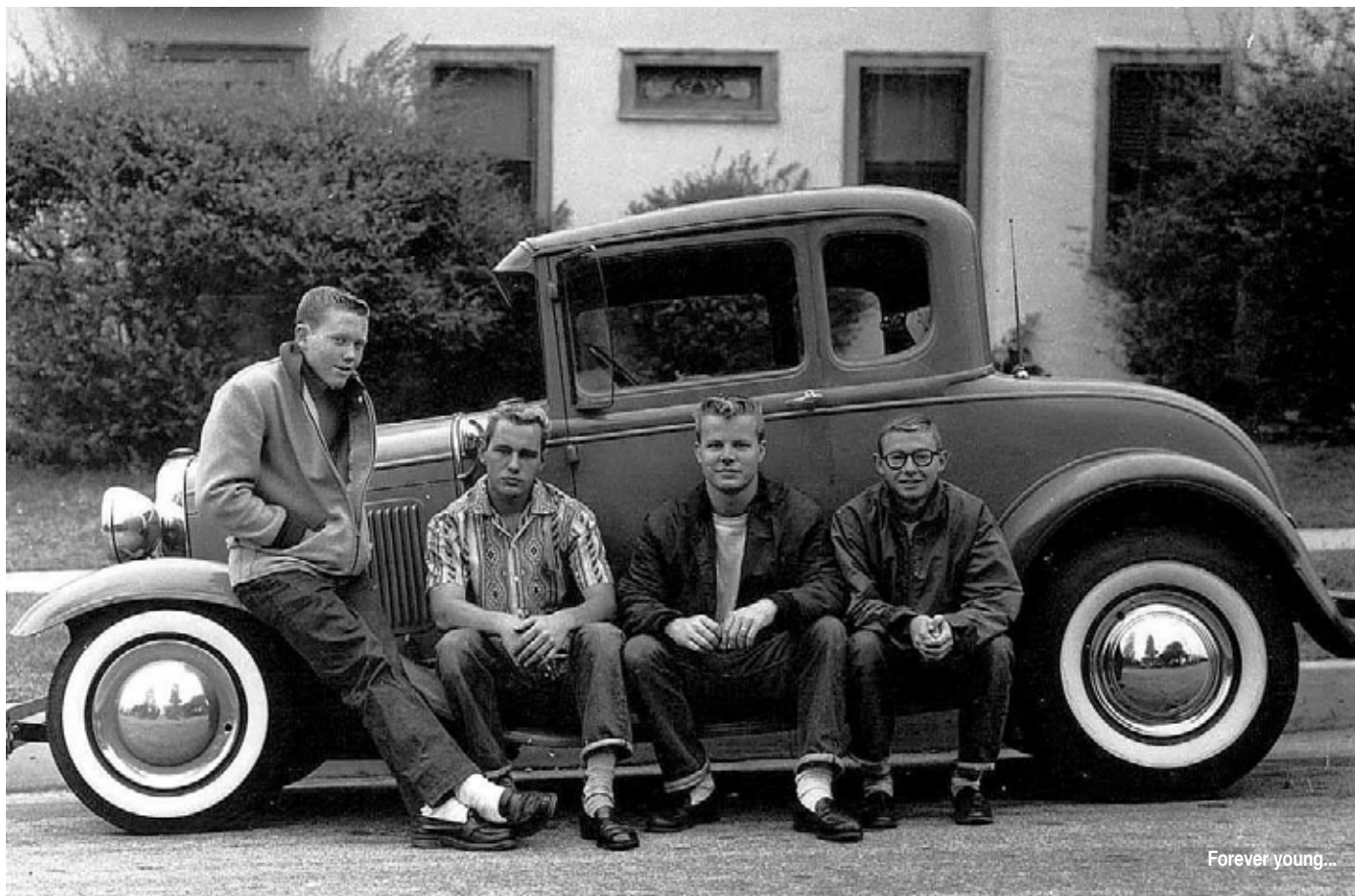
We did cop a bit of flack from some non-members who were put out that they weren't invited to the "*show*" – interesting given that it was never supposed to be, nor was it advertised as such. The permit to use Tonsley was granted based on it being a 'private' event only.

Had it not been, we would have had conditions put on the usage – such as requiring security guards, cleaners, first aid officers etc. etc. That would have added unnecessary costs to a day which is primarily about getting as many memberships renewed and log books updated as possible.

Still, it didn't detract from what was a great day – as a bonus, without even really trying we made the **Seven** and **Nine** news bulletins for the third time!

Well, that wraps it up for me. Hopefully this cold, wet weather vanishes as quickly as it appeared, and we can all get our metal machines back out for some cruising. Although, there's still lots on over winter these days with regular **Coffee and Chrome** events popping up all over the joint.

Till next time, keep it Mopar!
– **Iain**



Forever young...



I reckon if you asked a cross section of our people why they are a member of the **Chrysler Club of SA** they would start talking about cars. It might be about a classic such as an S series or a big **Dodge Phoenix**, perhaps about the clatter of a high performance **Hemi 6** or the throatiness of a big block V8. But no doubt it would all be about the cars.

But I think that they are wrong. They can't see the wood for the trees. I think that it is *actually* more about the people. They come to mix with other people. People that happen to have a common interest – **Chrysler** cars.

If the world came to an end and all the people vaporised off the planet, the **Valiants** and big **Chryslers** would still be there. The club would no longer exist, as unlike the very successful cartoon movie **Cars**, these masses of metal cannot move without the human input. The people.

When we meet on a monthly basis, we don't sit in our cars in the carpark, and on most occasions the **Chryslers** are safely tucked up at home. But 60-80 people still gather with a common interest. Friendships are made, common interests are discussed and plans are put in place for the future of the club. Humans crave interaction with other humans. It is only a few that like their own company so much that they don't need to interact. Although **Stuart Croser** reminds us that there are a few members every year who don't even crawl out of their hole for membership renewal each year. Perhaps they get their human interaction with people in other places such as work or via a computer. Or perhaps they are the weirdos that hang out in supermarket queues and give the 16 year old cashier a hard time.

When I joined the club four or five years ago, I came to a few meetings hoping to hear all sorts of **Chrysler** stories and for the first three meetings I was starting to wonder why people came.

Was it just to watch that microphone on a 30 foot lead being passed behind the head table or to hear a forensic financial analysis by the treasurer? (Rest assured the clubs money is in safe hands there!). I was starting to imagine that everyone sat through an hour of microphone passing just to hear the *buy swap and sell* announcements. Would I bother still coming to meetings? But on the fourth meeting we had a guest speaker and I was hooked. Why wasn't every meeting like this?

When **Iain Carlin** became President, he came across as an approachable sort of guy and so I felt comfortable offering comment and asking questions about why we do things this way or why we don't do that? Suddenly I was someone who could contribute to the club and challenge the way we do things.

"Why does the committee sit at the front table like it is a wedding or a court Marshall?"

"What happens to first-time attendees at a meeting after they are asked to stand up and offer their name?"

"Will people stop coming to meetings if there are no free cans of lemonade?"

What I really wanted was to see more people at meetings, more people attending cruises and more people interacting at meetings.

The human element.

At the **Tonsley Hotel** as part of the **ACF**, **Roger Carroll** spoke about his engineering design days at **Chrysler**. He was quite the storyteller and there were some fabulous anecdotes and inside stories of the Yanks versus the Aussies. Many of these stories can't be published and will only survive for as long as the people who were involved in the stories do. And the way that those stories were told with humour, passion and emotion can't be replicated in a book.



To me it is the human interaction that makes the club so interesting.

Every member has a story to tell. There is always a reason how **Chrysler** came into their life whether it be at childhood, their first car or working on the **Tonsley** production line. I love hearing all of these stories. They are all different just as the cars they drive are different.

So whether or not it is right or wrong, I will continue to preserve the stories by having as many people as possible talk about their **Chrysler** journey. Not everyone is a wordsmith or public speaker, and lots of people are shy or think that their story is not important. So we will continue to create different opportunities for people to tell their stories in their own way. Short or long. It might just be their learning experience in changing a set of brake shoes or how excited they were to find a treasure laying in some long grass.

Long live the **CCCSA** and the people that make it great.

Hey Charger!

– **Andrew I**





ANDY MILLER - ROD BUILDER

I always thought I knew what a hot rod was. It always seemed that there was a somewhat loose definition, but innately, I could just tell if a car was in fact a rod or not. I'd been brought up around cars and just had a sense for it. However, working with Dave H on this issue of Torqueback, my eyes have been opened somewhat to discover that the definition of a rod is actually something of a contentious issue! There are plenty of definitions and even more opinions, but all that aside, I still think that the ability to discern whether something is a hot rod or not requires the ability to recognise something that isn't necessarily there (in other words, a computer would have a hard time of it!).

Eager to find out more about the fine art of rodding, for this issue's interview, I sought out a hot rodder, and then wondered where I'd find one... I didn't have to look too far, since our club has a genuine hot rodder of its own: Andy Miller!

Andy Miller has quite the collection of Valiants (and other cars too), and they're all kinds of impressive – obviously a hot rod on top of that. Sadly, the rod is not a Chrysler, it's a Ford T-bucket (with a Ford engine which is actually quite unusual), but that doesn't stop it from being one cool machine!

"How we came across the car? We were out on a Zippel Cruise from memory..." Andy begins.

On a cold night when we caught up, together with his partner and fellow Valiant and car lover Sarah Michell.

"The guy had a sign in front of the car, for sale, and Sarah said that's pretty cool, and it wasn't ridiculous money. I saw it one other time after that, and didn't see it for probably about two years. I was looking at buying another car that fell through, and so I just put in hot rods on Gumtree, and fuck me, there was that car, that same car!"

"I'm going to cut in," Sarah cuts in, overhearing our conversation... *"I saw that car and I was talking to the man at the Zippel. I liked it and I was going to buy it, but then he disappeared!"*

"Anyway," Andy continues, *"I saw it on Gumtree on a Friday – so I logged in, got his number and went and bought it on the Saturday! Not a very practical car, unless you've got a 25 to 30 degree day, otherwise it's super freezing. But it's pretty cool, you make new friends at every set of lights you pull up at."*

Andy's a well-known member of the club, with plenty of fine Chrysler specimens, and he's noticed a few differences between the hot rod guys and the classic guys...

"Hot rodders are special people", he jokes, *"half of them are trying to resurrect some '70s part to put on their car, when they should just go and buy a new part – 'cos they're all tight-arses [like us TAVOs hey? – Luke] and most of the guys I know build their own stuff."*

"They're not bad guys, and the majority, or at least 50% of the hot rodders I know, they will drive their car. Even on a day like today! Raining, or whatever! With their '30s whatever, they will drive around... Raining, whatever... doesn't matter – cos it's a car. They'll just take it out for a drive, cos it's meant to be driven!"

"Um, but they don't drive well," Sarah chimes in from the background again.

"No, most hot rods drive crap," Andy states. *"If you've got nice smooth roads, they drive quite well, but they don't like bumpy roads! Old I-beam transverse leaf kingpin front end, and a transverse leaf with a four-bar on the rear..."*

"They're fantastic when you're in them," Sarah continues, *"like when I'm a passenger, it's fantastic fun, but for the driver, it's absolutely horrific!"*

A cornerstone of hot rodding is the customisation and really putting your own stamp on the car. So, since he bought the car as a rod, has Andy done much to his?

"Oh yeah," he chuckles. *"I bought it and we drove it around for about a year, maybe not even ten times. And then, stripped the entire thing back. Repainted it, new interior, shiny bits..."*

So how does that compare to working on his Valiants? *"It's very easy, cos there's not much of it! And it's a custom thing, so you can bolt anything to it..."*





"Basically, we just disassembled the car, fixed a few things that needed to be fixed on it, painted it, there was nothing wrong with the engine and gearbox, so we painted it, detailed and chromed some bits and pieces and pretty much put the car back together with a new interior."

It is interesting to note that the majority of hot rods tend to be **Fords**, and you certainly don't see a lot of **Mopar** hot rod product around.

"No," Andy explains, "it's a rarity thing. One of my friends, Ziggy, and we'll see if we can set up a photo shoot with him, has a Dodge T-Bucket, even though it's got a Holden V8 in it. It is a Dodge. You don't see many of them around..."

"Most hot rods are 1930s cars, and Fords probably outsold everything 20 to one or whatever it would have been...."

"There are a few Mopar hot rods around, it's not like they're not out there. I don't know what it is, but predominantly they're Fords. They made 30 squillion of them, first mass-produced V8 engine, the flathead..."

As we were chatting about cars, the most contentious of all topics did come up: *so what is a hot rod?*

"What's a traditional rod... I don't know," Andy explains. "Get some photos from the Monarchs Hot Rod Club – they have traditional rods. Something that somebody would have built in the 1950s from a 1930s car, which is about when it started..."

"And here's a good one, what's the difference between a hot rod and a street rod? No one can tell me in the club, or anything can tell me. They say 'you've got a hot rod' and then, 'nah, it's a street rod!' Work that one out!"

"What is the definition... you'll have to go to Wikipedia for that one!" [I had to! - Ed]

As usually happens, the discussion carried on for quite some time, with lots of debate over whether particular cars could be classed as hot rods or not. Does it really matter?

And whether or not Andy's car is a traditional rod (for the record, he classes his as a non-traditional, '70s vision of a hot rod!), I think the perfect summary came at the end.

"Look, it's about having fun," Andy admits.

"Go on a cruise. If it's cool, nice weather, go for a cruise to wherever – have coffee, have a beer..."

"See if you can steer back home, and have a bit of fun. Make some friends at the lights, cos it's something different – and it's cool!"

Why not?
– Luke

DEPENDS ON WHO YOU ASK...

Universally, hot rods (or 'rods' for short) are typically old, classic American cars with large exposed engines modified for linear speed. The origin of the term 'hot rod' is unclear however. For example, some claim that the term 'hot' refers to the vehicle being stolen. Other origin stories include replacing the engine's camshaft or 'rod' with a higher performance version.

The term has since been adopted in broader language to apply to other things that have been modified for a particular higher performance purpose, such as a 'hot-rodded computer'. Indeed, today 'rodding' something means to modify it so it can go faster.

What exactly is a 'hot rod'?

The traditional American definition of a *hot rod* is an automobile of 1948 or earlier, that has undergone some modernisation to the engine, transmission, interior, or anything else. A hot rod, while once a street car, has virtually been redesigned for racing. Hence it usually has a more 'souped up' engine, often exposed.

So what is a 'street rod' then?

The traditional American definition of a *street rod* is an automobile of 1948 or earlier that has undergone some modernisation to the engine, transmission, interior, or anything else too. But it's a non-racing vehicle used for enjoyment. The more family friendly version of the hot rod.

What's the difference between a hot rod and a street rod?

In America, there is an age old debate about the difference between street rods and hot rods...

One school of thought considers a street rod as actually ANY type of classic car that has been highly modified. However, it isn't necessarily a muscle car. For example, a **Ford Mustang** would not be considered (by many) to be a street rod.

But according to the purists in the States, hot rods are strictly about performance, as this was the original historical precedent. Horsepower and power-to-weight ratio are more important than sound insulation, AC and a smooth ride.

