

Bob Wolfenden's '37 Ford panel delivery

BY RYAN MANSON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY RANDY LORENTZEN



The San Pedro Panel

It should come as no surprise that panel trucks make great work vehicles. Henry designed them for just such a purpose, so it's no wonder they're still as useful as ever 70 years later. Sure, the original drivetrain is a little antiquated, but the overall aesthetic of those old haulers is still very pleasing and the large, flat slabsides make for the perfect signage.

Bob Wolfenden always had a soft spot in his heart for panel trucks, and every time he saw a certain '37 Ford cruising around his home town of San Pedro, California, he told himself he had to own it someday.

Well, that day came when he passed that old '37 and noticed a "For Sale" sign in the back window. Bob chased

down the truck, bargained with the owner, and it was his a few days later. The truck was fairly complete and in decent shape, what Bob calls a "50-footer," but the Mustang II IFS install was a bit cobbled and the small-block Chevy had seen better days. Bob decided to save himself the grief and take the panel to a local shop that would be able to reviving the old Ford.

He called upon the capable abilities of Scott Bonowski and his crew at Hot Rods & Hobbies, in nearby Signal Hill, where the panel was taken for the painstaking tasks ahead. The first thing the HR&H crew did was order up a new chassis from the Roadster Shop, complete with a Heidts IFS and a new 9-inch Ford rearend. Aldan coilover shocks and Wilwood disc brakes were installed at all four corners, to



Dayton wire wheels are wrapped in Toyo rubber at all four corners, with 16x7s wearing 225/55R16 residing up front and 16x9s wearing 275/60R16 sitting out back.

ensure the new edition of the old Ford performs like a new car. The Roadster Shop's chassis also incorporated mounts for the new GM Performance Parts Ram Jet 350 small-block Chevy motor and the 4L60E transmission. Dayton wire wheels wrapped in Toyo tires complete the rolling chassis on which the panel truck sits.

One of the biggest challenges on the '37 was getting those big slabsides straight and repairing all the rotten steel, the result of 70-plus years in close proximity to the ocean. The HR&H crew jumped headfirst into repairing the body and also notched the firewall to clear the Chevy mill and removed the battery tray. Once everything was nice and straight, Scott brought the body into the paint booth, where he applied the PPG Black Cherry paint. Jeff Styles gets the



Bob's panel is powered by a GM Performance Parts Ram Jet 350, backed by a 4L60E overdrive transmission.



Bob's business, Auto Palace, provides storage space for cars and recreational vehicles of all kinds in the South Bay area of Los Angeles, and the side of his '37 panel is a perfect place for some business signage.

nod for the Auto Palace graphic laid down the side of the hauler, promoting Bob's car storage business in San Pedro.

With the paint laid, it was time to get cracking on the interior, where the truck was turned over to Elegance Auto Interior in Upland, California. There, tan leather was pulled over the front Glide bench seat and the custom rear seat, as well as the kicker, door, and those giant rear panels. Enough brown wool carpet was laid down to cover a small apartment, from the dash clear back to the rear barn doors. Bob also got a chance to pitch in with the build, fabricating that trick slat headliner made from oak that stretches the length of the Ford's ceiling and adds a utilitarian vibe to the commercial truck.

Since completing their delivery truck, Bob and his wife, Janet, have been making the rounds to all the local cruise nights and car shows. In fact, they were heading out to a local cruise night in San Pedro when we last spoke with him. After seeing the '37 cruising the streets for so long, it must feel pretty good being behind the wheel of that same truck he chased around all those years. **SR**





A Glide bench seat was used up front, while a custom bench was added for additional passengers. Elegance Auto Interior covered the pair, in addition to the door, kick, and rear panels, in tan leather, while brown wool carpet was laid from stem to stern.



An ex-cabinet maker by trade, Bob applied his skills to fabricate the wooden headliner. Originally planned to take a few hours, it ended up taking two and a half days to drill, tap, and fit every oak board—a job Bob reports as being one of the most difficult aspects of the build.

The dash was kept stock, with the addition of an original clock and radio, and all the gauges were sent out and rebuilt.



