

TRADITIONAL

FIRST ISSUE

SPEED & KUSTOM

MARCH 2009

Feature Issue:

MINTY FRESH
DONNIE BENSON'S
'32 FORD ROADSTER



THE MINT





"THE MINT"

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We love a little tongue-in-cheek humor, and when we heard that John Barbero, one of the main builders involved with this car, named his shop in Bellingham, Washington "Pyramid Auto Engineering" because the building happens to be located on "King Tut Road" we knew this was a group of guys we were going to like. The main player who owns the car we are featuring as the PREMIER ride in Traditional Speed and Kustom is Donnie Benson also from Bellingham, WA. Donnie filled us in on his back story-

"When I was twelve years old in 1957 I wandered into a body shop in North Grafton, North Dakota and I never left! I walked up to the painter who was priming a car and asked him what he was doing. He explained it all to me and then I asked him if I could give it a try. He handed me the spray gun and I was hooked for life. I went by the shop most nights after school and worked for free.



John Barbero (*center*) gets "The Mint" ready for the shoot, which involved over 200 photos. Fellow hot rodder Ray Tippi (*left*) and Pyramid Auto employee Rick Larsen (*right*) looks on.





Time Machine Go!



"Being from the Northwest I just couldn't see myself in a car with no top or windows. After I got my first look at a Dearborn Deuce body I was sold on the fact that it was all-steel and could keep me out of the weather"

Later when I had a little experience they started paying me fifty cents an hour. When the painter who taught me left a few years later to take another job I took over as the main painter. Eventually I left to spend a couple years in the Army and managed a different shop when I returned home. In 1969 I opened my own shop in Great Falls, Montana and ran it until 1979 when I moved on to my current home in Bellingham. In 1982 I purchased an existing 4,000sq. ft. shop that I still own and is now managed by my 31 year old son Travis. The shop has now grown to 16,500 sq. ft. with fifteen employees. During the summer of 2005 I decided it was finally time to build my first hot rod. I shopped around and looked at some finished roadsters, but being from the Northwest I just couldn't see myself in a car with no top or windows. After I got my first look at a Dearborn Deuce body I was sold on the fact that it was all-steel and could keep me out of the weather. I had experienced my fill of exposure to cold and wet outdoors having just recently sold my Harley I had ridden over 25,000 miles year round."



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Road Noise

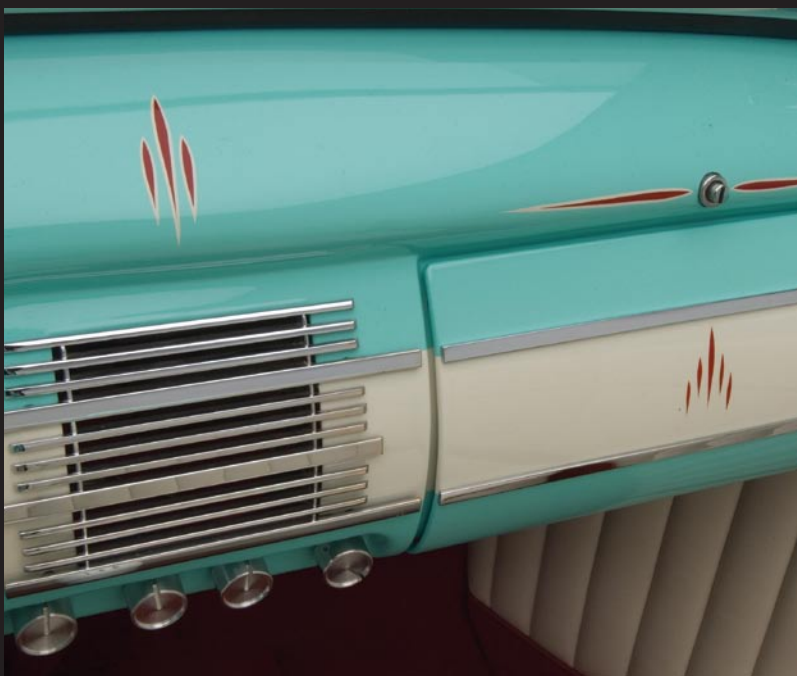
With a clear vision in his head, Donnie put the project into the capable hands of the Pyramid Auto Engineering crew, John Barbero, Steve Skuhra and Rick Larsen. First off they put together a solid platform starting with a pair of new SAC rails and some custom built 1 ¼-inch tubular crossmembers. The new perimeter frame was next mated to a Magnum five-inch dropped axle wearing a pair of 12-inch Wilwood disc brakes and located by fresh suspension pieces from TCI, shocks from Pete & Jakes all steered by Vega steering box controlled by a '40 Ford steering wheel on top of a Flaming River steering column. Underneath the rear is a Winters 9-inch Ford rear-end spinning Dutchman axles and held in place with more parts from

TCI, as well as another pair of Wilwood disc brakes for whoa and a pair of Aldan coilovers to keep the ride smooth. Sitting on a set of 15x6 and 15x8 steelies from Wheel Vintiques wearing '49 Ford caps and wrapped in 5.60 x 15 and 8.20 x 15 wide white Firestone skins, a 2006 302ci crate engine from Ford Motorsport hooked to a matching 2006 manual transmission from Ford provides the motivation. Engine dress-up includes a tri-power set-up wearing a trio of Holley carbs, Ford finned valve covers, Mallory ignition and Sanderson headers connected to a pair of Walker Turbo mufflers. Cooling is supplied by a Griffin aluminum radiator in conjunction with a Billet Specialties fan.