Street rods, on the other hand, place a higher premium on passenger comfort, style, fit and finish, and driveability. Street rods always have a license plate and registration, because they're always driven on the street. Hot rods don't necessarily have to be.

Of course, there are plenty of cars that cross over between both camps, so it's not an absolute definition. It's quite subjective.

In Australia we don't seem to worry so much about any distinction between 'hot' or 'street' when talking about rods. Maybe this is because we don't have so many old American cars at our disposal. And also because we have a much smaller population to drive them.

Interestingly, Australia's highest authority on the subject of all rods and customs call themselves the **Australian Street Rodding Federation**. Perhaps this title attempts to cover every kind of car, so the terms 'hot' and 'street' appear to be generic – maybe even interchangeable.

And what is a Custom?

The traditional American definition of a *custom* car is a passenger vehicle that has been substantially altered to improve its performance, often by altering or replacing the engine and transmission; made into a personal 'styling' statement, using paintjobs and aftermarket accessories to make the car look unlike any car as delivered from the factory; or some combination of performance modifying and appearance changes.

Although the two are related, custom cars are distinct from hot rods. The extent of this difference has also been the subject of debate among customisers and rodders for decades. Technically a street rod could almost be considered another kind of custom in a way. Street rods are cars that look like hot rods, but built more to custom car standards for the street, and more for style than speed. The only determining criteria here might be the age of the car.

Custom cars are distinct from cars in stock condition. Builders may adopt the visual and performance characteristics of some relevant modification styles, and combine these as desired. Hence several different custom themes have evolved from various trends over time.

In light of this, the category of *modern customs* has become a grey area even harder to define. Traditional customs were actually late model or even new cars at the time when the style started. Which makes modern customised cars really just following along in the same path, even though the styles are vastly different. You will rarely get traditionalists to agree however, that modern customised cars can be 'customs' per sé – even though they are customised.

In the US, the custom scene is enormous and ever-expanding, continually sprouting many of its own genres. For example, within the category of *lowrider* there are even more sub-genres, from *traditional lows* (which are the '60-80s American cars with metalflake and candy paint, hydraulics, wire wheels, etc) and '*bombs*' which are dressed up cars of the 30s, 40s, and 50s, to '*Euros*' which are imports done in a combination of traditional lowrider style.

Here in Oz, the **ASRF** seem to try and keep it simple. In their handbook, they officially declare that there are rods and there are customs.

Firstly, they define a *street rod* (as in their organisation's title) as "*a vehicle, the body and frame of which were manufactured prior to the*

year 1949, and which has been modified for safe road use; or a replica thereof which has also been modified for safe road use."

Then they refer to a *custom* as "*a vehicle which was manufactured between 1949 and 1965 inclusive (or retains original body styling through to the termination of the manufacturing design) and which has been modified for safe road use.*"

They then break this custom category down into subclasses:

- *Custom Classics*
- *Street Classics*
- *Mild Custom*
- *Radical Custom*

All customs must attain the required points from the modification list as per the **ASRF Handbook**.

So what is the difference between a hot rod and a custom car?

Well, the traditional American answer again seems to be that hot rods are American cars customised for speed, older than 1949. While customs tend to be newer than 1949 and built more for looks. There are grey areas, of course, as the classic '30s and '40s *taildraggers* are customs, but built from hot rod era cars. And of course, there are customs that go fast. And, there are hot rods built from foreign cars and the like.

The speed that is talked about when building for speed tends to be in terms of – and for, drag racing and land speed record cars. Road racing doesn't enter into the hot rod lexicon very much at all, though there are folks that have built hot rods specifically for road racing.

The famous **Hot Rod** magazine – integral to all rodding culture all over the world from the very beginning – actually started out basically as a technical guide for young hobbyists to carry out performance mods on their old project cars. Today we see these cars (like T-buckets and roadsters) as vintage, but in the 1950s these jalopies weren't so antiquated. And back then they were prime resources (cheap and easy to tweak) for rebelling with personal expression.

So essentially, the hot rod is the precursor and ancestor of the drag racing car. This is why the major drag racing authorities in the US – the **American Hot Rod Association** and the **National Hot Rod Association** – are named (historically) as they are – although today you won't actually see many hot rods competing on the quarter-mile strip anymore.

And what is a Street Machine?

In America, *street machine* is a term sometimes used to describe a modified car built for the street based on a post 1948 car. Another name for a custom. But the yanks are quick to differentiate between a street machine and a *muscle car*.

Muscle car is a term used to describe a FACTORY performance car, usually an intermediate to large size car with a big engine. While street machine is a term often used to describe a UNIQUE modified car built for the street based on a post 1948 car. Any 1948 and earlier modified car built for the street is broadly referred to as a street rod.

For the yanks, muscle cars are generally considered to be a mid size car with a large displacement engine (though that isn't 100% the case, depending on who you ask), with said engine as factory equipment or installed by an authorised dealer. Street machines, on the other hand, are more of an extension of hot rods, a car that's been altered from stock for more performance and personalised, which can include bigger/more powerful engines, suspension alterations, body modifications, paint, etc...

A muscle car can be used to build a street machine. Also, plenty of street machines see track use. A muscle car can be MADE into a street machine, but not all street machines come from muscle cars.

Drag race cars newer than 1949 often erroneously fall into the muscle car category. Though, even though the first muscle car was built in 1955, the muscle car era didn't really get going until 1964.

Back here in Australia, we tend to use the title 'street machine' as a generic term, all-encompassing. Especially since *Street Machine* magazine's longterm pre-eminence nationally. For us, any and all types of rods and customs are BOTH street machines. This is also why SMASA call themselves as such.

Rat rods and *lead sleds* are NOT rods, even though it might be tempting to categorise them together under the concept of *old skool*. In the States they are vehemently distinguished from hot rods and street rods as a custom genre – of their own. You can build a rat rod or a lead sled from anything post 1949. Even a modern 21st century car. But the archetypal lead sled is a '49 *Mercury*.

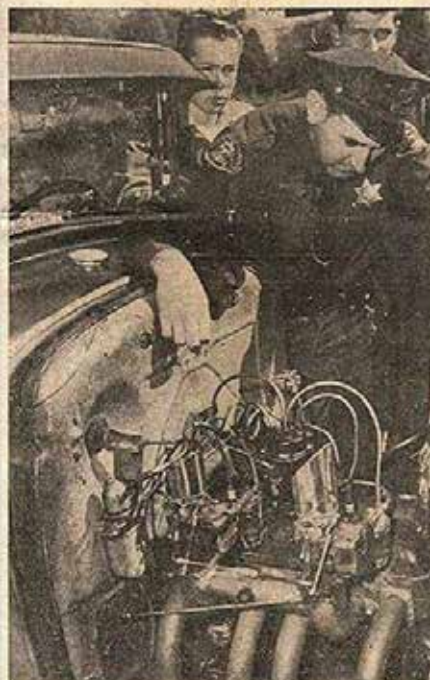
So, based on the general consensus of perceptions in Australia and historical references in the USA, here's a figure that seems to arbitrarily sum up what is a most subjective argument...

STREET MACHINES (All rods and customs)	
RODS (up to 1948)	CUSTOMS (from 1949)
Hot Rods Street Rods	Kustoms (1950-1960) Lead Sleds Rat Rods Low Riders Hi-Risers Cal Style VW Custom Classics Street Classics Mild Custom Radical Custom Pro Street VIP Ricer Modern Custom

You could probably add to this the unique Australian scene for 'feral' utes, although technically they probably fall under one of the modern customs types. The custom van craze of the 1970s could almost come under classic customs today, while pickups have been big in the last few decades in the USA, Japan – and now here, as modern customs.

None of these categories are in fact perfectly clear nor etched in stone. It's quite possible to clarify a car under a number of these definitions. It just depends on who you ask...

Police Capture 31 Youths With 'Souped-Up' Jalopies



'HOT-ROD' CAR—Sheriff's Dep. Norman Hoskins and youthful drivers examine motor of "souped-up" jalopy impounded after arrest of 31 Pasadena Junior College youths as they gathered at Sierra Madre and Villa Blvds.

Pasadena Juveniles Offer to Aid Law if Given Race Tracts

Altadena Sheriff's deputies and Pasadena police yesterday climaxed a well-planned cleanup drive on "hot-rod" highway racers with the arrest of 31 Pasadena Junior College youths — but the crackdown was countered by a voluntary move by the youthful drivers themselves to co-operate with authorities in organization of legal areas for competitive hopped-up jalopy racing.

The 31 youths, including two girls (strictly passengers) and ranging in age from 15 to 18, were found by Deputy Sheriffs Al Mansell and Norman Hoskins as they congregated with seven "jalopies" at the intersection of Sierra Madre and Villa Blvds. in county territory east of Pasadena. All were cited on technical charges of "illegal assembly" except two boys who attempted to evade arrest and were given speeding citations after allegedly racing 70 m.p.h. when pursued by police.

Youths Seek Parley
Bill Mock, 18-year-old junior college junior student, 1748 Oakwood St., Pasadena, was named chairman of a committee to confer with Pasadena Police Chief

Post World War Two, the USA boomed. Young people suddenly had time and money to express themselves – and rebel against the establishment. Hot rods and drag racing became as synonymous as rock n' roll with youth pop culture.



STREET GANGS AND SPEED DEMONS

Some automotive historians say the term 'hot rod' originated with stolen vehicles being refitted with another engine and repainted. In the early days of automobile manufacturing there was no identical matching transmission, body frame, and engine numbers. It was possible to change engines and repaint the car or truck, and in effect turn it into a different vehicle – thus it became near impossible to prove that the vehicle was stolen. The term *"hot"* was equivalent to being stolen. The term *"rod"* was equivalent to any motorised vehicle. Even today, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment in its vehicle emissions regulations, still refers to a *"hotrod"* as any motorised vehicle that has a replacement engine differing from the factory original.

Another possible origin includes replacement of the camshaft with a new *"hotter"* version, sometimes known as a 'hot stick' or 'hot rod'. Roadsters (which are vintage today) were the cars of choice because they were light, easy to modify and inexpensive. The term became commonplace in the 1930s or 1940s as the name of a car that had been *"hopped up"* by modifying the engine for higher performance. A term common in the early days was 'gow job'. This has fallen into disuse except with historians.

The gow job morphed into the hot rod by the early to middle 1950s.

Late 1930s – 1950s

The term 'hot rod' seems first to have appeared in the late 1930s in southern California, where people raced modified cars on dry lake beds northeast of Los Angeles under the rules of the **Southern California Timing Association (SCTA)** among other groups. The activity increased in popularity after World War Two, particularly in California, because many returning soldiers received technical training in the service. Many cars were prepared by bootleggers in response to Prohibition to enable them to avoid revenue agents (*"Revenooers"*); and so police vehicles were also modified in response.

Of course, these moonshine runners (who were trying to make their high performing car inconspicuous to look like a regular car) were the ancestors of the **NASCAR** stock car.

The first hot rods were old cars (most often **Fords**, typically **Model Ts**, 1928–31 **Model As**, or 1932–34 **Model Bs**), modified to reduce weight. Typical modifications were the removal of convertible tops, bonnets, bumpers, windshields, and/or fenders; channelling the body; and modifying the engine by tuning and/or replacing it with a more powerful type. *Speedster* was a common name for this modified car. Wheels and tyres were also changed for improved traction and handling.

The descriptive *"hot rod"* actually was first used in the early 1940s as a derogatory term for any car that did not fit into the mainstream. But this negative connotation soon became positive, as 'hot rodders' modifications actually began to be received as improving the appearance as well. Eventually, all this lead to show cars in the 1960s replicating these very same modifications along with a distinctive paint job.

Immediately postwar, most rods would change from mechanical to hydraulic *"juice"* brakes and from bulb to sealed-beam headlights.

Engine swaps often involved fitting the Ford **Flathead V8** or *"flatty"* into a different chassis and the *"60 horse"* in a **Jeep** was a popular choice in the '40s. After the appearance of the 255 cu in (4.2 l) V8, because of interchangeability, installing the longer-stroke **Mercury** crank in the 239 was a popular upgrade among hot rodders,



While it was still many years before the advent of it's closest relative, the Stock Car – the original Hot Rod aesthetic was undoubtedly influenced by the first open-wheel racing cars, such as this **Duesenberg** which appeared at *Indy* in 1921.

much as the 400 cu in (6.6 l) crank in small-blocks would later become. In the 1950s, the flathead block was often fitted with crankshafts of up to 4.125 in (104.8 mm) stroke, sometimes more. In addition, rodders in the 1950s routinely bored them out by 0.1875 in (4.76 mm) (to 3.375 in (85.7 mm)); due to the tendency of blocks to crack as a result of overheating, a perennial problem – this is no longer recommended. In the '50s and '60s, the Ford flathead V8 was supplanted by the **Chrysler FirePower** engine (known as the *"early hemi"*).

Reproduction spindles, brake drums, and backing based on 1930s technology remain available today. Aftermarket flatty heads were available from **Barney Navarro**, **Vic Edelbrock**, and **Offenhauser**. The first intake manifold Edelbrock sold was a *"slingshot"* design for the flatty. The first supercharger on a V8 may have been by Navarro in 1950.

A typical mid-1950s to early 1960s custom **Deuce** was fenderless and steeply chopped, powered by a Ford or Mercury flathead, with an **Edelbrock** intake manifold, **Harman and Collins** magneto, and **Halibrand** quick-change differential. Front suspension hairpins were adapted from sprint cars, such as the **Kurtis Krafts**. **Brookville Roadster** was the first company to reproduce these old car bodies in steel.

1945 to 1960

After World War Two there were many small military airports throughout the country that were either abandoned or rarely used that allowed hot rodders across the country to race on marked courses. This is the origin of drag racing.

Originally drag racing had tracks as long as one mile (1.6 km) or more, and included up to four lanes of racing simultaneously. As hot rodding became more popular in the 1950s, magazines and associations catering to hot rodders were started. These were led by the now famous **Hot Rod** magazine which is the oldest magazine in the world devoted to rods and customs – first started in January 1948. As some hot rodders also raced on the street, a need arose for an organisation to promote safety and to provide venues for safe racing. Hot rodders including **Wally Parks** created the **National Hot Rod Association (NHRA)** to bring racing off the streets and onto the tracks. They created rules based on safety and entertainment, and allowed rodders of any caliber the ability to race. The annual **California Hot Rod Reunion** and **National Hot Rod Reunion** are held to honour pioneers in the sport. The **Wally Parks NHRA Motorsports Museum** houses the roots of hot rodding.

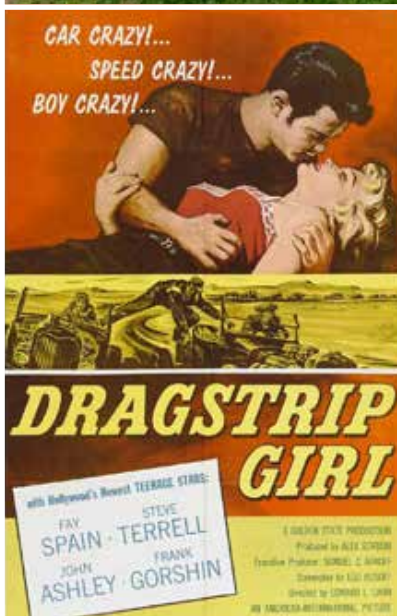
Modern rodding

By the 1970s, the small-block **Chevy** became the most common option for a motor, and since the '80s, the 350 cu in (5.7 l) Chevy has been almost ubiquitous.

