



gear
SUPER LOW
NO ROOF
340HP
STORY SCOTT TAYLOR
PHOTOS TONY RABERTE

COOL RUNNINGS

Lower than a Jamaican bobsled, finer than Canadian snow

BUILDING awesome streetcars is hard. If it were easy, everyone would be doing it. Sure, we see a lot of new cars every year but how many are top-of-the-tree awesome? And of those, how many are truly streetable? Awesome is great — we love awesome — but having something you can actually enjoy, too, well ... that's how we roll.

Kevin Brown, owner of Mild To Wild Restorations, has coined a new expression for the kind of high-end street cars we're talking about; he calls it 'street elite'. Maybe he should talk to Owen Webb (see Legends, page 34).

Peter Antoine, boss of fashion importer Atomic, contacted Kevin about building him a car that fits this category perfectly. He wanted Kevin to turn his '64 Falcon convertible into something special, but most importantly, it had to be drivable.

"Peter didn't ask for a show car," Kevin says. "He wanted a car that he could drive daily but he also wanted something high end. Something where he could put the kids in the back and cruise with his wife snuggled up beside him."

Trophies, accolades, car shows — he didn't care about that stuff. He just wanted a custom cruiser that was unique, and more than a little bit different from his mates' Ferraris and Porsches.

And perhaps most importantly, something that couldn't be bought by just walking into a dealership with a huge wad of cash.

Peter found Mild To Wild (M2W) through its website and a recommendation from Wheelboyz was enough to get Peter on the phone to discuss ideas. From there, Kevin drew up a concept in purple, which is what Peter wanted, but the boys reckoned the car would look better in a silver hue, so they came up with a second design.

"When Peter saw the second design, he said: 'That's it!'" Kevin says.

So the convertible was shipped from Queensland to M2W's Wagga Wagga, NSW, workshop. But Kevin wasn't overly impressed with what arrived. The white convertible sported an ugly folding roof and the door gaps were atrocious thanks to inadequate bracing in the original gas-axe attack.

So the first job was to fix the shell's rigidity. M2W took care of that with a pair of custom four-inch-wide chassis rails running front to rear. These stiffen the shell without interfering with ground clearance. With that sorted, they could get into the rest of the heavy mods. After all, there's no point doing all this close-tolerance customisation if the gaps change every time the car moves.

To point out all the custom work on this car

would take more space than we have in the whole magazine. Look at the rear bumper, for example. It's been blasted, sectioned, filed, and then welded to the rear of the car. Sounds simple, but there's hours of work right there.

Moving forward along the body, you can see Kevin and his team have kept the bodylines purposely sharp, not dulled with an excess of body filler or high-fill primer. No badges, holes, stainless trim or external door handles — everything has been deleted. It's an exercise in artistic minimisation; less is more. Even the side window openings have been filled and a fibreglass pod made to fill the back seat area when Peter's only cruising two up.

The windscreen's also been laid back a bit and the surrounding metal modified to handle a late-model type of windscreen rubber. That's another serious amount of work. Of course the engine bay has received considerable attention, too, with everything minus the suspension towers cut out and replaced with flat sheet. All you see in there now is the engine, just as it should be.

And as we said, that's only a fraction of what's been modified.

"At Summerhats, when we unveiled the car, they asked me if there was much done to the body. I just turned to them and said: 'You're kidding, aren't



● LEFT: Up front sits a 340hp 302ci Ford Racing crate motor. The boys bolted a pair of Edelbrock carbs atop a low-line tunnel ram and also fitted a low-stress serpentine belt system.

● BELOW: M2W built a wooden mould to create the fibreglass cover for the back seats. It slips into place and locks down using ure-style elastic turneau loops.

He wanted a car where he could put the kids in the back and cruise with his wife snuggled up beside him

● MAIN: Front and rear bumpers have been filed and sectioned to bring them closer to the body but the rear bumper has been welded to the body itself.



**PETER ANTOINE
1964 FORD XM
CONVERTIBLE**

Colour: PPG Champagne Custom

GRUNT

Engine: Ford Racing 302 Windsor
Carbs: 2x 500cfm Edelbrock Thunder series
Intake: Edelbrock twin four
Heads: Ford Racing X303 GT-40
Pistons: Hyper-tec
Crank: Standard
Rods: Standard

Cam: Hydraulic roller
Ignition: MSD
Exhaust: Custom headers, single 3in, custom hotdog, stainless Magnaflow muffler

SHIFT

Transmission: C4
Converter: B&M 2200rpm
Diff: Nine-inch, 3.5 gears, Traction Loc LSD, 31-spline axles

BENEATH

Brakes: RRS six-spot (f), RRS six-spot (r)

Springs: RRS coil-overs (f&r)
Shocks: RRS coil-overs (f&r)
Suspension: RRS modified (f)
RRS three-link (r)
Master cylinder: Under-dash 90-degree

INTERIOR

Wheels: Billet Specialties
Seats: Factory modified, tan leather (f&r)
Gauges: Classic Instruments
Cage: Six-point steel
Stereo: Alpine media station, Alpine 6in splits (f&r),

