

THE ICONIC FORD FALCON XB GT

SCALE
1:8



Right Door



German Compact



A 'Fifties Icon

POST-APOCALYPTIC EDITION

THE ICONIC FORD FALCON XB GT

ISSUE 7

ASSEMBLY GUIDE

3

Continue assembling the right-hand door, fitting the inner panel, trim and door handle.

HISTORY OF THE FORD FALCON

7

Volkswagen vehicles became major competitors for Ford in the USA.

CUSTOM MADE

10

Many of the techniques used to customise cars have specific terms, most originating in the USA.

DESIGNS FOR A NEW ERA

13

The Ford Thunderbird first hit the market in the mid-1950s and continued in production for 60 years.

YOUR MODEL

You will be building a 1:8 scale replica of a customised 1973 Ford Falcon XB GT. Features include a lift-up bonnet that reveals a detailed engine, opening doors, wind-down windows and an 'active' steering wheel. A remote-control fob illuminates the main lights, brake lights and indicators.

Scale: 1:8
Length: 62cm
Width: 25cm
Height: 19cm
Weight: 7+kg



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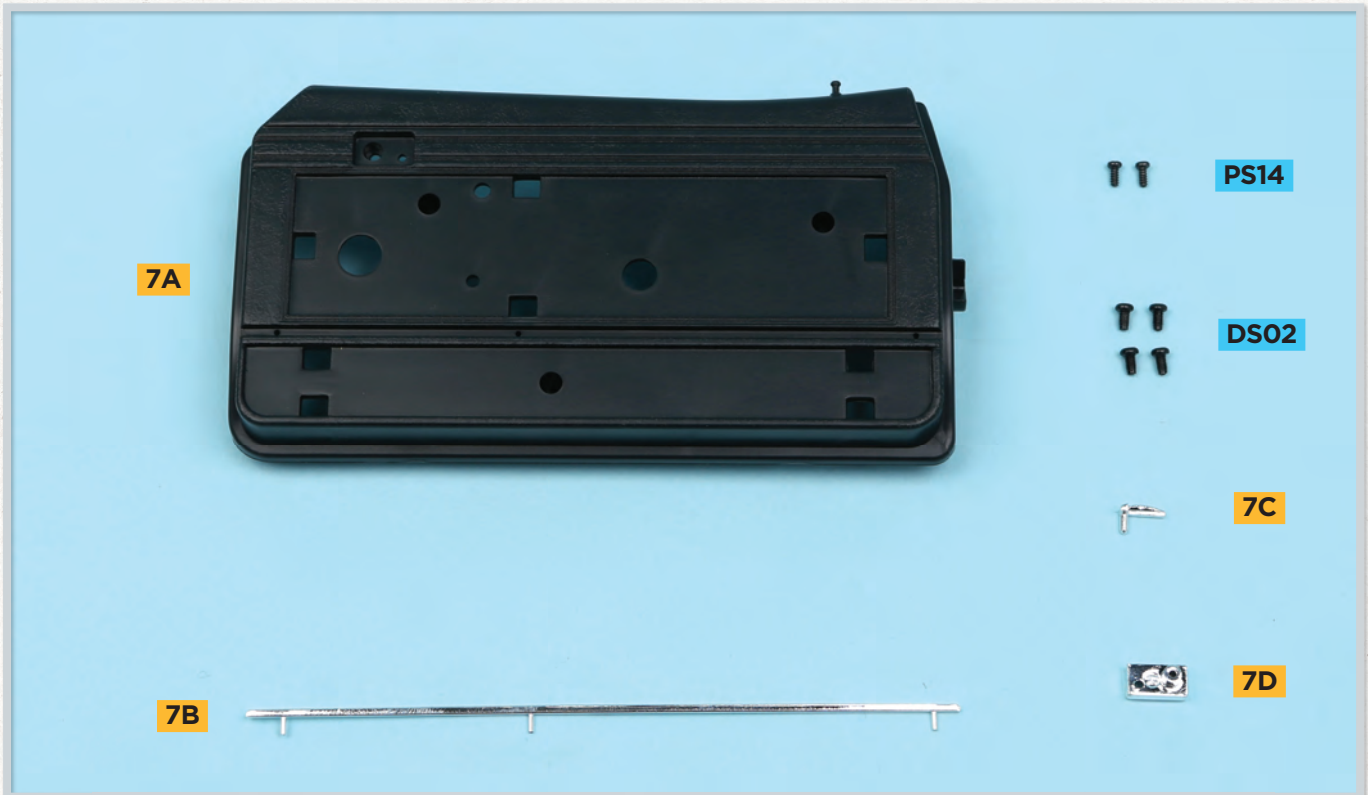
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t=top, c=centre, b=bottom, l=left, r=right, u=upper



Stage 7: Right Door (3)

Continuing the assembly of the right-hand door, fitting a trim, interior panel and inner door handle.



