

Article & Pictures by Chuck Belew

The owner, Mr. Reg Swanson, didn't want a street rod or hot rod. He wanted his old '53 pickup restored. As builder Steven Carter questioned Swanson about what he intended to do with the truck, it became more apparent that Swanson wanted a street rod. He just didn't know it and definitely wouldn't admit it.

Other probing questions Steven asked the old truck owner were about things like a sound system, climate control, steering characteristics, braking, and performance. Carter states, "The whole time that he's been talking to me he's been telling me he didn't want a hot rod. But, with all the questions I asked him that he answered yes to, he was defining a hot rod."

Luckily for Steven, Swanson gave him a free hand building the '53. Steven made a few subtle outward changes but nothing very radical. However, most of the modifications were found throughout the running gear, braking system, and cabin amenities.

The body was in pretty sad shape (tons of metal mite colonies). Steven had to perform major surgery on the firewall, floor pans, and most panels all the way around the cab from the windshield



down. The only body mods were a custom rear roll pan, frenched taillights and antenna, and a custom gas filler door. Satisfied that he had smoothed the body to perfection, Steven covered the fresh metal with a generous coating of British Racing green chroma premiere Dupont paint and followed it with some super cool gold ghost flames. The name of the game here is clean and uncluttered! Steven pulled it off to perfection.

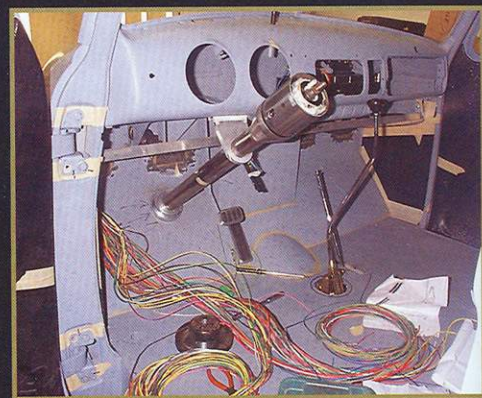
The chassis and running gear were next to feel the effects of the crafty surgeon. The original chassis was stripped, boxed, plated, and painted. This was followed by the fabrication of the necessary crossmembers for the 350-cubic inch Chevy mill backed by a rebuilt 700R4 transmission. For the suspension upgrades Steven added a Mustang II IFS with Heidt's 2" dropped spindles, KYB shocks, and Chevy calipers with Granada rotors. Out back a Curry positive-traction 9" differential spinning 3.55 gears was hung and supported by Camaro leaf springs aided by KYB shocks. Binders on the rear are power-assisted 11.5" Lincoln disc brakes.

It was now time to install the heartbeat of the newly designed country Cadillac. A brand-new ZZ4 350-cubic inch, 355-horsepower GM crate motor won the bid hands down. The mouse is equipped with an aluminum intake carrying a Holley 650cfm double pumper. The '53 is jolted to life by a MSD electronic distributor and Taylor 8mm plug wires; and Jet Hot Coated Shorty headers flow through 2 1/4" aluminized pipes into twin chamber Flowmaster mufflers. A custom-designed air cleaner that's complimented by chrome and billet engine accessories completes the finely detailed engine compartment.

The cabin compartment features creature comforts that weren't even on the drawing board in 1953. The original dash was smoothed, painted, and loaded with Phantom instruments, a Vintage air heating and cooling unit, and a Secret Audio Receiver with AM/FM-CD system powered by a 600watt Kenwood amp. All the trick electrical connections were made with a custom Painless wire harness. Directional control utilizes an Ididit tilt column with a Lecarra steering wheel. Steven was also responsible for transforming a few mad cows into a clean and functional comfort zone. Several hides of saddle-colored leather were stretched and stitched over the custom front seat, RodDoors door panels and the headliner.

The cool stance for the XFRMTRK combines 18" American Racing wheels wrapped with 255ZR18" Pirelli blackwall radial tires.

Mr. Swanson may not want to call his pickup a street rod, but from what I have seen, it sure resembles one. Regardless of how you label the '53, Carter Kustoms deserves a noble nod of approval for the transformation into one of the coolest pickups we've seen.





