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OCTOBER 2024 | ISSUE 50 \$8.95

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BY BRIAN LIMBERG (EXCERPTS FROM HIS BUILD BOOK) ■ IMAGES BY NOTSTOCK PHOTOGRAPHY

Family Affair

The John Lamb/Tin Man's Garage
1961 Ford Unibody

John Lamb fell in love with a neat 1961 Ford Unibody pickup truck at a local car show one summer. He was so attracted to the truck because his father had a red Ford Unibody pickup when he was a kid and has great memories of driving in that truck with his family. He requested to the owner that when he was ready to sell the truck he give him first right of refusal to purchase the pickup. John patiently waited a couple of years until he got the chance to purchase the truck.

After John acquired the truck, he wasted no time digging into the project to rebuild the truck of his dreams. He had a concept sketch he had snipped out of a magazine with a rendering of a red Unibody pickup with some Ford Lightning pickup attributes he was wanting to use for some inspiration.





John had been interested in doing something different with the engine and was inspired from a local builder who had used Triton V-10s in his last couple projects and he thought it would be neat to use that same engine but build a twin-turbo version for his truck. John found a slightly used V-10 from a commercial work vehicle that was in a fire and purchased the engine from a salvage yard. John also purchased a Fatman Fabrications independent front suspension system and installed that kit, dropping the frontend of the truck down and improving the ride quality. His son, Jeff, helped by installing the new crossmember, which allowed room for the Triton V-10 powerplant. Jeff reworked the oil pan to get the lowest center of gravity for the engine in the chassis.

Next, John enlisted the help of Tin Man's Garage's Brian Limberg to fabricate a new firewall, floorboards, and trans tunnel to fit the new engine and transmission. John, Jeff, and Limberg hit it off immediately

and the trio worked together closely as a team to build the truck. After the floor and firewall were completed the Tin Man's Garage crew got to work finishing the rear suspension, setting up the truck's stance, and figuring out the wheel and tire combination. A No-Limit four-link suspension was installed with a new fabricated 9-inch housing. A new sheetmetal bed floor was fabricated to go over the step notch in the floor. A custom tailgate was fabricated with a small wing that was inspired by OEM rear roof design from the back of the cab. The smooth one-piece tailgate was built with hidden hinges and the tailgate handle was moved to the inside. A new roll pan was fabricated with a frenched license plate. The license plate was formed to match the radius of the lower part of the tailgate. This kept the license plate from hanging down below the roll pan. The taillight housings were removed and straightened. A hammerform was made to better fit the original taillight housings. These newly formed sheetmetal pieces were blended into the original taillight housing sheetmetal/bed corners.

A custom aluminum flush-mounted bed cover was fabricated to allow room for storage in the bed. The tonneau cover was eventually wrapped in black hearts cloth for a more elegant look.

There were some roof repairs that needed to be made along the driprails from some typical rust on these old Ford trucks. After analyzing the areas that needed to be repaired, the idea came up to radius the driprails to blend into the existing body line that runs up the top of the B-pillar. The door handles were shaved and the vent windows were deleted. The front A-pillar area on the door was reformed to fit the new glass run channels. The new one-piece side window glass looks more modern and smooth with the vent windows removed. The doors were gapped and new lower "rocker" filler strips were created to correct the lower door gaps and make the bottom edge of the truck one straight line from front to rear. Our goal was to make it look as straight as a razor blade along the bottom edge.

The interior was treated to the typical smoothing and cleaning up of everything in the dash. A custom gauge cluster was machined and fabricated and then welded into the dash to fit recessed custom Classic Instruments gauges. The interior was painted a satin color-matched Maserati Rame, which was color-matched to the luxurious Italian leather and suede that was used throughout the interior by Schober's Custom Hot Rod Interiors. A little splash of fun on the headliner and behind the reworked original bench seat was utilized with some gray toned plaid fabrics with maroon accents.

The wiring and all the electronics were engineered to mount behind the bench seat, mounting the two 6V batteries, Haltek engine management, American Autowire fuse panel, ground distribution blocks, and relays. Some easily removable panels were fabricated to gain quick and easy access to the components for troubleshooting if needed down the road.

The most noticeable talked-about feature of this truck is the aforementioned engine. The Ford Triton V-10 engine was selected to do something different. Tin Man's Garage set out to give the engine an equally unique look by using European design for influence when fabricating the engine's components, turbo plumbing, and underhood sheetmetal panels. The aluminum valve covers were fabricated from scratch and were made to look like an exotic engine that could have four cams. The large step in the valve covers also allowed for tighter nesting of the turbos down and closer to the engine. This tighter packaging allowed a cleaner design of the overall engine compartment sheetmetal. A new intake manifold was fabricated and grafted into the original cast-aluminum intake runners. The new plenum used an electronic throttle body. The plate on top of the plenum was machined with a teardrop-styled taper bead detail that closely resembled the hood's bead detail. New fuel rail mounting brackets were fabricated and a custom wiring harness was created through some Aeroquip AN hose to make the harness appear it was part of the mechanical workings of the engine.





The sheetmetal panels that were fabricated in the underhood area were engineered to be an immediate seamless transition from the exterior body sheetmetal. A crossflow radiator was used to help keep the height of the sheetmetal uniform around the perimeter. A framework was created and the sheetmetal skins were attached to the framework, allowing a machined counter bored low head fastener to be used around the perimeter. The inner fender panel's hardware is all hidden by using threaded studs for mounting everything secure. The aluminum front panel was fabricated from scratch and was also used to mount the main air inlet tube. The turbo plumbing routes through the chassis and makes its way around to the needed locations under the engine compartment's body panels. A custom aluminum power steering reservoir tank and overflow tanks were fabricated and mounted to the underside of the two side panels with flush-mounted fill caps. The engine bay was painted the same Mercedes Mountain Grau Color as the exterior, with the only difference being a matte clear was used instead of the standard gloss clear on the exterior for a different look.



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The front end was treated to a handful of custom touches as well. The headlights were flush mounted. The bumper was narrowed and tucked in flush to the sides of the fenders. The bead detail in the notch along the lower edge of the front bumper is the original bead detail from the rear roll pan that was cut out. It was reconfigured and used on the front bumper to accent the air scoop to allow additional air to enter the turbo's intercooler. A custom air foil tube grille was fabricated from scratch and painted Porsche Carbon Grau Metallic with matte clear. This was the same color used to paint the spokes of the Vintec Billet Specialties Wheels. Custom V-10 logos were machined into the hubcaps and the steering wheel's horn button.



The hood is the last major custom component of this build. Multiple things were corrected regarding the original fit as well as some custom design touches to improve the look of the muscular truck. The hoods on these old Ford trucks always fit terribly. The gap at the rear on the hood was large and they were wider than the cowl. Tin Man's Garage cut the original hood apart and reworked the inner structure to move the width of the hood in to make it narrower to fit the cowl. The hood hinges were reengineered to help make the hood open correctly so the gap at the rear of the hood could be tightened up and match the other gaps. The center of the hood skin was reshaped and the main bead detail down the center peak was completely removed. The corners of the hood's leading edge were pie cut toward the center to lessen the crown across the hood skin. All these changes improved the hood's fit, finish, and overall design, making it look more streamline and aggressive than it did from the factory.



The bodywork and paint by Adam Krause/The Refinery on this Unibody pickup is over the top. The body panels have been worked over thoroughly together as a whole to get the truck straight. The goal was to make the truck's body appear as if it were cut out of one piece of granite stone and then polished. The deep metallic Mercedes Grau paint has been color sanded and buffed to perfection, making this truck look like a wet mirror. **CTP**

