

1951 STUDEBAKER CHAMPION

KIWI BUILT BY OWNER, TREV HALSTEAD.
CUSTOM AND CLASSIC RESTORATIONS,
RUKUHIA. PH: 07 8252638.

This car was purchased in below average condition, in Dunedin in 1972 for \$40 and driven home with two gears. Since that time it has evolved from a standard side valve six motor and has had three major ground-up rebuilds in its lifetime, over 37 years with me.

BODY

This is an uncommon custom to undertake being a chopped four door sedan rather than a two door or coupe. Many body modifications have been undertaken, the predominant ones being, all excess chrome has been removed from the body except the Bomber nose and door handles, the centre piece of the nose has been cast in brass. A steel tilt front has been fabricated from original panels, the guard arches are opened out to clear the tyres, the front of the guards have been split, radiused and welded below the head lights. A 1950 Studebaker hood has been extended to join to the original 1951 Bomber grill panel which has been welded to the hood and the guards. A new lower front panel was custom built to clear the front suspension area with a tubular edge to strengthen the front and the side of the guards. The rear of the front guards have had the factory air vents removed and have been curved at the bottom to meet the front door posts and pillars. The front door posts have been fabricated from scratch and fold into the fabricated firewall. The original wiper motor has been removed off the firewall and replaced by an escort wiper motor mounted internally. The roof has been chopped 3" keeping the standard length and laying down the screen at the rear. The roof and upper rear door frame area has been fabricated to give a dropped sweeping curve. Front and rear screens have been changed to split screens and the back screens have been made using formed acrylic. B pillars have been angled forward to give a Tudor or coupe look to the four door sedan. All door corners have been radiused; rear

guards have been welded to the main body shell and have open arches over the wide rear wheels. Four 1959 Cadillac tail lights have been recessed into the rear guards. The boot lid, guards and doors have all had rust removed, re skinned and the floor has had much reconstruction. New custom inner and outer sills have also been fabricated. A steel console and high drive shaft tunnel has been built to accommodate the chassis modifications. The original cardboard parcel rack has been re-fabricated in steel to tie the back of the body shell together and mount seatbelts and 6 x 9 " speakers. The rear bumper is the original, narrowed for a better fit and shaved of all mounting bolts. Front and rear screens were fitted by Kirrin Hodges, new glass has been cut and the side glass and rear screens have a smoke coloured tint.

PAINT

All the body and panels were prepared with 2K primer prior to the lacquer paint job. The gold paint was custom mixed by Vinni at Resene to my desired shade with flames in gold pearl and silver tips. All the painting was done in house at my work shop with assistance by Justin from Ngongotaha Paint & Panel. Endless hours were spent on the body's gold paint job, a small part of which was 40 hours masking the flames. The body paint is in Lucite L400 Lacquer followed by clear lacquer with lots of colour sanding between coats to get the desired finish. The interior paint is 2K Centari to match the exterior as is the chassis and its associated parts.

INTERIOR

The original dash panel was completely rebuilt leaving only the original top and glove box lid. Custom built steel instrument panels were fabricated to accommodate the 280z rev-counter, speedo and gauges. The steel consol was built to make accessing the radio easy while driving, it also contains most of the electrical controls, wiring and switches. Four 6 x 9" speakers are hidden behind the upholstery in the front doors and parcel rack. Steering column is a modified 280z item as is the steering wheel which has been extended 2". It has a steel centre which was fabricated with a 56 Studebaker button. A 1957 Studebaker indicator and housing is also fitted to the steering column. Heating is via a Natra box heater mounted up behind the glove box as is the ignition coil, fuses and

more electrical controls and wiring. Foot pedals are custom designed in stainless steel. Front bucket seats have been donated from a K20 coupe. Interior handles and fittings are all Studebaker, from models 1947-55 with turned alloy knobs. I used 3mm palite acrylic sheeting to make the door cards and consol panels prior to covering them in the gold and black fabric. Stainless steel interior trim was a one off design as is many other fittings in the car. All stitching was by Greg at Midnight Upholstery as was the seats and hood liner. Rear seat is stock except for a high arch frame over the driveshaft tunnel.

MOTOR

The 1969 427 Chev motor has been built from leftovers accumulated over the past 30 years. It has a bore of + 060" to give 439 CID with a forged crank shaft and TRW hypereutectic pistons and 1.7 to roller rockers. Cam shaft is an Isky Supercam with a half inch lift and 110 degree lobe centre. The cylinder heads and block are cast iron which has had all the rough castings shaved, smoothed and painted in 2K gold. Headers are owner built from u bends, donuts and tube which go to the under body lakepipes. The inlet manifold is an Edlebrock Performer, rocker covers are early Weiand. Starter and dissi are standard Chev. Bosch wires were used to make custom H.T leads under the headers and the alternator is from a Holden Commodore. Four barrel Holley 750 carb supply's fuel, in turn supplied from an electrical fuel pump mounted in the boot. Many extra parts were made of stainless steel which were polished by owner as was all the alloy, ceramic coating and chrome prepping.

TRANSMISSION AND DIFF

A turbo 400 was rebuilt, shaved and smoothed for a coat of gold with an alloy pan and convertor cover. The shifter comes from a K20. Drive shaft is a custom built heavy wall special which connects to a 2.9 to 1 Dodge Dart diff from 1963.

CHASSIS AND SUSPENSION

The 1951 chassis of top hat section has had an extra 1/8" steel plate on all of the base for strength and I have also built heavier cross members with 2" heavy wall tubes to run parallel to the drive shaft to minimise chassis flex. Front suspension arms are provided from a 1962 Studebaker GT Hawk with a 1965

Studebaker Cruiser steering box, cut and splined to join to the 280z collapsible steering column through a flexible joint. The front of the chassis is Z cut to give 4" of lowering plus lowered springs. The rear of the chassis is C notched to enable the lowered diff to operate on its 4" saddle pads and HZ Holden Ute flattened springs. Rear stainless steel shackles are made 1" shorter and a Ford Falcon EB rear sway bar is used on the rear with a pair of air and gas shocks.

BRAKES

Front brakes are a combination of Holden HQ calipers and Falcon XA rotors. Brake fluid is supplied by a stock Studebaker master cylinder to a VH44 brake booster to the front circuit and the rear circuit runs through a HQ proportioning valve to the 10" finned Studebaker brake drums, mounted on the Mopar diff. Cortina hand brake has custom made cables which follows the floor and diff tunnel to the Studebaker backing plates.

WHEELS

Chromed 14" x 7" front 100 wires have 185 x 80 x 14" tyres; 15"x 8" rear 100 wires have 245 x 60 x 15" tires.

SOME VEHICLES WERE HARMED WHILE BUILDING "THE BOMBER"

Holden Commodore, Torana, HZ Ute, HQ. Ford Falcon XA and EB, Mk2 Escort, Cortina. Chev Corvette. Dodge Dart. Nissan 280z. Toyota K20 and Nash Ambassador.

OTHER STUDEBAKER DONORS:

1965 Cruiser steering box, 1962 G.T Hawk suspension arms, 1957 Indicator housing, 1956 Horn button, 1955 Escutcheons, 1950 Hood, 1947 Handles.

SPECIAL THANKS:

I would like to acknowledge and thank George Panfilow of Studebaker parts, Greg Knight, Eric Carter Kirrin Hodges, Justin Smith, Josh Dredge, and of course my wife Di and daughter Tasha for their help with the build.

DARING TO BE DIFFERENT