There is still a vibrant hot rod culture worldwide, especially in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Sweden. The hot rod community has now been subdivided into two main groups: street rodders and hot rodders.

In modern culture

There is a contemporary movement of traditional hot rod builders, car clubs and artists who have returned to the roots of hot rodding as a lifestyle.



This includes a new breed of traditional hot rod builders, artists, and styles, as well as classic style car clubs.

Events like *GreaseOrama* in the US or our own *Kustom Culture Weekend* here in SA, feature traditional hot rods and the greaser lifestyle. Magazines like *O! Skool Rodz*, *Gears and Gals*, *CK Deluxe* and our very own *Cruizin'* here in Oz cover such events and people.

Author **Tom Wolfe** was one of the first to recognise the importance of hot rodding in popular culture and brought it to mainstream attention in his

book *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*. There are magazines that feature traditional hot rods, including *Hot Rod*, *Car Craft* and *Rod and Custom*.

Movies like *American Graffiti* and the TV sitcom *Happy Days* revolved around the hot rod and rock n'roll culture of the 1950s and 60s. There are also non-fiction television shows such as *My Classic Car* and *American Hot Rod*.

Rods are here to stay, daddy-o.



GREASED LIGHTNING

As automobiles offered by the major automakers began increasing performance, the lure of hot rods began to wane. It was no longer necessary to put a Cadillac engine in a Ford roadster to be fast.

It was now possible to buy a muscle car that outperformed nearly any hot rod, with more passenger room, and without having to expend the effort of building and tuning the car oneself. After the 1973 Oil Crisis, the public called on automakers to offer safety and fuel efficiency over performance. The resulting decrease in an average car's performance led to a resurgence of hot rodding, although the focus was on driving hot rods over racing so the term 'street rod' was coined to denote a vehicle manufactured prior to 1949, but often with a more reliable late model drive train.

Street rodding as it was now known, was a different phenomenon than hot rodding, as street rodding was mainly family-oriented. National events were hosted by the **National Street Rod Association (NSRA)**, which also stressed safety as the **NHRA** did 20 years before. Each NSRA event has a *Safety Inspection Team* that performs a 23-point inspection process beyond normal State safety regulations.

In the mid-1980s, as stock engine sizes diminished, rodders discovered the all-aluminum 215 (**Buick** or **Olds**) could be stretched to as much as 305 cu in (5 l), using the Buick 300 crank, new cylinder sleeves, and an

assortment of non-GM parts, including **VW** and **Mopar** lifters as well as a **Carter** carb. It could also be fitted with high-compression cylinder heads from the **Morgan** +8. Using the 5-litre **Rover** block and crank, a maximum displacement of 317.8 cu in (5,208 cc) is theoretically possible.

Street Rods seem to be most prevalent in Oz, probably because we don't have as much access to, and enough numbers of, older cars as they do in the States. Consequently, the attitudes towards (and reliance upon) modern tech sees the expectations of street rods seemingly much more forgiving too. But any kind of rod always turns heads here just the same.





A gasser is a type of hot rod originating on the dragstrips of the United States in the late 1950s and continued until the early 1970s. In the days before Pro Stock, the A/Gas cars were the fastest stock-appearing racers around. Gassers are based on closed body production models from the 1930s to mid-1960s, which have been stripped of extraneous weight and jacked up using a beam axle or tubular axle to provide better weight distribution on acceleration (beam axles are also lighter than an independent front suspension), though a raised stock front suspension is common as well. Common weight reduction techniques include fibreglass body panels, stripped interiors, and plexiglass windows (sometimes colour tinted).



The 1933-36 Willys coupés and pickups were very popular gassers. The best-known would be the 1933 Willys 77. Although it was never built in large numbers, making it a puzzle why it became popular – it was neither cheap nor plentiful. Many of you might remember the 'experimental' gasser-style tribute called "Pork Hunt"; built from a VC wagon by Paul Cronin, Jim Smith, Ed Craven, Aaron Henry, Andrew Staples and Simon Major, which was a sensation when revealed at All Chrysler Day.



Modern street rods can blur into modern customs. This incredible roadster might have vintage lines, but the rest of it is all 21st century auto salon, state-of-the-art. Fibreglass, aluminium and carbon fibre engineered in CAD, and boasting a V10 turbo from a Viper.



EXPRESSION SESSION

A custom car is a passenger vehicle that has been substantially modified in either of the following two ways:

1. a custom car may be altered to improve its performance, often by altering or replacing the engine and transmission
2. a custom car may be a personal “styling” statement, making the car look unlike any car as delivered from the factory.

Although the two are related, custom cars are quite distinct from hot rods. The extent of this difference has been the subject of debate among customisers and rodders for decades. As essentially, a street rod can be considered a custom.

History

The *custom* was an inevitable and natural development of hot rodding – the change in name corresponding to the change in the design of the cars being modified.

The first hot rods were pre-World War II cars, with running boards and simple fenders over the wheels. Early model cars (1929 to 1934) were modified by removing the running boards and either removing the fenders entirely or replacing them with very light cycle fenders. Later models usually had fender skirts installed. The “*gow job*” morphed into the *hot rod* in the early to middle 1950s.

Many cars were “*hopped up*” with engine mods such as adding additional carburetors, high compression heads and dual exhausts. Engine swaps were often done – the object of which was to put the most powerful engine in the lightest possible frame-and-body combination.

The suspension was usually altered. Initially this involved lowering the rear end as much as possible with the use of lowering blocks on the rear springs. Later cars were given a rake job either adding a dropped front axle or heating front coil springs to make the front end of the car much lower than the rear. Immediately postwar, most rods would change from mechanical to hydraulic (“*juice*”) brakes and from bulb to sealed-beam headlights.

By the mid-1950s and early 1960s, the custom *Deuce* was everywhere – typically fenderless and steeply chopped, and almost all **Ford**

(or **Mercury**) with the 239 cu in (3,920 cc) flatly, introduced in 1939 with (arguably) the first **Jimmy** supercharger on a V8 by **Navarro** in 1950. Later rods and customs swapped the old solid rear axle for an independent rear, often from **Jaguar**. The mechanicals (and the attitude) had remained fairly constant – but the aesthetics would soon evolve into something else.

One day came when the grille of one make of car was replaced by another; a 1937 **Buick** grille was often used on a Ford. In the 1950s and 1960s, the grille swap of choice was the 1953 **De Soto**.

The original hot rods were plainly painted, like the **Model A** Fords from which they had been built up, and only slowly began to take on colors; before the eventual fancy orange-yellow flamed bonnets or “*candy-like*” deep acrylic finishes came into vogue.

With the change in contemporary regular car design to encase wheels within fenders and to extend the bonnet to the full width of the car, many former body-styling practices were no longer possible. In addition, there was tremendous automotive advertising and subsequent public interest in the new models in the 1950s. Young folks started to go out and buy newer cars.

Hence custom cars came into existence, swapping headlamp rings, grilles, bumpers, chrome side strips, and tail lights, as well as frenching and tunnelling head- and taillights. The bodies of the cars were changed by cutting through the sheet metal, removing bits to make

the car lower, welding it back together, and adding a lot of lead to make the resulting form smooth (hence the term *lead sled*; lead has since been replaced by **Bondo** which we often refer to as *bog* here in Oz).

By this means, *chopping* made the roof lower while *sectioning* made the body thinner from top to bottom. *Channeling* was cutting notches in the floorpan where the body touches the frame to lower the whole body. *Fins* were often added from other cars or made up from sheet steel, bespoke.

But in custom car culture, someone who merely changes the appearance without also substantially improving the performance is usually frowned upon. Performance mods remained an essential ingredient.

Custom cars celebrated the influence of hot rodding culture that had been born out of teenage rebellion in the post World War Two boom, perpetuating it. Based on the hot rod and now custom lifestyle, **Juxtapoz Magazine** – founded by the artist **Robert Williams**, began to cover and proliferate a whole new aesthetic, *Kustom Kulture* art.

The whole concept of *cool* in mixing historical styles – to create a radical and hybrid NEW form from the old – soon became (beyond the car) a whole life philosophy, and a culture.

Kustom Kulture (spelt with a K) arose, with it's own diverse ranges of music and fashion – and continues to flourish today with the **Midwest Trader** shop, *suicide girls* and *psychobilly* punk.

Classic custom down under.
A very tidy '57 Chrysler Royal.
Fats 'n fins.





But, back to cars...

Custom cars are always distinct from cars in stock condition. Builders may adopt the visual and performance characteristics of some relevant modification styles, and combine these as desired.

From this has evolved now several different custom themes, including even a modern custom style where contemporary components and paint finishes of modern cars are used, including things like body kits and tire lettering.

Of course, features from all sorts of eras are often mixed so types can overlap and blend, making them impossible to classify!

Features

Paint

Paint has always been an important concern. Once bodywork is done, cars are often painted unusual colors. Transparent but wildly colored candy-apple paint, applied atop a metallic undercoat, and metalflake paint, with aluminum glitter within candy-apple paint, first began to appear in the 1960s. These took many coats to produce a brilliant effect – which in hot climates had a tendency to flake off. This process and style of paint job was invented by **Joe Bailon**, a famous customiser from Northern California.

Customisers also continued the habit of adding decorative paint after the main coat was finished, of flames extending rearward from the front wheels, scallops, and hand-painted pinstripes of a contrasting color. The base color, most often a single coat, would be expected to be of a simpler paint. Flame jobs later spread to the hood, encompassing the entire front end, and have progressed from traditional reds and yellows to blues and greens and body-color 'ghost' flames. One particular style of flames – called *crab claw flames* – still prevalent today, is attributed to **Dean Jeffries**. Lace pattern panels also appeared.

Painting has become such a part of the custom car scene that now in many custom car competitions, awards for custom paint are as highly sought after as awards for the whole cars themselves.

Engine swaps

Engine swaps have always been commonplace. Once, the flathead, or *flatty*, was the preference – supplanted by the early **Hemi** in the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1970s, the small-block **Chevrolet**

was the most common option, and since the 1980s, the 350 cu in (5.7 l) Chevy has been almost ubiquitous. More recently, the 325 cu in (5.3 l) Chevy LS has begun replacing the 350. Flatheads and early Hemis have not entirely disappeared, but ready availability, ease of maintenance, and low cost of parts now make the Chev V8 – in particular the first and third generation small block – the most frequent engine of choice.

Once customising post-war cars caught on, some of the practices were extended to pre-war cars which would have actually been called *fendered rods*, with more body work done on them.

An alternate rule for disambiguation developed: hot rods had the engine behind the front suspension, while customs had the engine over the front suspension. The clearest example of this is Fords prior to 1949 had **Henry Ford's** old transverse front suspension, while 1949 models had a more modern suspension with the engine moved forward. However, an American museum has what could be the first true custom, built by **Cletus Clobes** in 1932, among its exhibits.

With the coming of the muscle car, and further to the high-performance luxury car, customisation declined. One place where it persisted was the US Southwest, where lowriders were built similar in concept to the earlier customs, but of post-1950s cars.

As the supply of usable antique steel bodies has dried up, companies such **Westcott's**, **Harwood**, **Gibbon Fiberglass** and **Speedway Motors** have begun to fabricate new fibreglass copies, while **Classic Manufacturing and Supply** for one example, has been making a variety of new steel bodies since the 1970s. California's *junker law*, which pays a nominal sum to take 'gross polluters' off the road, has been criticised by enthusiasts (and by **SEMA**) for accelerating this trend.

Starting in the 1950s, it became popular among customisers to show off their vehicles at drive-in restaurants (a la **Happy Days**). Among the largest and longest lasting was **Johnnie's Broiler** in Downey, California.

The practice continues today, especially in Southern California.

Famous Customisers

Ed "**Big Daddy**" **Roth** and **Robert Williams** historically are luminaries in the world of both rods and customs, as their influence upon Kustom Culture itself is profound. Examples of notable custom builders include **George Barris**, **Darryl Starbird**, **Boyd Coddington**, **Dave Stuckey**, **Dean Jeffries**, **Barry Lobeck**, **Phil Cool**, **Chip Foose**, **Jesse James** and **Pete Chapouris**. Others, such as **Von Dutch**, are best known as custom painters.

Several customisers – including Barris and Coddington, and studios like **West Coast Customs**, have become famous beyond the auto community thanks to their proximity to Hollywood. Barris designed TV's *Batmobile* among many other memorable cars we'd all have seen and might know. And **Pimp My Ride** was the first of many 'reality' lifestyle shows about custom cars and bikes.

Awards

The highest award for customisers is the **AMBR** (*America's Most Beautiful Roadster*) trophy, presented annually at the **Grand National Roadster Show** since 1948 (also known within the custom community as the **Oakland Roadster Show** until it was moved to Southern California in 2003). This competition has produced famous, and radical, customs.

Another is the **Ridler Award**, presented at the **Detroit Autorama** since 1964 in honor of show founder **Don Ridler**. With one of the most unusual of car show entry requirements, winners of the prestigious Ridler Award are selected as the most outstanding from among cars being shown for the first time. This prompts builders of many high-end roadsters to first enter the Autorama first and then the Grand National show in order to have the chance to win top honours at both shows. Few cars and owners can claim this achievement.

Notable customs

Some customs gain attention for winning the AMBR trophy, or for their outlandish styling. Notable among these is Silhouette and **Ed Roth's Mysterion**. Some of these more unusual projects have been turned into **Hot Wheels** toy cars, among them **The Red Baron**. Other custom cars became notable for appearances in film (such as the yellow deuce from



American Graffiti {1973}} or TV (such as *The Monkeemobile*, the **Munsters** hearse, or, more recently *Eliminator*, built for **ZZ Top**. Specialist vehicles, such as *KITT* from **Knight Rider**, are not usually considered customs because they retain a mostly stock exterior.

Language

Certain linguistic conventions are followed among rodders and customisers.

The model year is rarely given in full, except when it might be confused, so a 1934 model is a '34, while a 2005 might be an '05 or not.

A '32 is usually a *Deuce* and most often a roadster, unless coupé is specified, and almost always a Ford.

A 1955, 1956, or 1957 is usually a Chevrolet.

A 1955, 1956, or 1957 Chevrolet is often called a *Tri-Five*.

A 3- or 5-window is usually a Ford, unless specified.

A *flat* is a flathead V8 (always Ford, unless specified); while a *late* (or late model) *flat* is probably a *Merc* (Mercury).

Of course we all know what a **Hemi** is, but to non-**Mopar** rodders and customisers a *hemi* is universally assumed to be a 426, unless displacement (331, 354, or 392) is specified; typically, a 426 is a hemi, unless **Wedge** is specified. See *baby hemi*.

A 392 is typically assumed to be an *early hemi*.

A 331 or 354 is known to be an (early) hemi, but rarely referred to as such.

A *270 Jimmy* is a 270 cubic inch **GMC** truck engine often used to replace a smaller displacement Chevrolet six cylinder.