3x Alpine amps, 2x12in Alpine Type-R subs
Shifter: Lokar

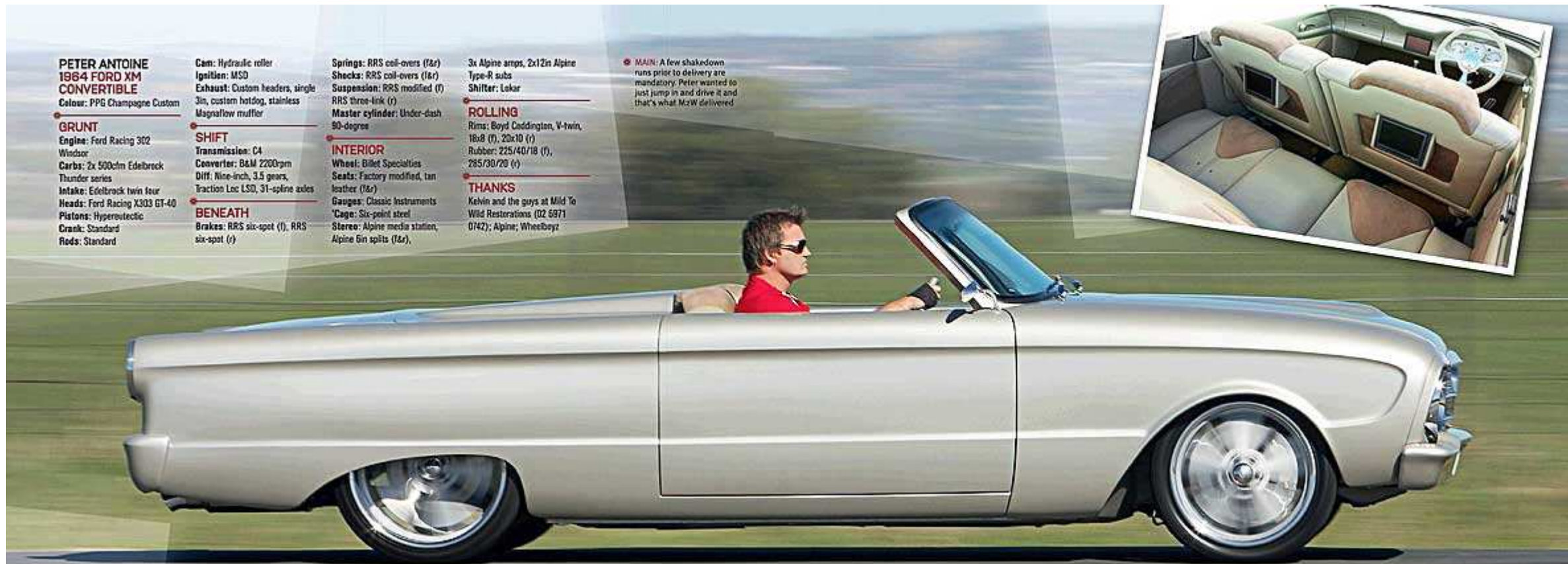
ROLLING

Rims: Boyd Coddington, V-twin, 16x8 (f), 20x10 (r)
Rubber: 225/40/18 (f), 285/30/20 (r)

THANKS

Kelvin and the guys at Mild To Wild Restorations (02 6971 0742); Alpine; Wheelbevy

MAIN: A few shakedown runs prior to delivery are mandatory. Peter wanted to just jump in and drive it and that's what MZW delivered.



They asked if there was much done to the body. I turned to them and said: 'You're kidding, aren't you?'



LEFT: Tan leather works well with the brown suede over the factory seats. With the windows gone, the doors were opened up to accept huge door pockets.

you?" Kelvin laughs. He says the idea behind this car was to build a modern car inside an old one, so every nut, bolt and fitting is brand new. "The only original parts are the body panels," he says.

Rather than use the 302 Windsor and C4 that came with the car, MZW installed a 340hp Ford Racing crate engine, adding an Edelbrock funnel ram and twin 500cfm carbs while they were at it. Kelvin says Peter wanted to go for something bigger but they managed to keep him focused on the big picture. Saying no to a car's owner isn't always easy, but Kelvin didn't want to compromise the impact or usefulness of the car.

"Peter's original brief was to have a car that would cruise comfortably with his young kids in the back," Kelvin says. "Fitting some big horsepower monster would have been a mistake."

Installing the suspension turned out to be a bigger job than you might imagine. Kelvin had RRS send out a truckload of gear but he had some specific ideas of what he wanted to achieve. Not happy with the placement of the wheels, he modified the RRS front end. This included shortening the

lower control arms, and repositioning the radius rods to get things where he wanted. The RRS three-link rear also copped some modification, with the hubbed rear end requiring the rear shocks to be stood straight up to clear the 20x10 Boyd Coddington rims.

Kelvin would have gone for airbag suspension if he could but with the car headed to Queensland that wasn't an option.

If you stick your head under this automotive masterpiece, it's obvious that no bolt has been left unburned. Every part has been modified not for the sake of it but with the specific aim of making this car a better driving experience.

"It can drive in and out of every driveway," Kelvin says. "The car looks low but in reality everything's up high and tucked away."

By the time it was finished, Summernats wasn't far away, so Kelvin decided to unveil the new ride during the Meguiar's Great Uncover. Not only did the public love it but it earned a spot in the Top 20 and won Top Convertible.

But it's hard to truly appreciate the work that's

gone into the car standing in a judging hall. This is a machine that's destined to spend plenty of time on the road, although the lack of roof and side windows means there will need to be covered car parks for this machine.

It does beg the question of whether we're seeing a shift away from undrivable elite type cars. If we are, there are no complaints here, because what it boils down to is this: cars are meant to be driven. And Kelvin agrees.

"We're trying to get back to the roots of street machining," he says, "building elite cars that can be driven, but that with a quick wash and detail can still win trophies."

"At the end of the day, we wanted to build a car for Peter and his family, one that he could drive and enjoy. Realistically, anyone can jump in that car and drive it."

But according to Kelvin, the biggest compliment came from Peter when MZW unveiled the car in a special workshop ceremony prior to Summernats.

"Peter said: 'That's the best looking car I've ever seen in my life.'"