Builder Steven Carter & his lovely wife Louanne

1953 Chevrolet Pickup
Reg Swanson
Brentwood, TN

BUILDER: Steven Carter; Carter Kustoms and Restorations

COLOR: British Racing Green; Dupont chroma premiere

ENGINE: GM 350-cubic inch, 355-horsepower crate engine; Holley 650cfm carburetor; MSD distributor; Taylor plug wires; Jet Hot Coated Shorty headers; 2 1/4" aluminized tailpipes; Flowmaster mufflers

DRIVETRAIN: Custom chassis; Mustang II IFS; KYB shocks, front and rear; Camaro rear leaf springs; Curry 9" positive-traction differential; disc brakes, front and rear; 700R4 transmission

BODY: Stock, all-steel body; frenched taillights, antenna, and gas door; custom rear roll pan; paint and body work by Steven Carter

INTERIOR: Stock dash; Phantom instruments; Painless wire harness; Vintage Air unit; Secret Audio receiver; Kenwood AM/FM-CD stereo; Lecarra steering wheel; saddle-colored leather interior

WHEELS AND TIRES: American Racing 18"x7" wheels with 255ZR18" Pirelli P Zero radial tires



CARTERKUSTOMS

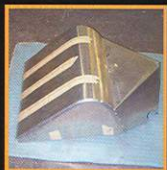
Custom built cars & restoration

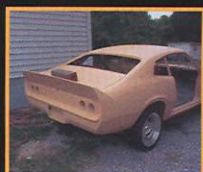
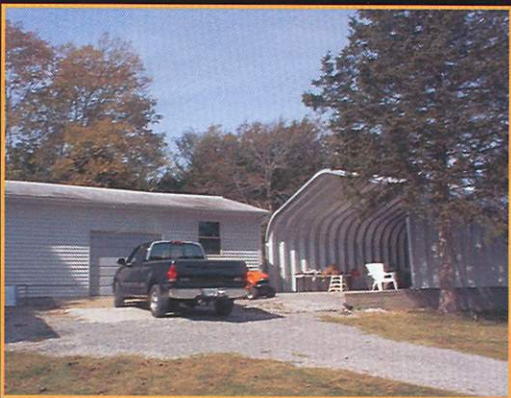
Article by Chuck Belew. Pictures by Louanne Carter



Steven Carter is a one-man show, a man on a mission, and a man on the move!

Born in Los Angeles, California, in 1958 Steven developed a love for cars at a very early age. When he was two years old, his folks caught him with an oil can preparing to lube the brakes on the family's Model T. Three years later his family moved to northern California where Steven continued to find cars to tinker with. When he was nine years old, he was given a basic Craftsman tool set, and his father told him that if he could get the '52 Ford (with a flathead engine) running he could drive it. It took him quite a while; but after new rings, bearings, etc. he had it running. Nobody taught Steven how to drive the '52; he just knew how. Although he did have to sit on a phone book to see out the windshield, Steven wore out a path in the cow pasture.





At 17 Steven started his own detail shop to earn money to purchase his first car, a 1966 Mustang. He then began working in different shops learning front end work, suspension, bodywork, and general mechanic services. Soon other opportunities came his way. Steven built a custom '60 Ford Falcon station wagon that caught the eye of a local businessman, and he commissioned Steven to build two '60 T-birds. Both cars were award winners at their first shows.

In 1994 Steven and his wife, Louanne, moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to start a custom and restoration shop. Times were tough in the beginning, but with his determination and talent Steven made it work. Soon they found another house in a better area of Nashville that had some land, a small shop, and three bedrooms. Going from a 3,000-square foot to a 1,000-square foot shop created an immediate space problem. The new house became a storage area for freshly painted parts from Steven's projects. Currently, they are in the process of building on additional shop and paint booth that will more than double his work area and give Louanne back her house.

Steven specializes in building custom cars and trucks one at a time. From body and chassis mods to custom fabrications and all types of performance engines anything the customer wants can be done! No job is too big or too small for this multitalented builder.





A perfect example of his work can be found on pages 84-87 of this issue. Reg Swanson's 1953 Chevrolet pickup caught my attention at a show in Pigeon Forge, and I had to find out more about it. As it turns out Steven and Louanne brought Mr. Swanson's '53 to the show along with the three-wheeler Steven built.

If you're looking for a builder that will work closely with you on your project and possess the skills, craftsmanship, and integrity to do it right; then you need to contact Carter Kustoms, 1515 Owen Road, Brentwood, TN 37027; or call: (615) 776-2372. Steven builds each project with the customer's interest in mind because "It's all about the art, passion, and love of building beautiful and exotic machines." Carter Kustoms is where custom and restoration should be fun for both the builder and owner.