Units are routinely dropped, unless they are unclear, so a 426 cubic inch (in³) displacement engine is simply referred to as a *426*, a 5-litre (litre) displacement engine is a *5.0* (spoken as "five point oh"), and a 600 cubic feet per minute (cfm) carburetor is a *600*. Engine displacement can be described in cubic inches or litres (for example, a 5.7-litre engine is also known as a *350* {"three fifty"}); but this frequently depends on which units the user is most comfortable or familiar with.

The 'cutoff year' as originally promoted by the **National Street Rod Association (NSRA)** is 1949. Many custom car shows will only accept

1948 and earlier models as entries, and many custom car organisations will not admit later model cars or trucks. Also, with some imports – this has been a grey area of what's acceptable: eg. an aircooled **VW Beetle**, a Big Three product manufactured overseas like a Ford **Capri** built in the UK or a **General Motors Holden's** product. And/or a vintage import with an American driveline transplant, but this practice is subject to change.

Modern day custom car shows which allow the inclusion of musclecars have used the 1972 model year as the cutoff, since it is considered the end of the musclecar era prior to the introduction of the catalytic converter. The NSRA announced in 2011 it would switch to a shifting year method where any owner with a car 30 years or older will be allowed membership. So from 2011 the owner of a 1981 model year vehicle would qualify, then in 2012 the owner of a 1982 model year vehicle would qualify, and so on. Additionally, the **Goodguys** car show organisation has moved the year limit for its 'rod' shows from 1949 to 1954 in recent years.

Kustoms

Kustoms – with a "K" are *period correct* modified cars from the 1930s built between the 1950s and '60s, done in the customising styles of that time. The usage of a "K" for "Kustom" rather than a "C", is believed to have originated with George Barris. It is virtually the biggest subcategory of the custom, almost the majority.

Styling

This style generally consists of, but is not limited to, starting with an existing car and making changes such as:

Slamming

Lowering the suspension – either by cutting the springs (not a good idea), replacing with lowering springs, adopting coilovers (adjustable shock absorbers) or going all the way with airbags!

Chopping

Chopping down the roof line, (usually chopped more in the rear to give a 'raked back' look, B-pillars are also commonly leaned to enhance this look)

Sectioning and Channeling

Sectioning and/or channeling is removing a section from the centre of the body. Certain pieces of side trim can also be removed or 'shaved' to make the car look longer, lower and smoother. Often bits and pieces of trim from other model cars, are cut, spliced and added to give the car a

totally new and interesting 'line' to lead the eye in the direction that the *kustomizer* wishes it to go.

Shaving

Door handles are often *shaved* as well, with electric solenoids or cables then installed. Buttons are installed in hidden locations and used to open the doors. Boot lids and other pieces of the body can also be altered in this way.

Frenching

The head and tail lights of a true Kustom may or may not be the original ones manufactured with the car. Some popular swaps would be putting **Oldsmobile** or **Buick** headlights in another model for example. Headlights, tail lights, antenna(e) are also subject to term and act called *frenching*, where the object is cut from the body, a 'box' in the shape of the item is fabricated and welded into the original hole. The part is then installed back into the 'frenching pocket' giving it a look of being recessed into the body.

Leading

Traditionally, 'lead', (a mixture of 70% lead and 30% tin) was used in bodywork of the area instead of modern polyester fillers or fibreglass, after the metal shaping is done to prepare for paint. 'Leading' connotes a true Kustom *Lead Sled*, which was started in the 1950s to imply a large, slow lead-filled car that was all flash and could not hold its own at the races. This was sometimes not the case however and certain kustoms packed some serious punch under the bonnet. Today, however calling someone's car a 'Lead Sled' will generally be taken as a compliment.

Grills and hubcaps

Grills are often changed on lead sleds as well. Some owners use pieces of other grills to customise their own. For example, using a **DeSoto** grill in a '50 **Mercury**, or a **LaSalle (Cadillac)** grill in a '36 **Ford**, are two of the most recognised and classic combinations of all time.

Flipper style hubcaps are popular on customs; such as the '57 **Dodge Lancer** (4 bars), '56 **Oldsmobile Fiesta** (3 bars), and from the '59 **Dodge Lancer** – called *Crabs*, as they are said to resemble a crab. Other wheelcovers such as those from a '57 and '49 **Cadillac** are referred to as *Sombreros*, while '57 **Plymouths** have *Cones*. There were also other popular styles that were purely aftermarket and never came factory stock on another car, like *Hollywood* flippers, or *Crossbars* for example.



Tyres

Of course *fats* have always been the go. The more rubber, the tougher it can look.

But once it was an unspoken rule of sorts that a 'true' Kustom will have whitewall tyres, the most authentic being bias ply style tyres. The width of the whitewall denotes the era that the particular car hearkens to. For example, a custom built in a 1940s style will typically have true "*wide Whites*" which are 3 inches or more in width, where the white rubber extends behind the rim of the wheel, this style is period-correct for customs up to the mid 1950s. From the mid to late 1950s, there was a narrower (but still wide) wall extending to the rim of the wheel.

In 1956, **GM** exhibited a concept car called **Biscayne** (which carried styling elements that were later used on **Corvettes**, '57 **Chevrolets**, and **Corvairs**). This car featured some new high-tech looking tyres that had only a very thin stripe of whitewall rubber. By 1958, Cadillac started selling cars with these type of "*skinny Whites*" or "*Inch walls*". They were an instant hit and all the rage with the Kustom Krowd. This style of thinner 1 in, 1.5 in, 1.3 in, 3/8 in, or 5/8 in whitewall continued to be popular well into the 1960s – and are still common even on some newer cars today.

Exhaust pipes

Lakes pipes were another Kustom mainstay, long or short chrome pipes that run back behind the front wheel wells. They have either

one of three removable end plugs for running flat through with open exhaust. Side pipes are similar but do not include removable plugs. *Bellflower* tips are similar but run from the rear wheel well back under the bumper, a style that originated in the Bellflower California area in the early 1960s.

Schools of Kustomizing

Kustoms can literally be set apart by the attitudes surrounding them – the so-called 'schools' of *Kustom*.

The oldest and most traditional school of customising is universally called building a "*Stock Component Kustom*" where parts from other makes and years are used to alter the appearance of the car.

But other attitudes have since evolved, and these intentions not only determine trophy categories but sometimes the themes of entire shows – and hence their entry criteria!

Mild Kustom

The term *Mild Kustom* generally refers to a fairly conservative approach to customising, where the majority of the original beauty and identity of the car is retained.

Full Kustom

A *Full Kustom* refers to a car that has been severely altered in every aspect possible. Almost every exterior panel is re-shaped, with tricked interiors, dash, engine bay, suspension – and lots of heavily chromed mechanical components.

Bomb

There is also a third version of a true Kustom, the *Bomb*. These were the original *Lowriders*, which developed back in the 1940s through the 1960s alongside the other types of Kustoms. These usually were similar to the mild Kustoms in that they emphasize keeping the car as original as possible, but using custom paint, chrome, and often covered with every type of bolt-on period correct accessory possible. Each additional accessory on a Bomb is like having one more little badge of honour. Bombs usually have heavily altered suspensions that incorporate traditional hydraulics setups, (the most authentic use discarded World War II aircraft hydraulic components, which were largely available after the war). This is the origin of the *air bag*.

Terminology

Almost all modified cars post 1949 can be referred to as custom cars, even leadsleds or sleds. The term kustom is generally used as a signifier that the car was done in the 1950s and early 1960s style as opposed to later more modern styles.

Types of customs

Hi-Riser

Kustom

Lead sled

Lowrider

Rat rod

Ricer



THE LINGO

Common terms

3/4-race — high-performance flaty cam, suitable for street and strip use

3 deuces — arrangement of three 2-barrel (twin-choke) carburetors; distinct from **Six Pak** and **Pontiac** and **Olds Tri-Power** (also 3x2 arrangements)

3-window — 2-door coupé; so named for one door window on each side plus the rear window

5-window — 2-door coupé; so named for one door window and one quarter window on each side plus the rear window

97s ("ninety-sevens") — reference to the model number of Stromberg carburetors

A-bone — Model A coupé

Alky — alcohol (methanol) racing fuel

Altered — drag racing car, or the category it runs in

Anglebox — British slang for a '59 to '68 Anglia

Appletons (sometimes **Appleton spots**) — spotlights, mounted in the A-pillars, similar to those used by police cars.

Ardun — Ford flathead V8 hemi heads designed by Zora Duntov

Awful Awful (mainly North American) — AA/FA ('double A' Fuel Altered) racing car

Baby elephant or **Baby Hemi** — small cubic inch early Hemi

Baby moons — chrome small smooth convex hubcaps covering the wheel lug area. Full moons covered the entire wheel.

Back-halved — a bodied drag racing car that has had its stock rear suspension removed and replaced with a four-link or ladder bar rear suspension, and narrowed rear axle. This arrangement allows for larger tyres and better adjustability.

Bagged — the use of air suspension to raise and lower the car (see low-riders)

Barn find — newly discovered vehicle typically found in storage, either long forgotten or abandoned, still in its original condition from when it was first stored

Big tire (sic: North American) — a drag racing car running large rear tyres usually over 29" tall and wider than 10.5"

Blower — mechanically driven supercharger; excludes turbochargers. Commonly a **Roots**.

Blown

An engine equipped with a supercharger (ie: a "*blown hemi*"); rarely used in reference to turbocharged engines

A vehicle equipped with a supercharged engine (a "*blown highboy*")

A wrecked engine or transmission

Blue dots

Pontiac tail lights

Any taillight equipped with a blue crystal to give it a "*purple-ish*" appearance when illuminated. Illegal in some places.

Blue oval — Ford product (for the Ford badge)

Bondo — brand name for a body filler putty, often used as a generic term for any such product. In Oz what we'd call **Bog**.

Bored — increased the diameter of the cylinders in order to increase engine displacement ("*He bored the engine*"); having had the diameter increased ("*the engine was bored*")

Bottle — nitrous tank

Bowtie — Chevrolet product (for the badge)

Boosted — a car that has a turbocharger or supercharger

Bugcatcher — large scoop intake protruding through hood opening, or on cars with no hood.

Bullnosing — replacing the hood ornament with a "bullnose" chrome strip or filling the mounting hole with lead.

Bump in — the act of staging a drag car by moving forward in short increments or 'bumps' while a transbrake or light foot brake pressure is applied. A transbrake equipped car uses a 'bump box' to momentary unlock the transmission allowing it to creep short distances. This is often done by turbo cars in order to build boost while staging, but can also be done by non-turbo cars to shallow stage to increase roll out.

Bumpstick — camshaft

Burndown — intentionally slowly staging a car for a drag race in order to throw the other driver off his game, or to cause the opponents car to build excess heat. Also called a *staging duel*

Cabriolet (or *cabrio*) — A vehicle with a removable or retractable cloth top, characterized by integrated door window frames and crank up glass.

Cam — camshaft

Cammer

(Most commonly) the SOHC (single overhead camshaft) version of the 427 Ford V8.

(Sometimes), the Ford Racing Power Parts 5-litre. (Rarely), any engine with overhead camshaft(s).

Cannon — Common exhaust pipe style in modern customs with an increased opening diameter; taken from the modern Super Saloon and Stock Car race car

Channelled — a car lowered by having the floor removed and reattached.

Channeling — removing the floor and reattaching it to the body at a higher point, thus lowering the car without suspension modifications. Also known as a *body drop*.

Cheater slicks (or **Cheaters**) — soft compound tyres with just enough tread added to make them street legal (not usually in singular)

Cherry — like new (yes, that word comes from rodding!)

Chipped — fitted with a modified ECU or PCM.

Chop — removing a section of the roof pillars and windows to lower the roofline

Chopped — to cut the roof, remove a section and then replace it back again to lower the car's profile

Chopping — executing a roof chop

C.I.D. (sometimes **Cubic Inches** or **Inches**) — cubic inches displacement

Cobra killers — decorative wheel centers that stick out 3–5 in (7.6–12.7 cm) and have flipper qualities for more visual attraction.

Convertible — retractable top car with no integral door window frames like the cabriolet. Has roll up glass in doors as opposed to roadsters that do not.

Crank — crankshaft

Cubes — CID

Cutout — a short leg of the exhaust system that exits to the side of the car and typically in front of the driver. The cutout can be operated manually or remotely from the drivers seat. Hot rodders typically use cutouts on hot rods that are used on the street and the strip. The cutout is closed for street use and open for drag racing on the strip.

Dagmars — large front bumper or "*bullets*"

Decked — trunklid trim removed

Deuce

'32 Ford Model B (most often a roadster); now commonly on A frame rails. Probably the most recognisable hotrod

Dollys — Dagmars, after the country singer, Dolly Parton

Digger — dragster: only applied to rails, slingshots, or fuel cars

Dragster

(Broadly), any vehicle modified or purpose-built for use on strips. (Specifically), specialised racers (early or recent types, in gas, alky, or fuel varieties)

Donk — Australian slang for motor

Door slammer (**doorslammer**, **door car**) — A drag racing car that retains its stock body with functioning doors or the appearance of a stock body with functioning doors. Some classes of door slammers are *Pro Stock*, *Pro Modified*, *Real Street*, *x275*, and *Outlaw 10.5*.

Ducktail — A Valiant Charger

Dual quads — two four-barrel carburetors

Duval windshield — a v-shaped windshield with a centre post, as opposed to the typical stock straight-across type.

Dyno queen — a car that puts up impressive power numbers on a dynamometer but doesn't perform well when actually raced.

Elephant — Chrysler Hemi

Fabricate — create a part no longer be available; create any part from scratch

Factory Freak — an unmodified car that seemingly makes more power than or is much quicker than the average for its year, make, and model. Sometimes called a *sleepier*

Fat-fender — 1934-48 (U.S.) car (most common usage is to refer to '41-'48 inclusive, with '35-'41s called *pontoon fenders*.)

Fang it — Australian slang for 'go faster'

Fordillac ("*for di lack*") — Ford with transplanted Cadillac V8 engine

Flagger (in street racing) — the person who stages and starts the race, usually by an arm drop or flashlight.

Flamed — painted with a traditional flame job

Flaty — flathead engine (usually refers to a Ford; when specified, the Mercury-built model) , can also be a Chrysler flathead

3/8s by 3/8s — lengthening the stroke and increasing the cylinder bore 3/8 inch. A term only applied to flattys.

French — to install a headlight or taillight slightly sunken into fender

Frenched — headlight or taillight slightly sunken into fender; to install as such ("*she frenched the taillights*")

Fuel

(Most commonly), nitro (or a mixture of nitro and alky)

The top drag racing class (which runs on nitro)

(Broadly), gasoline (petrol)

Fuelie

(originally) the 1957 Corvette fuel injected engine, or the car itself (the *fuellie 'vette*)

(commonly now) any fuel injected engine

Fueler — any drag racing car run on nitro, or in a nitro class

Full-race — high-performance flaty cam, suitable only for strip use

Gasser — car used in gasoline-only drag racing classes in the 1960s (as opposed to alcohol or nitromethane fuels), where the front end of the car is raised along with the motor. Characterised by a body that sits well above the front wheels. Distinct from hiboy.

Gap — To win a race by at least a car length

Gennie — genuine.

