

# LONE RANGER

It May Not be Silver but  
It's as Good as Gold

BY KEVIN LEE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULIA AND JOHN ASCHENBERG

Rodney Paine had only built and worked on a few Camaros and late-model trucks doing things like engine swaps, fuel injection, lowering, etc., when he started this project. He thought he knew what he needed to know to build a hot rod from the ground up but he was in for a ride awaking. The experiences he encountered throughout the process of building this truck educated him on more things than he ever imagined. When Rodney traded a perfectly good '84 Trans Am for a pile of old parts his friends and family thought he had lost his mind, but he could see the potential.

Through old-fashioned on-the-job training and trial and error throughout this build-up Rodney's skills as a hot rod builder were increased. But this experience also taught him a lot about patience and determination. Rodney thought he would be able to complete it by himself in a couple of years—but it ended up taking 11.

The goal for the completed truck was to have a hot rod that would be as reliable and ride like a modified late-model. Rodney felt the best way to start this would be with a later frame.

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After some checking he found that a Ford Ranger frame would meet his needs and once a suitable candidate was found he C'd, Z'd, and shortened it. In order to get the ride height he wanted, Air Ride Technologies components were installed with custom brackets.

Once all the modifications were done the entire chassis was powdercoated gloss black. It was then reassembled with stainless brake and air lines. Rodney made his own fuel tank and installed a Rock Valley internal pump. For motivation a '95 Chevy LT1 with Street & Performance brackets, pulleys, headers, PS pump, and wiring harness was installed. A 4L60E trans and the 8.8-inch Ford rear complete the drivetrain.

The brakes are Wilwood Dynalite II calipers with 12.2-inch rotors

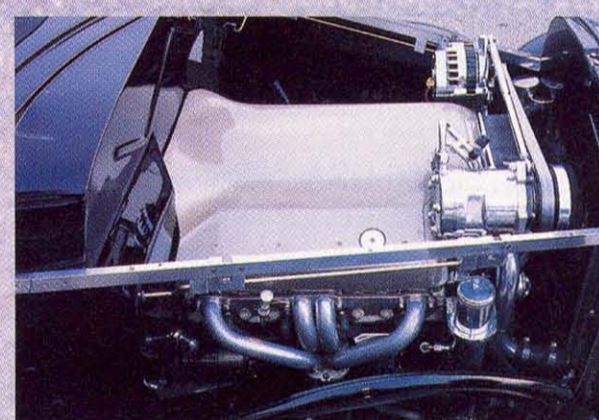
that he customized by having a local machine shop machine in his own designed cross-drilled and slotted pattern. The front caliper brackets were also designed by Rodney and then machined via CNC by TWH Enterprises in Newport, Arkansas. He had the caliper brackets and rotor hats black anodized and then safety-wired them for that racy look.

Rodney didn't want to make any radical changes to the body but has made subtle changes to just about every piece. A '35 grille shell was used because it is thinner and he felt the best looking of the '35-'37 trucks. The radiator filler was removed and the top of the grille was smoothed. The original grille insert was cut out and replaced with an aluminum insert from Alumacraft. The three-piece hood is from Rootlieb and is mounted with Carolina

Custom hood latches/supports. The front fenders are stock steel and have been reworked to fit the cowl better.

A subtle change that most people don't pick up on but helped finish off the front of the truck is the custom inner fender panels that fill the area between the bottom of the hood and the inside of the fenders. On the cab Rodney welded all of the cab and door seams, filled the cowl vent, and replaced the stock drip rails with smooth ones that flow better with the reworked body. He built and installed hidden hinges and changed the doors to open suicide style. The firewall uses the original top panel along with a hand-built custom lower half.

The windshield frame was removed and filled so that he could flush mount the glass for a cleaner look. The running



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boards are fiberglass reproductions from Poliform that were modified to fit better and had the factory ribs ground off.

Rodney and his father built the bed by starting with reproduction original style bed sides from Mack Products and fabricating the rest from mild steel. The front bed panel is curved to fit the contour of the cab and the entire bed is pushed up one inch to tighten up the gap between the cab and bed. They also made the bedcover by building a frame out of 3/4-inch mild steel tubing and riveting on an aluminum top. It was then covered with Black Hartz cloth. The tailgate was handmade to continue the smooth look. To make sure it would be fully functional Rodney custom-built polished stainless and aluminum supports and latches. Inside the tailgate resides a bear claw latch that can be remotely opened.

