

NEW SCHOOL STUDE

Old
School
Owner



by Louie Mayall

One of our favorite power combos is a stout, but conservative, Chevy small-block (355 cubes in this case) topped with a slightly underdriven B&M baby blower.



It couldn't have taken us five minutes from getting on the fairgrounds at the Zoo to have our heads under John Moffett's '33 Studebaker coupe. We here at StreetScene have a love of those who dare to build something different and the lines of a '33 Stude were enough to draw us in. What got us on our knees to thoroughly check out the Stude was the continuing, "yeah, I'd do that like that," conversation going on in our heads. The owner's name on the window sticker was John Moffett, which sounded familiar. The more we looked, the more we liked things like the perfect use of factory Studebaker trim (we like 21st Century resto-rods), clean body mods you really

don't see, the baby-blown small-block Chevy, the Corvette rear and the slammed stance on five-spoke Billet Specs wheels. Well, turns out of course we knew John Moffett; he's been rodding since dirt made a good road for his \$50 '46 Plymouth. He made the same choices we would have because like us, he's made the wrong ones once or twice before. Let's see what went into his '33 Studebaker 656 coupe.

If there was one thing John knew right from the time he got the '33 off the truck from Minnesota, was this thing was going to be able to put down the miles in style. Steve Hankinson was put in charge of the chassis and he started by

squaring up, boxing up, and stiffening up the chassis with a custom X-member. Steve slipped in a FatMan's Mustang II front crossmember with tubular A-arms, power disc brakes and rack and pinion steering. The rear suspension is a Corvette (C4) independent with custom coilovers in place of the transverse leaf, a limited-slip differential and disc brakes. Part of the fun of driving is a good engine, but stopping for gas sucks so a B&M blown Chevy 355 was chosen for power and a 700R4 tranny helps extend the range a bit.

We like to think of the styling of John's '33 Studebaker as modern resto rod. What we mean is the rod looks like it is stock and slammed on modern wheels, but actually has been highly modified.

John had David Nelson fill the roof, suicide the doors, mold the gas filler, clean off a little trim and straighten everything out. Lee Nelson was then called in to lay down the stunning PPG Prowler Orange and taupe two-tone paint scheme. The look is finished off with 17- and 18-inch Billet Specialties GTX Series three hoops with Michelin Pilot Sport rubber.

From behind the wheel, the two most important parts of the car are the paint on the top of the hood and interior, so John and Mike Smith came up with a plan for Mike to stitch up. Before dropping the car off at Mike's, John slipped in power windows, Stewart-Warner gauges, Sony tunes and A/C with defrost. Mike stitched the leather and ostrich around the bucket seats, the original umbrella holders and the molded door panels and headliner. Steve Hankinson was brought back in to do the wiring with an It's a Snap kit.

In the beginning of this story we talked about how John had been around for a while. He gave all the standard responses, like making the first Nationals and such, but what we dug was this, "I was showing in ISCA in the '70s, but it didn't take to long to figure out NSRA shows, cruising, and rod runs were way more fun and a whole lot cheaper." We must agree that driving is always better, but John's Studebaker is certainly capable of making the show rounds if only he could make those rock chips disappear. 🚩



There's a lot to love in this interior, but our favorite by a long shot is the taupe-painted original sheetmetal in all its shining Art Deco brilliance.



It's been said that it takes a special kind of person to love Studebakers. But they couldn't have been talking about early examples like John Moffett's '33 coupe out of East Leroy, Michigan, now could they?