Giggle gas — nitrous oxide

Goat — GTO (not the Ferrari or the Mitsubishi)

Grenaded — to break a part into pieces ("*When I missed that shift it grenaded my transmission.*")

Guzzoline — Australian slang for petrol

Hair dryer — turbocharger (for the shape of the intake and exhaust casings)

Hairpins — radius rods on axle suspension systems

Hang (or *pull*) **the laundry** — to deploy a braking parachute

Header — variety of exhaust manifold.

The hit — giving someone in a drag race the option to move first. Sometimes *the move*.

Hiboy (or *highboy*) — fenderless, but not lowered. Distinct from gasser.

Hippo — A Valiant VH, VJ or CH hardtop

Hopped up (also *hopped*) — a stock engine modified to increase performance

Huffer — supercharger, especially of the Roots type.

Indian (also *Tin Indian*) — Pontiac (for the grille badge)

Jesus Bar — handrail or roll cage strut "*that you hang on to and say...*"

Jimmy (Usually) GMC straight 6

(Broadly) any GMC product, such as a compressor used on 2-stroke diesels used as a supercharger. In Australia we'd say *from or by the General*.

Jimmy Six — GMC straight 6

Juice — originally nitrous oxide, but today often used for petrol

Juice brakes — hydraulic brakes

Kits — multiple nitrous oxide systems (“How many kits are you spraying?”)

Lake pipes — exhaust pipes running beneath the rocker panels, originally invented for saltlake racing

Laundry — parachutes used to slow drag racing cars

Lope — exhaust note produced by of a high-duration cam

Louvres — cuts in the sheet metal of the body with a narrow raised section on one side of the cuts to create a small window. Used to release air from engine compartments, or often merely for esthetics

Lowering — reducing the ride height (or ground clearance). Also known as *slamming*

Mag

Magnesium wheel, or steel or aluminum copy resembling a racing wheel.

Merc — Mercury

Mill — any internal combustion engine

Moons (or *Moon discs*; incorrectly, *moon discs*) — plain flat chrome or aluminum disc hubcaps, originally adopted by land speed racers. Smaller examples are *baby Moons*. Named for **Dean Moon**.

Mopar — any car or engine sold by **Chrysler Corporation**; from the acronym of the parts, service, and customer care organisation. The word has since become a proper noun.

Mouse — small-block Chevy.

Mountain motor — large-displacement engine. Named for their size, and for being constructed in the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina. In organised automotive competition, the term commonly references a V8 engine displacing more than 500 cubic inches; informally, a V8 engine displacing more than 560 cubic inches

Nail — any car used as a daily driver

Nailhead — Early **Buick** V8, named for relatively small diameter valves

Nerf bar — a small tubular or solid T-shaped or decorative bar that acts as a bumper.

Nitro — Nitromethane, used as a fuel additive in some drag cars

Nitrous — nitrous oxide

NOS

New Old Stock, stockpiled parts of models no longer produced, not previously available for retail purchase. (More common among customisers than rodders.)

Nitrous Oxide System (a.k.a. laughing gas, liquid supercharger, N2O, nitrous, “the bottle”): apparatus for introducing nitrous oxide into the air intake of an engine prior to the fuel entering the cylinder.

Nosed — as in *nosed and decked*: removal of any hood (bonnet) or trunk (boot) ornaments, the filling of holes, and painting as a smooth clean surface.

Phaeton — 4 dr roadster; also called a touring

Phantom — body style never built by the original manufacturer[66] (a term also adopted by model kit builders)

Pinched rails — Deuce frame rails narrowed under a Model A (which has a narrower front body)

Pickoupe — (North American) car-based light-duty pickup, from ‘pickup’ and ‘coupé’. Our ute.

Pinched — narrowed and lengthened body, usually at the nose.

Pop

A mixture of nitro and alky.

British slang for a sit-up and beg Ford Popular.

Plod — (British) body filler

Ported and polished — enlarging and smoothing of the intake and exhaust port surfaces of performance engine cylinder heads to facilitate the ease of movement and increased volume of the engine gases.

Port-matching — the lining up of the intake manifold, cylinder head ports and exhaust headers as to create one continuous smooth course of travel for engine gases with no ledges or obstructions.

Prepped — a track or road that has been treated with various chemicals to increase traction

Pro Street — street legal car resembling a *Pro Stock* car. Some are very thinly disguised racers.

QJ or Q-Jet — Quadrajet (Rochester 4-barrel carburetor)

Ragtop — convertible

Rail

Dragster with exposed front frame rails. Usually refers to early short-wheelbase cars, and not usually to *Altered*s.

Rake job — car with suspension modified to lower the front end

Rat

Chevy big block engine

Redline — maximum safe rev limit; to operate an engine at that limit (“*redline it*”, “*redlined it*”)

Rockcrusher — Muncie M22 4-speed transmission[60] so called because of the audible differences in operation between the model M-22 and its lower strength but quieter cousin, the M-21[citation needed]

Rocket — Oldsmobile, in particular their early V8s

Rolled pan — Contoured sheet of metal covering the space where the bumper used to be

Sandbagger — a driver who intentionally drives slower than his car is capable of or lets off before the end of the drag strip to give the illusion his car is slower than it is to lure people into racing.

SBC — small-block V8 (Chevy)

SBF — Small block Ford V8.

Sectioned — having sectioning (“*the ‘49 was sectioned*”); having performed a sectioning (“*he sectioned the Merc*”)

Sectioning — removing of a horizontal centre section of the body and reattaching the upper and lower parts

Shoobox — ‘49-’54 Ford (for the slab-sided appearance)

SkyJackers — airshocks used in the rear to jack up the backend to clear wider tires/wheels.

Slammed — lowering the car very close to the ground. Frequently accomplished with the use of air suspension.

Sleeper — a car that is disguised to look stock or in poor condition but is actually a very quick car.

Slick — soft compound tire with no grooves, designed only for drag racing. Usually much wider than normal street tires.

Slingshot — later variety of early digger, named for the driver’s position behind the rear wheels (not its speed)

Smack — Nitrous Oxide

Small tire — (US spelling) a drag racing car using rear tires generally no taller than 29” and no wider than 10.5”

Souped (or “*souped up*”) — hopped up, performance improved (more common in ‘40s and ‘50s)

Spray — nitrous oxide

Snail —turbocharger, from the snail shell appearance of the housing

Steelies — stock steel rims

Stovebolt — Chevy straight 6

Straight axle — term for a car (often a *gasser*) that has had its stock A-arm style front suspension removed for leaf springs and a solid tube axle.

Street legal — dual-purpose car, capable of performing routine duties as well as weekend racing. Some cars described as such, such as *Pro Street* cars, are very thinly disguised racers.

Street-strip — dual-purpose car, capable of performing routine duties as well as weekend racing. Some cars described as such have very marginal off-track utility.

Strip Drag strip.

More broadly, cars or parts used or intended for racing only. Thus “*street-strip*” is a dual-purpose car.

Stroke — Engine stroke; to increase the engine stroke (“*stroke it*”)

Stroke — increased stroke, to increase displacement, usually by adding a longer-stroke crankshaft

Suicided — door changed from front- to rear-hinged (“suicide”) type.

Suicide front end — a front axle configuration where it is mounted forward of the front cross member or the end of the frame rails

Suicide knob — egg-sized knob mounted on the steering wheel to assist rapid turning also “*spinner knob*”

Taildragger — lowered more in the rear than front. Often seen on leadsleds. Often a regionalised trend.

Tin — Possibly a barn or a shed find, but a wreck of an old car that can be saved and restored, potentially into a rod.

Tin Indian — Pontiac (for the grille badge)

Toploader — Ford 4-speed manual transmission,[64] so named because access to the transmission internal was made via an access panel located on the top of the transmission housing.

Track T — Model T roadster built in the style of a dirt track race car

Traction bars —usually, a set of square tubes attached to the back axle via two U bolts before and after the axle housing leading forward with a rubber snubber at the top end allowing as the car takes off to limit axle wrap on leaf springs.

Trailer queen — a race car that isn’t daily driven, is trailered to events, and sees little or no use other than on a race track.

Tabbed — A car that has had its stock rear wheel wells removed and replaced with larger ones to allow for wider rear tyres.

Tunneled — deeply sunken into fender

Weedburners — short, downward-pointing exhaust pipes with no mufflers (similar to *Funny Car* exhausts), used for racing, or just for show (not street legal)

Wombat — General Motors W series engine

Wrinkle walls — drag racing slicks

Zoomie pipes (or *zoomies*) — short exhaust pipes with no mufflers, used for racing, or just for show (not street legal)

Some terms have an additional, different meaning among customisers than among rodders: NOS, for instance, is a reference to new old stock, rather than nitrous oxide.



...NOW THE CUSTOM SPECTRUM BEGINS TO EXPAND

In automotive usage, a **lead sled** is a standard production car (of actually any age) with a body heavily modified in particular ways; especially, though not exclusively, a 1949, 1950 or 1951 model year Ford 'Shoebox' or Mercury Eight car. Altering the car's entire appearance by manipulating its profile and transplanting its detailing is the main objective (and most revered skill), with DeSoto and Plymouth trims the most prevalent choice of body dressing. Typically, lead sleds are radical hybrids of different makes.

Period auto body repair by an auto body mechanic used to be achieved through a combination of re-shaping sheet metal using specialist hand tools and the application of molten lead to damaged body panels, fulfilling the role of more modern polyester fillers such as bondo today. The same techniques were also used in high end low volume car production (coachbuilding) and then adopted for aftermarket hot rodding body panel modifications.

Leading connotes a true *Lead Sled*.

The term was actually started by hot rodders in the 1950s as a pejorative – a criticism, to imply a large, slow lead-filled car that was all flash and could not hold its own at the races. This wasn't always the case however, as certain kustoms deceptively packed some serious punch under the bonnet. But rodders still frowned upon these "*big bloated boats on the road*" as inferior customs. And of course they didn't deserve any badges of honour as they "*weren't scratch-built*".

Over time sleds became respected for the extreme crafting required in their creation (often much more sophisticated and involved than other customs) to become their own category. And today, the term 'lead sled' is far from derogatory.

In fact, if anything, today it will generally be taken as a compliment.

In the beginning, the intent behind a *sled* was to take its looks to the absolute extreme, while the intent of a *rod* was to do so with its performance. They're kinda opposites. Rods were purpose-built, to go fast. Sleds were not. Ironically, what we see in the autosalon or even in the concept car today is more of a lead sled mentality than hot rod.

So which custom actually is superior to the other?

Back in the day, in order to be classified as a lead sled, the vehicle had to be subjected to most, if not all, of the following body style modifications:

Chopped

Cutting off the roof, removing four to six inches from the pillar posts and re-welding the roof back onto the car body.

Channeled

Cutting the underside of the body to lower the entire body on the frame, usually by two inches.

Frenching

Recessing headlights, tail lights, license plates and radio antennas into the body for an exotic or completely new and different look.

Emblem removal

All original manufacturer's emblems were removed as they were considered to detract from the vehicle. The thought was "*anything that produces a hiccup, a bulge or extrudes from the body is not aerodynamic and detracts from the smooth appearance of the vehicle.*" And so the object of the master craftsman was to make the body as smooth, sleek, and sexy as possible.

Trim removal

All factory trim was removed as these dressings detracted from the lines of the car.

Drip rail removal

Window strips were removed from the roof as they detracted from the smoothness of the vehicle

Door handle and door lock removal

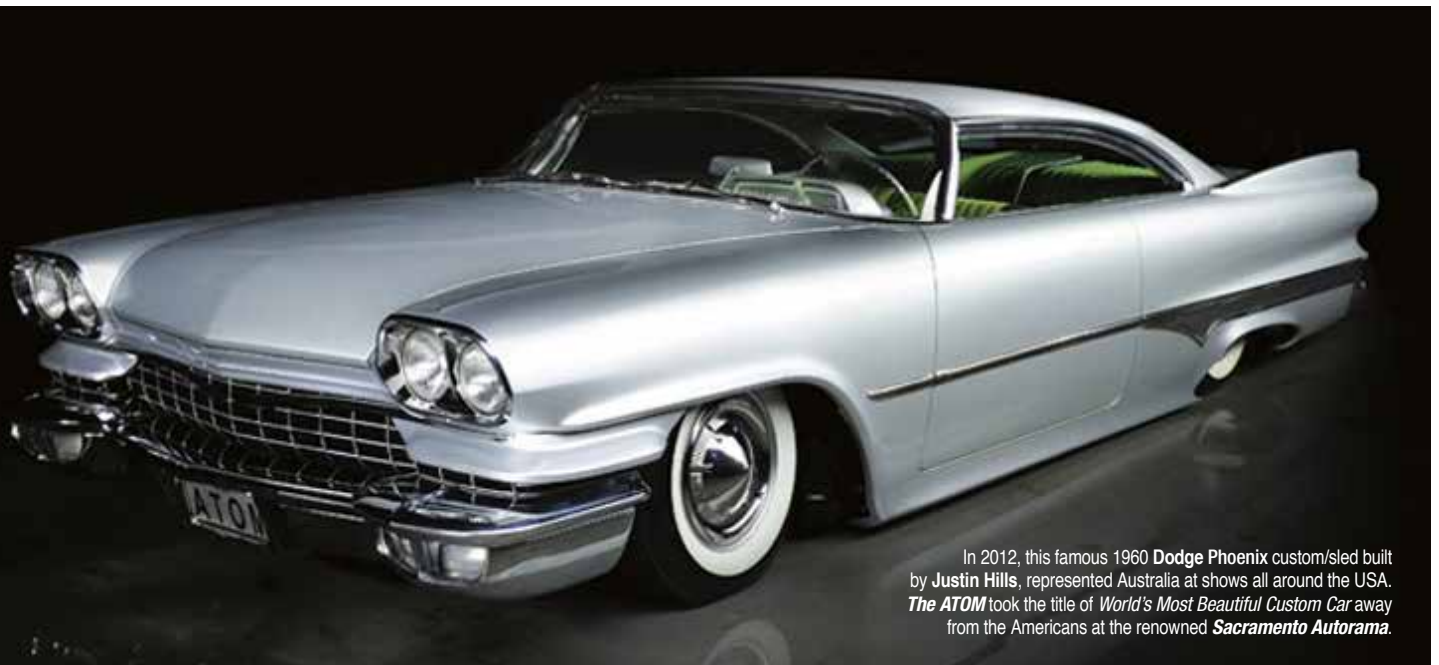
Door handles and door locks were removed because these parts detracted from the smoothness of the vehicle. Electric solenoids and switches were installed in inconspicuous parts of the body, typically underneath the rocker panels, to provide alternate systems for opening the car's doors.

