

Star Light, Star Bright



When you put a clear top on your hood, the engine better look like something special. Steve detailed a '92 302 to the nines with a ground-smooth and body-colored EFI, custom aluminized headers, engine compartment gauges and enough chrome to dazzle an ISCA judge.

by Louie Mayall

You can tell a lot about a guy if you know the story behind his car. Some of us like to start with a total wreck and build it exactly our way. Some of us drive our cars unfinished, but finish them up eventually. Some of us can't stand to be seen in a car that's less than perfect in our mind's eye, and the rods done in a relatively short time (sometimes it's a lot longer before the perfectionist gets to drive his rod). Steve Henry bought his '54 Ford Crestline Skyliner Starlight off a used car lot in 1977 because the car was in great shape and he loved the one he had in high school. Steve spent the next 25 years collecting parts for his '54. He collected some pretty rare pieces for the old Ford, including the wild

hood we thought he had built, but luckily an old guy standing next to it knew exactly what the deal was with the see-through hood.

It may have been the ultra-rare and perfect bodywork that made us look at the car, but it was the chassis and powertrain that got this car on these pages. Back in 2003 the collecting stopped and Steve started blowing the car apart. Once the chassis was cleaned up and straightened out he started by adding FatMan dropped spindles, then hung a pair of disc brakes and finally slipped in a power dual-reservoir master cylinder. Steve liked the ride out back and kept it all stock sans a pair

of 2-inch lowering blocks. Steering duties are taken care of by a Saginaw 625 power box for a '57 Chevy (fits right in place). Power for the Skyliner comes from an injected and Painless-wired '92 Ford 302 backed up with an overdrive AOD tranny.

The body was in great shape to start with and Steve just had to do a little straightening to get the body ready. The body may look totally stock, but there are plenty of street rod touches, like the '54 Oldsmobile taillights, Lucas tri-bar headlights and polished stainless bolts. Steve found the see-through hood hiding among a pile of hoods at a swap meet and luckily the guy didn't know what

he had, so Steve got her cheap. One clear top hood was sent to every dealer to show off Ford's new OHV engine (overhead-valve Y-block). Steve refitted a new piece of flat Lexan plastic on to the hood by slowly fitting it into place and letting it take the shape on its own. He then laid down the DuPont Sonic Blue Pearlcoat hues and started slipping on all the stock chrome and stainless.

The sign that you have done something right is when the more knowledgeable person really notices it first. Steve modified the interior out of a '66 Ford T-bird to fit in the Skyliner. Once he got everything fit up, he added in cup holders and the AOD shifter to the center console. The dash itself was fixed up with AutoMeter gauges,

The basics of the interior came out of a '66 T-bird, but done in white leather and a very shiny, dark stained walnut. Modern touches include Kenwood tunes, tilt wheel and power everything.

AC/Heat/Defrost, Kenwood tunes, a tilt column, and then was painted the same Pearl Sonic Blue from outside the ride. Steve then had everything covered white leather with blue accents and dark blue wool carpeting. His final task was to wire the car together using a Kwik Wire kit.

So what does Steve Henry's car tell us about Steve? The finished project tells us he is a bit of a perfectionist, but the process tells us a lot more. Steve waited until he had all the parts ready to go and had the time to put in it (he recently retired). Steve is patient. That Steve got exactly the look he wanted without making multiple tries tells us Steve has been at this for a while. And, of course, we learned the most important thing about Steve and his ride by seeing his giant smile while cruising it. We know Steve is a rodder through and through. Just a quick note, we need to mention Diane Henry (Steve's wife), without whom this project and a lifetime of rodding would not have been possible. Keep on cruisin' the both of you!

We spent Thursday night going over Steve and Diane Henry's '54 Ford out of Princeton, KY, and were impressed. The next day Steve saw me walking by him, noticed the Mayall on my shirt, and told me a great story about how my dad, Joe, had helped him in the early '70s. I told him we loved his ride. Small world, eh?