Inside the weather resistant Roadster is more fine detailing with a classic '40 Ford dash that could not look any better than when fitted in an open '32 Ford. Donnie likes things clean and simple so his main controls are the '40 Ford Steering wheel and a Hurst stick shift- no radios necessary for this hot rodder! But to keep the drop top user friendly throughout year a climate control system from Vintage Air was installed by the crew at Pyramid Auto Engineering. Timeless classic rolled and pleated threads in red and white vinyl were stitched up and installed by Frank Castilleja in Mt. Vernon, WA making Donnie's road machine ready to hit the highway.





With the chassis under control focus was then returned to the main component that made the car possible, the Dearborn Deuce body surrounded by a full set of fenders and a custom hood by Al Swedberg of Centralia, WA. With the grille shell dropped 1 ½-inches and the hood and deck lid ventilated with plenty of louvers Cal Byerlin of Ferndale, WA massaged the panels for a perfect fit and then handed everything off to Kelly Mackie in Seattle, WA to apply the Glasurit '54 Buick Seafoam Green paint. Mitch Kim of Portland, OR added the finishing touch with some beautiful Tommy the Greek flavored lines and tasteful Maroon scallops and accents. Shiny bits include a pair of '32 bumpers tucked in nice and close to the body with a '49 Chevy plate surround added to the back, stock headlights and taillights on both ends and a set of '49 Ford hubcaps just to be a little different.

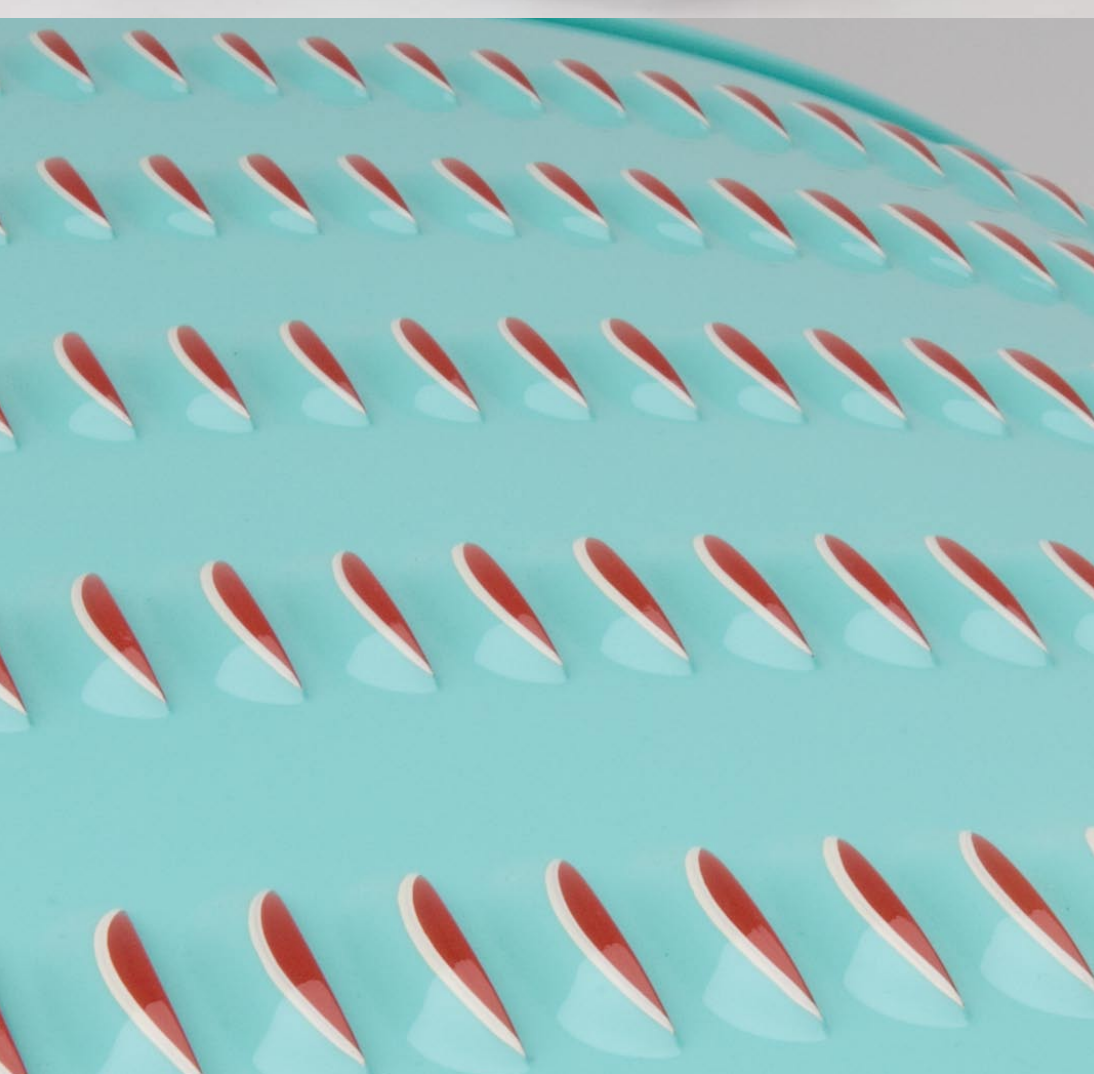




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