The entire process of removing badges, trim, and doorhandles was referred to as shaving. Of course, debadging and removing any stripping is commonplace nowadays in most customising (sometimes mandatory), yet its roots go way back to the lead sled tradition

Grill modification

The original grill was heavily modified, or substituted with the grill from a completely different make, model, and year car.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, plastic body filler and fiberglass did not exist. Instead, bar lead was used as a body filler. A true craftsman pulled and pushed out dents with body spoons, hammers and dollies until the sheet metal was as straight as they could get it. Any sheet metal



In 2012, this famous 1960 **Dodge Phoenix** custom/sled built by **Justin Hills**, represented Australia at shows all around the USA. **The ATOM** took the title of *World's Most Beautiful Custom Car* away from the Americans at the renowned **Sacramento Autorama**.



that was still slightly wavy, the *bodyman* heated bars of lead and flowed the lead onto the body with an oxygen-acetylene torch similar to work done by a tin smith. The bars of lead were what we today call “*solder*” but were not the wire material we are familiar with today, typically sold for electrical or plumbing repairs. The lead bars or strips ranged anywhere from a quarter of an inch to one inch in width and several inches in length.

Lead craftsmen call the process of melting the lead “*running lead*” and this is a highly specialised ancient trade passed from a master craftsman to an apprentice.

An apprentice bodyman typically would remove the body part from the car and place it on a bench so as to have a fairly flat surface to flow the lead horizontally onto the body. In contrast, the master craftsman could control the heat of the lead in a vertical position without having to remove the body part, thereby saving time in performing the repair.

An apprentice bodyman most likely would have to grind and hand file the lead to a smooth finish for repainting. The master craftsman on the other hand did not have to grind – and only had to hand file, if he had to perform any smoothing at all. The true craftsman controlled the flow of lead with his torch and most times could produce a satin finish without filing.

“*Lead*” referred to the body material used and the extra weight added by the repair material. “*Sled*” referred to the lowering of the vehicle, giving these vehicles the appearance that they were “*slip sliding*” down the highway.

As time progressed, plastics such as *Bondo* were introduced to the market. These plastic body fillers were easier to work with and eventually bodymen did not use their dent pulling tools as effectively because the plastics could compensate for larger errors with decreased finishing times.

Some of the most common model lead sleds are the 1949 **Mercury**, 1949 **Ford**, and the 1959 **Cadillac**.



MIX N' MATCH

Lead Sleds are celebrated for their ingenious execution in creating a flawless ‘new’ hybrid.

This award-winning car owned by Californian **Greg Lazzarini**, started out life as a ‘51 **Plymouth** coupe. He chopped it and altered the front end with a **DeSoto** grill and a cut down molded 54 Chevrolet bumper. The side moldings are also from a 54 Chevy but were installed upside down. The rear bumper is a cut down and molded ‘51 **Pontiac**.

THE ANTI-STREET ROD

A rat rod is a style of custom car that, in most cases, imitates (or exaggerates) the early hot rods of the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s. The style is not to be confused with the somewhat closely related *“traditional”* hot rod, which is an accurate re-creation or period-correct restoration of a hot rod from the same era.

Quite literally, a rat rod can be made from (and the parts of) any car of any era – and virtually any material. The only limits being imagination. Think of the retrofit junkers in *Mad Max* without all the apocalypse.

To begin with, in the late 1950s, the *rat rod* came about as a counter-reaction to the high-priced *custom* and typical *hot rod* – many of which were now seldom driven and served only a decorative purpose. The rat rod’s inception signified a throwback to the original hot rods of the earlier days of hot-rod culture – built according to the owner’s abilities and with the intention of being driven. The kind of cars young people used to build and tinker with as their hobby – and they then identified with. Rat rods were meant to loosely imitate, in both form and function, the *“traditional”* hot rods of the era.

The archetypal rat rod is a late-1920s through to late-1950s coupe or roadster, but sometimes a truck or sedan. Many early (pre-World War II) vehicles were not built with fenders, bonnets, running boards, and bumpers. The bodies are frequently channeled over the frame and sectioned, or the roofs are chopped, for a lower profile. Later-era post-war vehicles were rarely constructed without fenders and were often customised in the fashion of kustoms, leadsleds, and lowriders; Maltese crosses, skulls, and other accessories were often added. The owner of the vehicle was typically responsible for most, or all, of the work present in the vehicle.

Biker, greaser, rockabilly, psychobilly, and punk sub-cultures are often cited as influences that shaped rat rodding. Even today, rat rodders still declare themselves to enjoy and embrace a lo-fi, DIY and amateur anti-aesthetic – citing a rat rod can be juxtaposed from just about any car, old or new. And rough is good.

Rat rods are to custom cars what Dada was to fine art in the 1920s, or punk rock was to music in the 1970s.

Recently, using the term ‘rat rod’ has been derided as being incorrect when describing any vehicle that appears unfinished or is built simply to be driven.

Rodding scribe **Pat Ganahl** had this to say:

“I see what are referred to as Rat Rods today comprising three elements: First are the traditional rods and customs. Those are cars built the way rods were built in the ‘30s, ‘40s, and early ‘50s, with a primary emphasis on low-buck and home-built, using period-correct components ranging from flathead to nailhead engines, wide whitewall tires to skinny blackwall bias-plys, and black primer to hand-rubbed paint.”

“Second are what I personally call Rat Rods, as a positive term... They’re artistic, fun, and sensational reinterpretations of late-‘40s/early-‘50s hot rodding as a culture that includes music, clothing, hairstyles, and tattoos. The cars are low, loud, chopped... with giant rear tires, lots of carburetors, open pipes, and tall gearshifts.”

There is a general belief that the term ‘rat rod’ refers to an unfinished appearance of a hot rod. Basically a hodge-podge of car parts. When a part does not work or needs to be replaced, you don’t go to the store to buy a new piece, you simply find it off of another vehicle and attach it on.

The December 1972 issue of *Rod & Custom* magazine was dedicated to the *“beater”*, a low-budget alternative to the early car models that were slick and customised. Due to the beater’s cheap upholstery, primer covering (instead of paint), and lack of chrome or polished metals, it has been considered a progenitor of the rat rod.

But the origin of the term ‘rat rod’ is the subject of dispute. Opinions regarding the term’s origins were based on one of the following perspectives: The term first appeared in 1972, in an article in *Hot Rod* magazine written by **Gray Baskerville** about cars that, at that time, continued to be covered by primer.

But, Hot Rod magazine has since verified that the first rat rod was indeed owned by artist, **Robert Williams**, who had a ‘32 Ford Roadster deliberately left in only primer as a protest. Williams coined the name as an homage to his colleague (and hero) **Ed “Big Daddy” Roth**’s underground icon, the character *Ratfink*.

Gray’s use of the term was in relation to *“rat bikes”* – motorcycles that were assembled from spare parts, to be enjoyed and ridden, and not necessarily for the display of the builder’s skills. It is believed that the term is likely to have originally been used in a derogatory or pejorative sense, as this remains the case among sections of the hot rod community; however, the term has also been adopted in a positive light by other parts of the sub-culture.

While Robert Williams is now rightfully credited as inventing the idea, the origin of the movement itself is a little easier to pin down. In 1987, after many decades of building hot rods and customs, **Jim “Jake” Jacobs** gathered spare parts from his amassed personal stash and put together a ‘28 Ford Phaeton in 28 days. It sported no fenders, wide-white bias-ply tires, a rusty Model A body on ‘32 Ford frame rails, a chopped windshield and a shortened deuce grille shell with a small-block Chevy 350 and a ‘39 Ford 3-speed. He called it the *Jakelopy*.

Jake then drove to and entered the **Goodguys’** annual *West Coast Nationals* with no bodywork, paint or interior (other than what was needed to be functional and legal). He parked in full view of many high-end, top-dollar customs and proceeded to pull out a bucket of paint and some brushes. Many spectators stopped to watch, and a few even joined Jake as he painted the car.

The Jakelopy was intended to remind people that hot rods were supposed to be accessible. They were supposed to be a hoot to build and drive.





Baskerville described the Jakelopy in Hot Rod as being *“finished... two years before the first rat rods even appeared.”*

So, how do you spot a rat rod?

Chassis

Frames from older cars or light trucks are sometimes used for rat rod conversions – to provide a sturdy base for subsequent alterations.

Older cars in poor condition are often advertised as candidates for rat rod conversions and, in some cases, the owner will purchase a custom frame, or design and build it themselves. In other cases, a rat rodder may use a small pick-up chassis, such as **Dodge Dakota**, to insert into an older body – to create a vehicle with the look of a classic rat rod, while maintaining the reliability of a modern vehicle.

Paint and finish

Rat rods often appear unfinished.

Sometimes primer-only, or in a satin or matte black, and other flat colors are also common. *“Natural patina”* (the original paint job, with rust, blemishes, and sometimes bullet holes, left intact) is also celebrated. As is any patchwork of original paint and primer, or bare metal, in rusty or oiled varieties – with no finish at all. Such finishes honour the anti-restoration slogan that *“it’s only original once”*.

And, contrary to the aesthetic of many car builders, rust is often acceptable and appreciated by rat rod owners.

Early low-budget hot rods were often long term *“works in progress”* and as such final finishing treatments (such as metal prep, paint, and trim) remained in the future, so the rat rod came to imitate and champion this aesthetic.

Pinstriping over the top of any of these surfaces is also a common feature to rat rods.

Interior

Interiors of rat rods can range from spartan to fully finished, though this is typically the final phase of construction. Mexican blankets and bomber seats form the basis of many rat rod interiors, and most are designed to be functional without many comforts; although, this will vary in accordance with the owner’s taste.

Drive train

Though a variety of engines may be used, the most common engine type that is used in rat rods are Flathead V8s, early **Hemis**, or more modern small block V8s from any manufacturer. Straight-8s straight-6s, straight-4, and V6s are also welcomed with varying displacements and any mods.

Diesel engines are occasionally used, rarely fitted with emission controls – as such a feature was not part of the original construction or required under the original license.

Most rat rods are rear-wheel drive, with an open driveline. The rear-ends and the transmissions are typically passenger vehicle pieces.

Suspension

A beam axle is the most commonly used type of front suspension, due to its appearance when exposed without fenders on a vehicle with open front suspension. Independent front suspension is rarely used and most rat rods use a 1928-1948 Ford I-beam axle, with a transverse leaf spring. Although any rear axle can be used in a rat rod, the Ford rear end has been preferred for years due to the availability of spare parts.

“...Ford 9-inchers are the most used rear ends in nearly every form of racing and most high-performance street vehicles...”

Spring types in the front and rear can be transverse, parallel or coil setups – although parallel is not used as frequently as the more common single-spring transverse setup, and coil springs are still occasionally seen even though this spring type is less popular for aesthetic reasons. Rat rods will often be built with airbag suspension, thereby allowing the driver to raise and lower the car; this can be a useful feature due to the extremely low ground clearance of many rat rods.

In many cases, the front suspension is often mounted a considerable distance forward of the radiator, a practice that may be derived from the construction of early drag racing cars.

Criticism

Traditional rodders and restorers often regard the rat rod movement as inferior: *“cheap”* and *“talentless”*. Sentiment among ‘critics’ tends to be dismissive and sometimes pretty negative. A generation gap?

Renown hot rodder and freelance journo **Brad Ocock** said of the rat rod trend:

“There’s a huge difference between rat rod and beater. A beater has potential. A rat rod is something someone threw together to make a statement, and usually that statement is, ‘I don’t know how to weld. I had a bunch of crap lying around and realized there was enough to put together a car but didn’t want to put any effort into it.’”

Hot rod journalist and builder **Jim Aust** put it in his own perspective.

“I put the majority of it into two categories – ‘Young Guy Bad Style’ and ‘Old Guy Bad Style’. The two different camps are separated by those that do not know better and those that should – yet both produce a high volume of style violations.”

“The young guys that generally do not know any better commit their sins in the name of ‘Why not, it gets a ton of attention at the cars shows’. The problem is a clown on fire gets a lot of attention too, doesn’t make it a good thing either especially if you are the clown.”

“The young violators like to not only produce a car that in its raw form has no flow or style, but on top of that they ‘decorate’ them with such unnecessary items as spikes, bullets, grenades, plastic rats, garden tools, barbed wire, skulls and oversized tools.”

“The young guys into this style are nearly 100-percent new comers that have no knowledge of hot rod and custom car history and generally do not care. Good news many of them discover the history and quickly out grow the offensive style and leave it behind as they build new vehicles with an eye on style rather than creating unappreciated attention.”

However, despite such attitudes in many areas of hot rodding, over the last ten to twelve years rat rods have become more and more accepted at car shows.

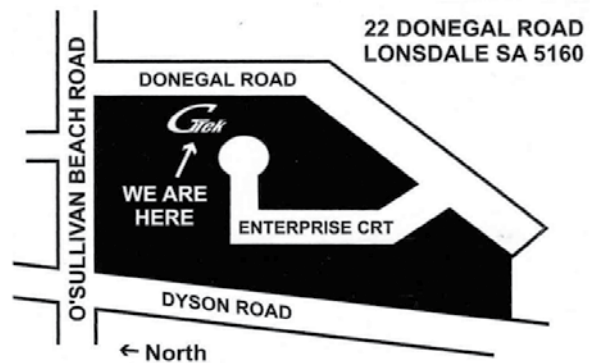
And in the custom car culture in general, with many car shows either including sections for rat rods, or beginning events directly devoted to them and aimed at wider audiences than ever before.



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JEANETTE MARTIN

Hi, my name is **Jeanette Martin** and I am the proud owner of a 1975 **Chrysler Valiant Regal** that I inherited after my husband **Ben** passed away in 2009. Prior to that he owned an AP5, and an AP6 that he somehow managed to wrap around a light pole in our street on his way home from nightshift. The Regal, a one owner second hand car purchased in 1981, was the family workhorse until Ben retired in 1988. Due to the cost of fuel, insurance and registration it was stored in the shed for about 18 years and only taken out occasionally to preserve the engine.

We joined the **CCCSA** in 2006 on the advice of a friend who was involved with heritage vehicles and were amazed to discover on inspection at the club that our "*Old Val*" was a rare vehicle. With just five left on the production line, Chrysler ran out of **Borg-Warner** gear boxes so they fitted the last few with V8 **TorqueFlight** transmissions. Not prepared to include them as standard – after adding a vinyl roof, bucket seats, rear bumper overrides and **Sanky Benson** mag wheels – they were released as a special edition. I believe mine is the only survivor. The car has 27,800km on the clock and no, it has not been wound back as some club members jokingly suggest. In 2000 a new water pump was fitted but Ben, not happy with it, repaired the old one and put that back in the car instead. The only other repair was to the bonnet that was damaged in 1987 when a baseball came flying over an oval fence and put a huge dent in it. In 2010, the car was featured in our club calendar and **Street Machine** magazine.

When I was seventeen I learned to drive in a friend's 1952 **Morris Minor**. He took me – and a rifle to shoot rabbits – out on a back road near Mannum. Sighting a rabbit, he suddenly yelled stop! I panicked, looked down at the clutch and brake, steered the car off the road and left it balancing on top of a large flat rock. We had to be rescued by a tow truck. That was in the days when a full licence was issued before a car could be driven. I can assure you that I am a much better driver now.

I have owned many daily drivers. My first was an **Austin A40** followed by a **Triumph Herald**, **Holden Torana S**, two **Ford Cortinas**, a 1986 **AS Telstar** and my current wheels, a 2001 **Mitsubishi Lancer**. Wish I still had the 1948 Holden that I sold for \$50.00. I have also driven many big horsepower cars in the days when my first husband and I were involved with horses. A **Chev Bel Air**, **Chev Impala**, **Parrisenne**, **Ford Ranch Wagon**, just to name a few. One of the Cortinas was written off in 1979 after a head on collision with a drunk driver who veered onto the wrong side of the road.