The inside of the bed is painted body color and the floor is covered with a spray-in bedliner material. Under the tailgate Rodney made a small roll pan that houses a handmade fuel filler door and flush fit taillights. To finish off the rear he made a rear valance panel out of a fiberglass '34 Ford gas tank cover and modified it to fit. The sheetmetal was then painted black with DuPont Chroma base by Robert Poling (a good friend of his in Little Rock).

Under the hood Rodney built an engine cover out of fiberglass and painted it with DuPont Sand Pearl Metallic. All lines and hoses for the Vintage Air/A/C system were custom-made and hidden out of sight. In the interior he used the contour of the factory dash top and made a custom dash that resembles a '32 Ford but has compound curves for a modern look. TWH Enterprises machined the gauge panel out of aluminum to fit the Auto Meter antique beige gauges. The custom center console houses the remaining two gauges, the air ride controls, and power window switches. Pontiac Fiero seats with the headrests removed were used and mounted so they would give as much leg room as possible. Paul Atkins was called upon to cover everything inside with Chestnut colored leather for a modern look. Bronze-colored glass was chosen to give the interior more of a golden look from the outside.

Rodney's friends have described the look of the truck as "delicate," "fragile," and "elegant" because it's so small compared to a truck of today. He calls it Modern-Retro because it has a lot of retro style with the modern touches available today and with over 7,000 miles on it in five months it's working whatever you want to call it. **CT**

## FACTS & FIGURES

### RODNEY PAYNE

Mabelvale, AR  
1935 Ford

#### CHASSIS

Frame . . . . . Ford Ranger  
Modifications . . . . . shortened 1", Z'd, C'd  
Chassis Builder . . . . . owner  
Rear end / Ratio . . . . . '90 Ford 8.8" / 3.55:1  
Rear suspension . . . . . Ford Ranger leaves (w/ 2 removed)  
Rear brakes . . . . . 12" Wilwood discs  
Front suspension . . . . . Ranger with Firestone air bags  
Front brakes . . . . . 12" Wilwood discs  
Master cylinder . . . . . 79 Lincoln  
Steering box . . . . . '84 Ranger power  
Front wheels, size . . . . . American Racing Torq Thrust IIs, 17x7s  
Rear wheels, size . . . . . American Racing Torq Thrust IIs, 18x8s  
Front tires, size . . . . . Dunlop 215/45ZR17  
Rear tires, size . . . . . Dunlop 255/45ZR18  
Gas tank . . . . . owner-built 18-gal.

#### ENGINE

Year and make . . . . . '95 Chevy LT-1  
Displacement . . . . . 350 ci  
Manifold / Induction . . . . . GM  
Ignition / Wires . . . . . GM  
Headers . . . . . Street & Performance  
Exhaust / Mufflers . . . . . 3" with Flowmasters

#### TRANSMISSION

Make and model . . . . . '95 GM 4L60E  
Modifications . . . . . stock  
Shifter . . . . . Windsor Fabrication

#### BODY

Body style / material . . . . . pickup / steel  
Manufacturer . . . . . Ford  
Fenders front/rear . . . . . stock / Poliform fiberglass  
Modifications . . . . . door handles shaved  
Hood . . . . . Rootlieb  
Grille . . . . . smoothed stock w/ Alumacraft insert  
Bed . . . . . custom built w/ Mack Products sides  
Bodywork and Paint . . . . . Robert Poling, Little Rock, AR  
Paint type / Color . . . . . DuPont Chroma Base / black  
Headlights / Taillights . . . . . '34 Ford commercial / Hagan smoothed  
Outside mirrors . . . . . So-Cal Speed Shop  
Bumpers . . . . . custom polished stainless nerf bars

#### INTERIOR

Dashboard . . . . . owner-built  
Gauges . . . . . Auto Meter  
Stereo / Speakers . . . . . Pioneer / Pioneer  
Air conditioning . . . . . Vintage Air  
Wiring . . . . . by owner  
Steering wheel . . . . . Budnik  
Steering column . . . . . Billet Specialties polished  
Seats . . . . . Pontiac Fiero  
Upholstery . . . . . Paul Atkins, Cullman, AL  
Material / Color . . . . . leather / chestnut  
Carpet . . . . . wool