Legends: 'TV' Tommy Ivo & Buick Nailhead

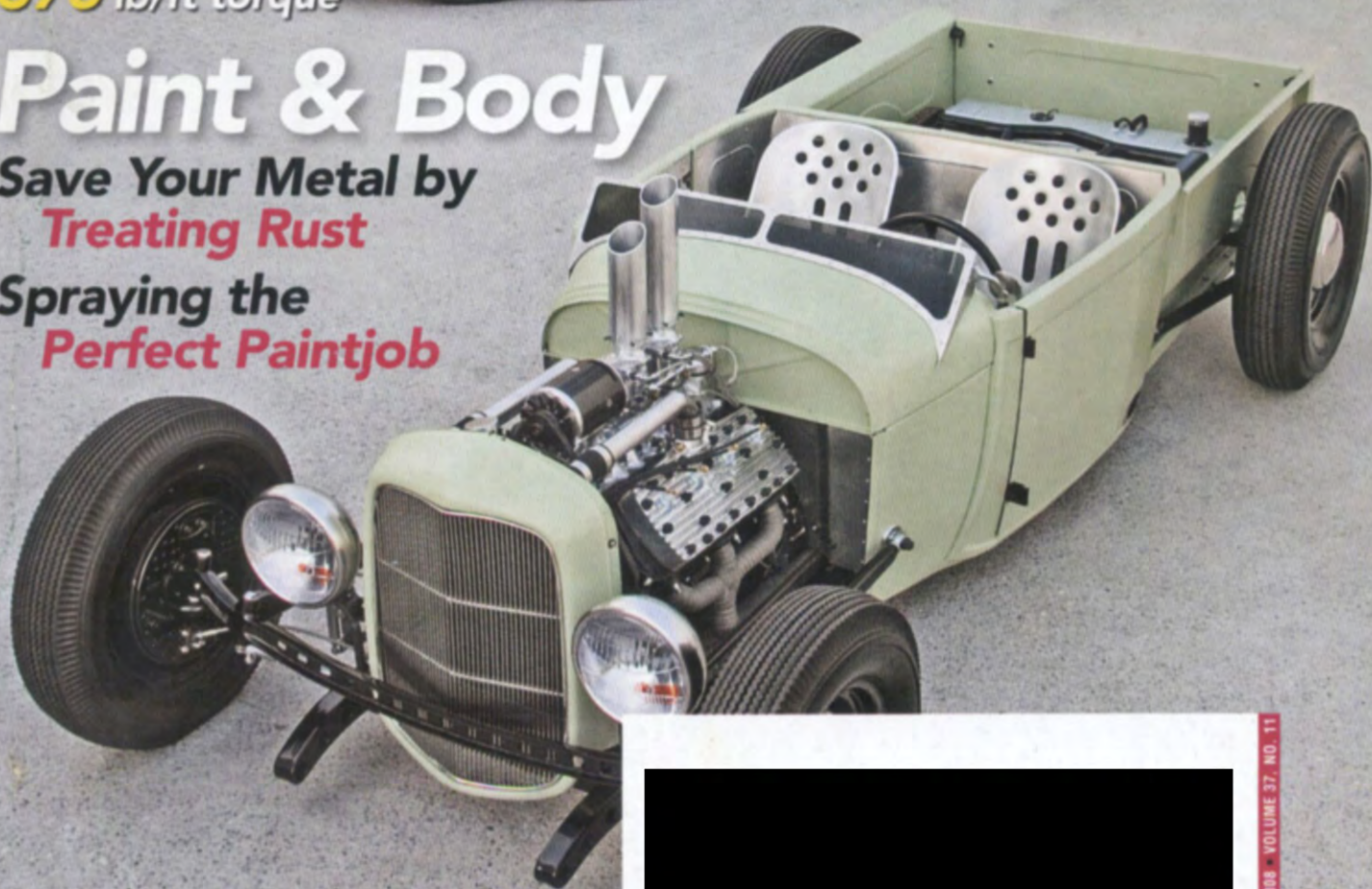
STREET RODDER

Hemi
in a Box:
528 inches,
650 hp and
675 lb/ft torque



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