In my early 20's I worked as a cook on sheep and cattle stations, returning to Adelaide just prior to the birth of the first of my three children. Bush life was incredible, never wanted to leave.

I upset my mum once when working on Kalabity station 78miles south west of Broken Hill. Every year **CSIRO** men came to the station to collect rabbits for use in testing. I was seated on a plank tied to the roll bars on top a jeep, holding a spotlight. When the light hit the rabbits they squatted and could be easily picked up and tossed into cages. Unfortunately the jeep hit a creek. I bounced up in the air, came down and hit the driver on the head with the spotlight knocking him senseless. Thinking to keep my husband safe, I kept the spotlight on him while he was running. The driver in his stunned state kept revving the engine and chasing him. Eventually we came to a standstill and almost wet ourselves laughing. I was five months pregnant at the time. Perhaps that's why my eldest daughter has a wonderful sense of adventure!

Back in civilisation I have been employed as a cashier, store manager, assistant credit manager, hospital administrator and attended **TAFE** to attain my veterinary nurse certificate. I was also President of the first **Veterinary Nurses Association**, as well as teaching dog obedience.

After the breakdown of my marriage, I met Ben at a **Trash and Treasure** market – I never told him if he was trash or treasure! We then married in 1981. In my Ford Telstar we travelled Australia several times, once with a tent, then a camper trailer. That car had over 300,000 km on the clock when I sold it in 2016, still in perfect running order.

Retirement gave Ben and me the opportunity to be involved in politics, **RSL**, **TTG Garden Club** and local volunteering, where we earned several awards. Now that I'm nearly 80, I have more time to spend with my children. I have 14 grandchildren and 12 and a half great grandchildren, as well as being a part-time carer to my younger daughter who has MS.

I enjoy the car club where I have two wonderful friends, **Claire Rowlands** and **Junette Clifford**. They made Ben and me very welcome on our first visit to the club. I offer a BIG thankyou to Claire and her daughter **Fiona** who kindly drive me to the club for meetings.

– Jeanette Martin.





Jeanette Martin



diamond in the rough

CHRYSLER 300H

DON'T JUDGE THIS BOOK BY ITS COVER

The first hot rods were often low-budget and long term 'works in progress' and as such final finishing treatments (such as metal prep, paint, and trim) remained in the future. The sooner you got your project on the road, the better – whether it was unfinished or not, let alone in any 'show condition'. The rat rod came to imitate and champion this aesthetic as an act of protest, a reaction to trailer queens that aren't practical and never get driven. Rust, primer, bog patches, scarring, old paint and even bullet holes were retained – even preserved with sealants or lacquered over.

It gave these cars an attitude. They looked tough and were cool because they were punk.

Patina is the signature look of a rat rod. It came about as an homage to the 'tin' rodders sought to build fantastic new creations from. Doesn't mean these cars have to be complete heaps though, and it doesn't mean you can't have a trick interior or the latest modcons hidden beneath. This 1962 Chrysler 300H rat rod has a Viper V-10 lurking under its rusty bonnet.

Meet "Doris". When most vintage **Chryslers** reach this level of rust, the car's days on the road are over and it decomposes in a junkyard. However, this haggard 1962 Chrysler 300 is just starting a new life.

Classic Car Studio in St. Louis, Missouri in the USA got its hands on this classic Chrysler and saw it as a candidate for a fire-breathing rat rod. In keeping with the Chrysler family lineage, the St. Louis shop swapped out the old Chrysler 440 V8 (although they suspected it wasn't the original engine) for a more modern, more powerful 8.0-litre V10 from a second-gen **Dodge Viper**. In stock form, this V10 makes 450 horsepower and 490 foot-pounds of torque. Previously, this 300 hadn't been driven in about 30 years and had bounced around to different owners as an unfinished project.

"We chose the Gen II motor as they are the easiest for overall integration," said Noah Alexander of Classic Car Studio. "Since we were building a cruiser, at the end of the day we wanted reliability first and foremost so we went with a stock motor. John's [Industries] rear ends did a nice 9" set up for us with 4.11 gears. That pairs well with the T56 [six-speed manual] tranny, so it's a pretty lively car!"

Her interior is almost entirely fabricated. The stock steering wheel and dash remain and not much else. Classic Car Studio liberally applied a quilted look in the metal inside on the floor and on the massive tranny tunnel that runs down the middle of the car. Low-back seats made by **Scat Enterprise** brand **Procar** cradle the occupants in an industrial, yet classy looking interior while the stock **Golden Tone** stereo head unit plays through a **Kicker "Q" Series** audio system.

So where is Doris now? *"The current owner is a Mopar nut, but he likes some pretty interesting/different stuff,"* Alexander told us. *"This build was right up his alley, and he just cruises around on the weekends and hits up local shows now and then."*

We've been noticing the Viper V-10 as an increasingly common engine swap candidate. *"No replacement for displacement"* may be an outdated mantra, but we can't complain about more big V-10s on the road.

She sits on **RideTech Air Ride** suspension, **Wilwood** disc brakes, and big **U.S. Mags** wheels that perfectly fit the look of this rat rod. The wheels, engine, and trim are painted with **BASF Glasurit Paint** giving the hardware a nice matte finish that flows nicely with the rest of the car. On the engine, the bronze color makes more sense in this application than the stock red paint. Doris is certainly having her 'day' again...





IN SEARCH OF GOOD TIN...

Chrysler owners are all too aware how hard it is becoming to find a good car. Parts are getting rarer and as time rolls on, the luck of finding any example in reasonable nick – hidden away somewhere in a shed or a barn, continues to thin. We all hope and pray that one day we might still stumble across that pot of gold though. So we keep our eyes out, especially when we're out driving in the country – scanning farm paddocks and old junkyards for that elusive secret treasure.

For both restorers and rodders alike, the hunt for good *tin* is only the beginning of the adventure. But if they do find something, the skill, patience and determination to bring that old wreck back to life is pure magic.

Rat rods offer an alternative journey for scratch-builders. You can make a rat rod out of just about any car, from any era – with anything. Even a PT Cruiser!



AYE CARUMBA

A lowrider (sometimes low rider) is a class or style of customised vehicle. Distinct from a regular lowered vehicle, these customs are generally individually painted with intricate, colourful designs – including airbrush murals and striping, ridden on 13-inch wire-spoke wheels with whitewall tires, and fitted with hydraulic systems that allow the vehicle to be raised or lowered at the owner's command. Given these specific characteristics, while a lowrider is not always a lowered car, a lowered car is always a lowrider. The term is used to describe a class of vehicle, not simply the height from ground to chassis.

The term lowrider can also refer to the driver of the car. Low riding was first invented by Hispanic American youths in the late 1950s, – and is now central to their identity and culture in southern California.

Lowriding began in Los Angeles, California in the mid-to-late 1940s and during the post-war prosperity of the 1950s. Initially, some Mexican-American barrio youths lowered blocks, cut spring coils, z'ed the frames and dropped spindles. The aim of the lowriders is to cruise as slowly as possible, “*Low and Slow*” being their motto. By redesigning these cars in ways that go against their intended purposes and in painting their cars so that they reflect and hold meanings from Mexican culture, lowriders create cultural and political statements that go against the more prevalent Anglo culture.

Quite simply, the first lowriders set out to take the mickey. It was a payout of gringos! Wikipedia says the design of the cars encourages a “*bi-focal perspective – they are made to be watched but only after adjustments have been made to provide ironic and playful commentary on prevailing standards of automobile design.*” However, this resulted in a backlash. The enactment of *Section 24008* of the **California Vehicle Code** in January 1, 1958, which made it illegal to operate any car modified so that any part was lower than the bottoms of its wheel rims.

In 1959, a Mexican-American customiser named **Ron Aguirre** developed a way of bypassing the law with the use of hydraulic **Pesco** pumps and valves that allowed him to change ride height at the flick of a switch. The following year saw the emergence of the **Chevrolet Impala**, which featured an X-shaped frame that was perfectly suited for lowering and modification with hydraulics. Between 1960 and 1975, customisers adapted and refined GM X-frames, hydraulics, and airbrushing techniques to create the modern lowrider style. With such radical suspension, lowriders pride themselves on their ability to *bounce* their cars.

Today, the lowriding scene is diverse with many different participating cultures, vehicle makes and visual styles. Essentially all the options available to today's custom automobile creator are also available to the lowrider builder, and lowrider style varies greatly from region to region.



GANGSTA BLING

Hi-Risers are a type of highly customised car, typically a traditional, full-size, body on frame, V8 powered, rear wheel drive US sedan modified by significantly increasing the ground clearance and adding large-diameter wheels with low-profile tires. The most popular model and style of body customised include the '71-'76 Impala and Caprice aka "Donk", '77-'99 Impala and Caprices aka "Box" and '91-'96 Impala and Caprices aka "Bubble".

Hi-risers, sometimes known as *Quan-cars*, originally grew out of the 'Dirty South' subculture (hip hop from the southern US), but the trend has spread across America. They are kinda like a black man's low-rider, only the opposite.

Vehicles customised in the hi-riser style are distinguished by their oversized (even disproportionate) wheels, ranging from 20 inches to 30 inches or more in diameter (largest being 50 inch), as well as graffiti and mural paint-jobs, and booming audio equipment. Suspension modifications similar to those employed on lifted pickup trucks are made to give adequate clearance for the large wheels. In the case of a *donk*, the suspension is so modified that the front end sits slightly higher than the rear end, giving the car a swaggering appearance. Because of the exaggerated look gained from installing a lifted suspension and enormous wheels, they are sometimes also called "*skyscrapers*".

The most popular vehicles for these types of modifications are late 20th century, full-size, rear wheel drive sedans and coupes. Largely due to the ability to cheaply buy former police service examples, the **Ford Crown Victoria** has become the lowest common denominator hi-riser.

There are three main sub-types of hi-riser, although the distinctions are blurred and open to debate.

Most hi-riser enthusiasts agree that a donk traditionally is a 1971 to 1976 **Impala**. They were given this name because the Impala symbol was referred to as a "donkey" by owners or "donk" for short. To complement the sloping rear, the suspension of donks are frequently higher in the front end than the rear, resulting in a nose-up stance. Other hi-risers are usually raised evenly, resulting in a more or less level stance. A *box* is another sub-type of hi-riser, usually a 1977-1990 malaise-era Impala or **Caprice** with a boxy or squared-off front and rear end. Other models that are frequently made into hi-risers include the G-body **Buick Regal**, **Cutlass**, **El Camino**, **Pontiac Grand Prix**, and **Bonneville**.

Other vehicles gaining in popularity as hi-risers are the **Cadillac DeVille** and **Seville**, and **Mercury Grand Marquis**, and **Lincoln Town Car** sedans. These three are the last full sized, body-on-frame, RWD sedans of which the Lincoln Town Car, the last one of the three to still be in production, ended a 31-model-year run in 2011.

In fact, the Grand Marquis in particular is enjoying a slight sales surge due to the increasing popularity of buying them new and turning them into hi-risers. Several rappers have alluded to the Grand Marquis in their music, such as **Dorrough's Ice Cream Paint Job**: "*Grand Marquis, paint job grape jelly.*"

Hi-risers are an integral part of Indianapolis, St. Louis, the East Coast, Central and South Florida music scene. Donk riders and rappers from this area in particular also share unique styles of slang and clothing. In South Florida, drivers of cars that would otherwise be considered classic and have had their stock tyres replaced with 24s are referred to as donk riders. (The expression is thought to have originated with rapper **Trick Daddy**, who hails from Miami). One prominent donk rider style in the South Florida area pairs dreadheads with gold teeth or a gold grill, and over the years has spread throughout Florida.

Raising a vehicle off of the ground by such a degree raises the center of mass to a point where rolling the vehicle becomes a distinct possibility. The suspension modifications required are often meant for trucks and larger vehicles (unless specialised). If the vehicle's brakes have not been upgraded to compensate for the significant increase in wheel diameter, its braking ability will be greatly diminished. In turning too fast, the weight of the vehicle may shift to extremes that were never considered for the vehicle in question, and may cause loss of traction or damage to the vehicle itself. If not done the right way by a skilled technician, a wheel could come off while driving, resulting in significant damage to anything it hits. If done properly, it should handle in a similar fashion to a lifted truck or SUV.



THESE GENRES HAVE THEIR OWN SHOWS...

RICERS

Ricer or *Rice Burner* was originally a pejorative term in the 1960s to describe Japanese motorcycles, then later applied to Japanese cars, and eventually to Asian-made motorcycles and cars in general. The name inferred "overmodifying a sports compact, usually with oversized or ill-matched exterior appointments".

A disparaging term for cars which had been cheaply modified to present a deceptive or cosmetic appearance of high performance, without the capability.

While the term has since been outdated as racist, modern Asian cars now dominate the world and are arguably the best in today's market. Younger drivers today looking for performance, love their **Skylines**, **WRXs** and **Mitsi Evos**.

So this label has turned full-circle as now most westerners (including Australians) respect them – and of course, customise them. Today there are bodykits, colourful graphics, low-profile wheels, *cannons* (large diameter racecar-like exhaust pipes), EFI performance and turbocharging.

These are the 'fast fours' and rotaries that dominate the Auto Salon today. In the shadows of the impending electric car, perhaps movies like **The Fast and The Furious** trilogy may actually help save the custom car scene, introducing new up and coming generations to muscle via this contemporary breed of car. Move over all you dinosaurs!



VIP

Ever see those **Toyota Soarers** and **Mercs** gettin' around on low profile spoked or black mags with cannons? And if they aren't shaved their badges and trim are in gold?

Well, while this style of mild custom similarly is heavily influenced by **WRC Rally** and **SuperSaloon** racecars as ricers are, they are actually a different category unto themselves (especially since in recent years in Australia they have grown to include European marques also as a base). So they have their own name.

VIP, which roughly translates into Japanese as "*bippu*", refers to the modification of Japanese luxury (and now European) automobiles to make them lower in stance and wider looking with wide aggressive wheels, suspension, and body kits. VIP Style are typically large, expensive, rear-wheel drive sedans, though automotive enthusiasts use other contemporary cars like minivans.

Once associated with the yakuza, VIP Style modifications now are an established subset of automotive modification. Please note, this definition differs from the traditional origins of the term *Very Important Person*, and is a loose appropriation of the term perpetuated amongst enthusiasts. Indeed, this styling has probably influenced the mild customising of most modern cars today. Even our last **Commodores** and **Falcons**.

CAL STYLE VW

Once upon a time, the **Volkswagen** replaced the **Ford Model T** as the world's most popular and successful car. Naturally, it's no surprise that they have their own scene as both a mild and radical custom.

In the US, Beetles were a prolific breed of their own. Many became the bases for dune buggies on the beaches of Southern California and Baja bugs in desert racing. They are their own cool.

A *Cal-Style VW* is a lowrider-influenced vintage Volkswagen, that for style and cruising was lowered to the extreme in the manner. The Cal-Style VW originated in the streets of Los Angeles in the late 1970s, when the first generation of teens from Latino neighborhoods veered away from the Low Riders that at the time were associated with gangs and criminal activity, and instead customized their economical VWs into lowriders for the cruising and teen subculture.



PRO STREET

Pro Street is a style of street-legal custom car popular in the 1980s, usually built to imitate a *Pro Stock* class race car. Pro Street cars should appear to be more at home on the drag strip than the street, while remaining street legal and not gutted like a Race Car or Bracket Race car. Typically called a Backhalf car (*tubbed*).

Ideally, cars of this type always feature two of the following three modifications:

- A highly modified, with supercharger or turbo, large capacity V8, V12, V10, V6, I6 engine. Often exposed.
- A narrowed rear axle coupled with oversized rear wheels and at least a 14" wide tire (located within the wheelwells) for maximum grip and wheelie bars
- An NHRA legal roll cage.

Cars of this type should remain unmodified from the firewall back, keeping stock floorpans, a full interior with windshield wipers, carpet and working lights. Think bug catchers, big scoops and fat rubber.



CUSTOM VANS

The van craze swept the world during the 1970s and '80s. People started hotting up their vans with wild paintjobs, body mods and performance motors, while fitting them out with luxurious interiors. In Australia we saw the rise of the **Sandman**, **Sundowner** and our own **Drifter** panel van (the *sedan delivery* as it was traditionally known back in the US). Whereas back over there the boxier cabover shape such as the **Dodge Ram** or **Ford Econoline** was more prevalent.

For a time, car shows everywhere were dominated by custom vans.

In the US, they have since become known historically as *conversion* vans. Early conversions were simply vans with seats put in them, later with murals painted along the sides. A whole new refit industry spawned in its wake, which led to the evolution of a much more sophisticated campervan – something only ever really touched upon previously (as factory) with the likes of the **VW Kampmobil**.

After the mid 80s, luxurious interiors featuring thickly padded seats, wood trim and luxury lighting began to appear in conversion vans as families and retirees started using them for road trips and camping. At the same time, both governments and vehicle manufacturers took control of the van conversion industry, demanding certain safety guidelines. The price of conversion vans increased as things such as sleeping accommodations, cooking utilities, televisions and other items were added. The higher pricing and smaller market segment meant a resulting decrease in sales. At the same time, the price of gas was also increasing, leading still more people away from these large cargo vans, whose V8s and poor aerodynamics resulted in poor mileage. Finally, the growing demand for minivans and SUVs siphoned off even more potential customers.

The custom van had run its race. A handful of devotees today still carry on the tradition, but its more of a nostalgic curiosity than commonplace. A romantic oddity.

CUSTOM PICKUPS

Since the 1990s there has been a scene both here, in the USA and Japan where pickups (or 'mini trucks' as the yanks call them) such as the **Toyota Hilux** or **Nissan Hardbody**, are modified into mild customs with body mods, lowered suspension, performance drivelines, trick paintjobs and mag wheels. With an emphasis on clean lines (such as debadging), these pickups have never seen a day's work in their existence.

The tradition most likely harks back to the classic custom stepside pickups of the 1960s, except now with a modern take – including the latest tech such as EFI and pumping sound systems.



BEAUT UTES

The good ol' utility is an Australian invention and a cultural icon.

Since the 1970s, in Australia there has been a unique genre of ute here, once erroneously referred to as a *feral ute**, but now often called a *beaut ute*. This term has its origins (as a trophy title) in the *ute muster* event, the biggest and most famous being the *Deniliquin Ute Muster*. Often ute musters are combined with a larger festival such as a rodeo, agricultural show or country music festival, where ute owners show off their pride and joy which are personalised with spotlights, airhorns, bumper stickers, bull bars, truck mudflaps and running lights, flags, gunracks, CB antennae and all sorts of other aftermarket add-ons.

*A feral ute is in fact now recognised as a subgenre of the beaut ute, named for its roughness and untidiness.

KUSTOM KULTURE

We could probably go well beyond cars and dedicate a whole magazine in itself to the culture (ie: kustom kulture) that evolved around the hot rod and custom car scenes in the 1950s. (Actually that's not a bad idea for a theme...)

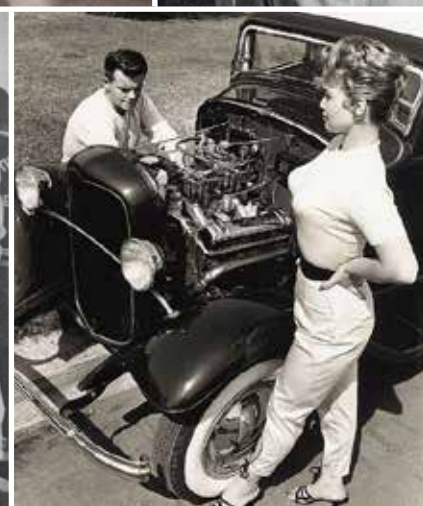
Post world war two, while America boomed as a mass consumer's free economy, young middle class (mostly white) people began to enjoy a comfortable standard of living. With disposable income and free time to socialise at places like the local diner, drive-in or dancehall – new generations seeked out their own identities to ultimately rebel against their parents and the establishment. The whole concept of cool emerged as a new popular culture took over music and fashion. Societal values and morals changed as whole new lifestyles evolved.

Rodders appeared as racing fast cars was cool too. At first hobbyists, with the benefits of new technologies they were able to recycle and refit many of the cars we consider vintages today. Soon enough, a personal expression shone out of this too, and customising was born.

Here are some historic photos of some of the people who had these cars back in the day – over 60 years ago!

Curiously, several of these photos are from a **Life** magazine story about delinquent all-female rodding gangs.





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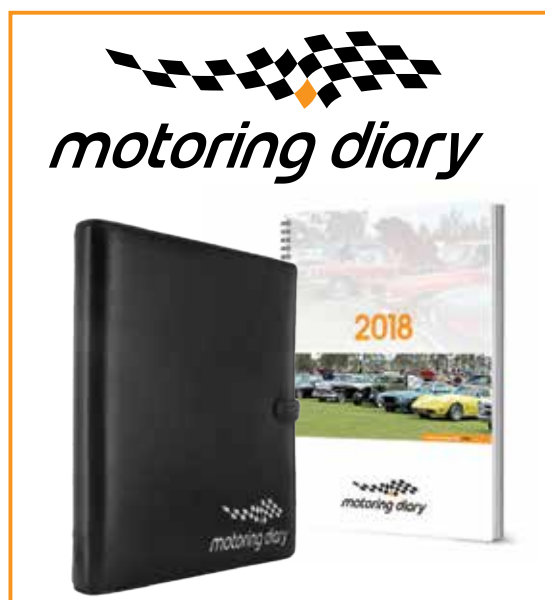
SUNDAY 22/4/18

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Event	Date/Time	Location
CCCSA MidYear Dinner	Saturday July 21, 5:00pm	Mount Barker (Steam Ranger)
Mopar Mayhem <i>Visit Mopar Mayhem QLD style on Facebook</i>	Saturday July 28, 11:30am	Lakeside Park, Kurwongbah QLD
Mopar Sunday <i>Hosted by the Queensland Chrysler Association - for more info, visit: www.moparsunday.com</i>	Sunday July 29	Willowbank Raceway, QLD
Cruise and lunch to Showblock Wines <i>RSVP club phone by 31st August for definite attendance for catering purposes.</i>	Sunday August 5	meet Kmart Karulta Pk 10:30am, depart 11am
CCCSA August 2017 Monthly Meeting & 2018-2019 AGM <i>Monthly Meeting - come and join and chat to fellow Chrysler enthusiasts. Visitors welcome. Meetings are informal and friendly. Dinner available from 6pm prior to the meeting AGM straight after the Monthly Meeting</i>	Tuesday August 7, 7:30pm	West Adelaide Football Club, Richmond
Saturday evening cruise	Sunday August 25	Castle Plaza 6:30pm, depart 7:30pm
CCCSA September 2017 Monthly Meeting <i>Monthly Meeting - come and join and chat to fellow Chrysler enthusiasts. Visitors welcome. Meetings are informal and friendly. Dinner available from 6pm prior to the meeting</i>	Tuesday September 4, 7:30pm	West Adelaide Football Club, Richmond
Victor Harbour Rock'n' Roll Festival <i>Cruise down Sunday for the show. Meet at Liberty Service Station Victor Harbour turn off Main South Road at 8am to depart at 8:30am. Enter online. Free vehicle registration and full program download from: rocknrollfestival.com.au Will have space allocated for Club.</i>	September 15 & 16 club cruise Sunday September 16, 8:00am	Victor Harbor
CCCSA October 2017 Monthly Meeting <i>Monthly Meeting - come and join and chat to fellow Chrysler enthusiasts. Visitors welcome. Meetings are informal and friendly. Dinner available from 6pm prior to the meeting</i>	Tuesday October 2, 7:30pm	West Adelaide Football Club, Richmond
All Chrysler Day NSW <i>For more info see: www.allchryslerday.com</i>	Sunday October 21	1 Museum Drive, Penrith, New South Wales
CCCSA November 2017 Monthly Meeting <i>Monthly Meeting - come and join and chat to fellow Chrysler enthusiasts. Visitors welcome. Meetings are informal and friendly. Dinner available from 6pm prior to the meeting</i>	Tuesday November 6, 7:30pm	West Adelaide Football Club, Richmond

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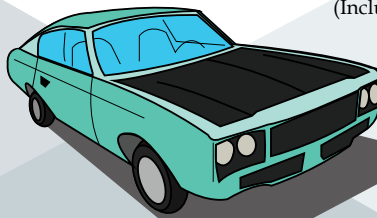
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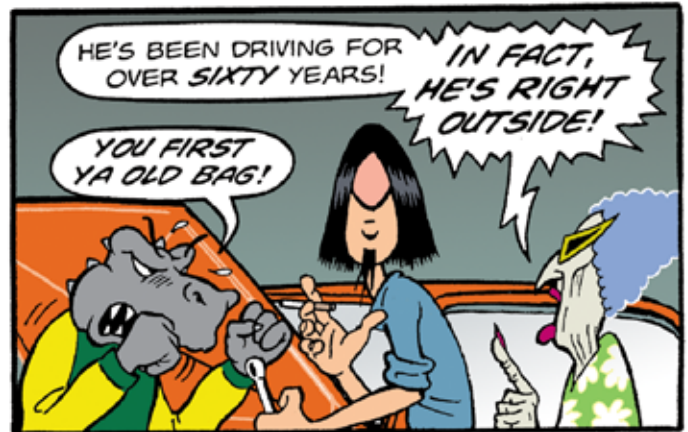
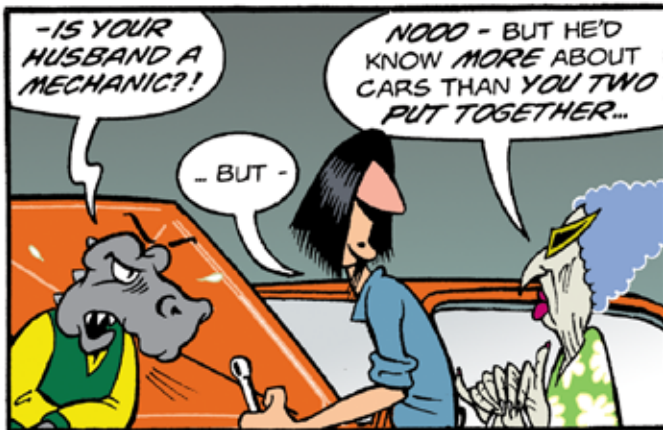
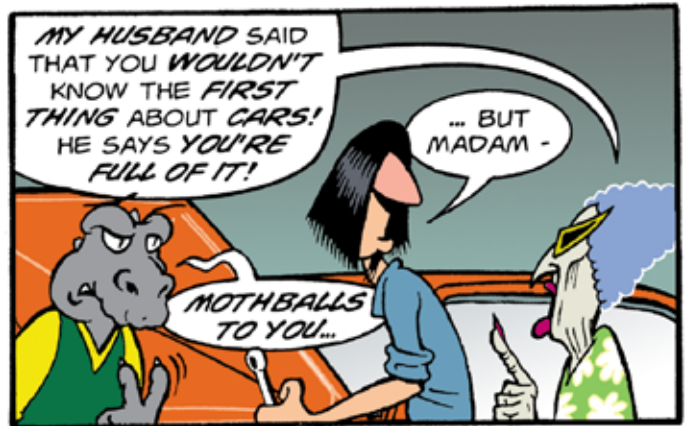
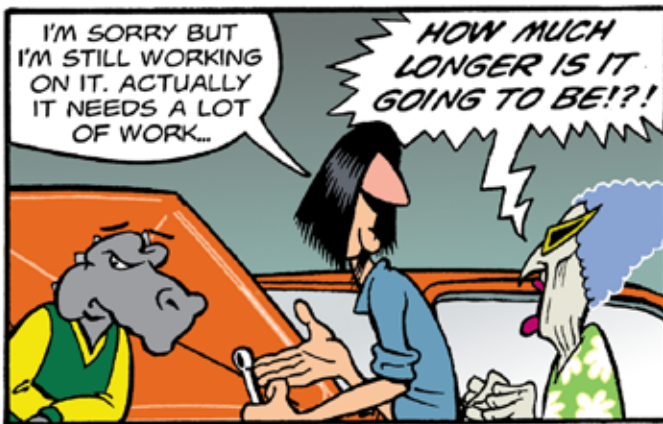
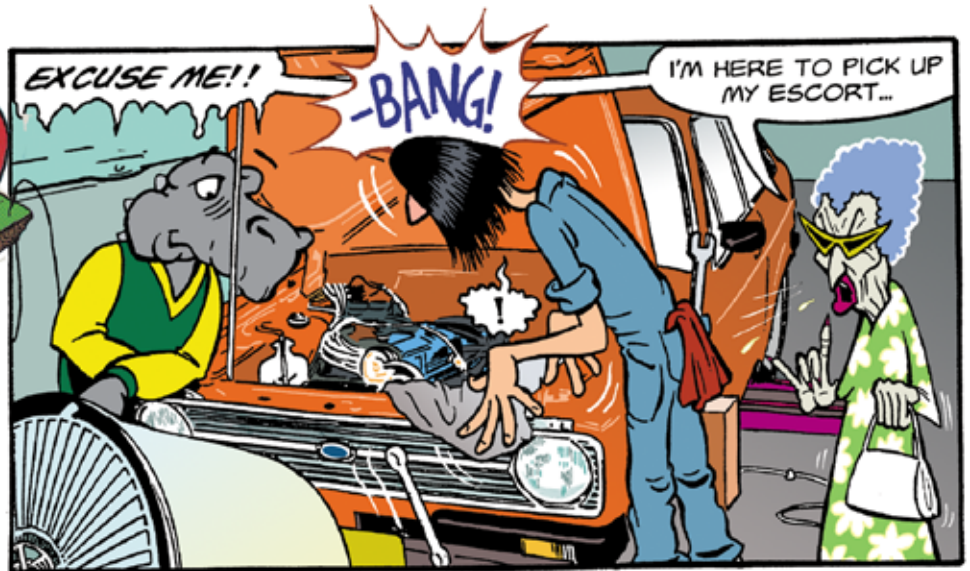


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