Area of assembly



List of parts:

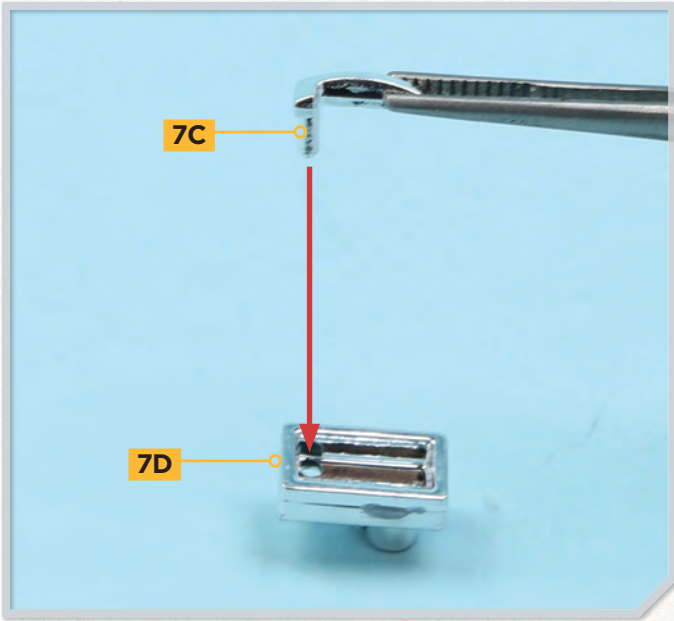
- 7A** Main inner panel for door
- 7B** Inner panel trim
- 7C** Inner door handle
- 7D** Inner door handle housing
- PS14** Two* 1.8 x 4mm PB screws
- DS02** Four* 2.3 x 4mm PM screws

* Including spare

PB = Pan head for plastic

PM = Pan head for metal

Stage 7: Right Door (3)



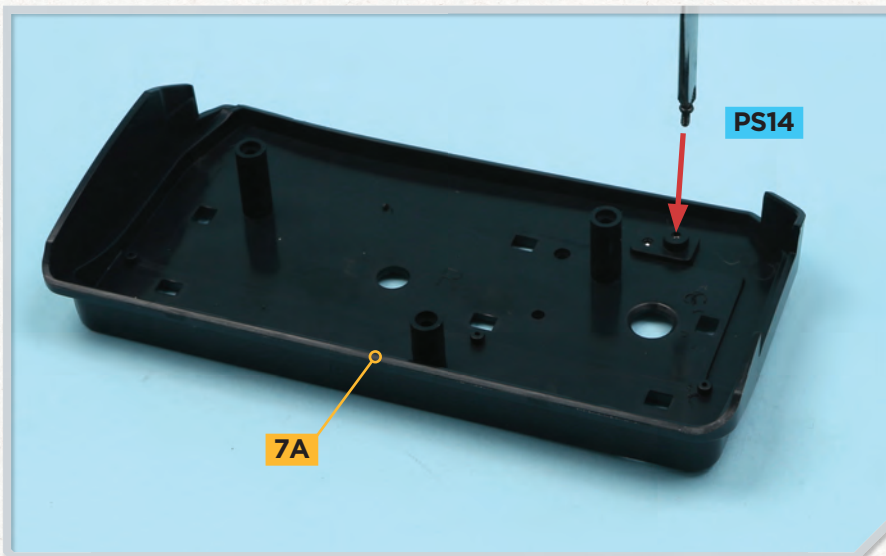
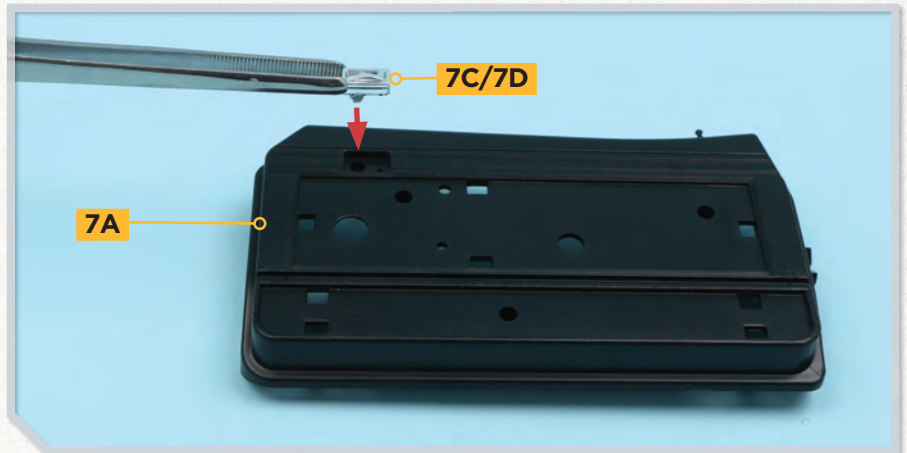
STEP 1

Take the two parts of the inner door handle **7C** and **7D**. Check how they fit together: The long peg on part **7C** fits into a hole in the corner of part **7D**. This is a push fit connection, but it requires quite a lot of pressure.



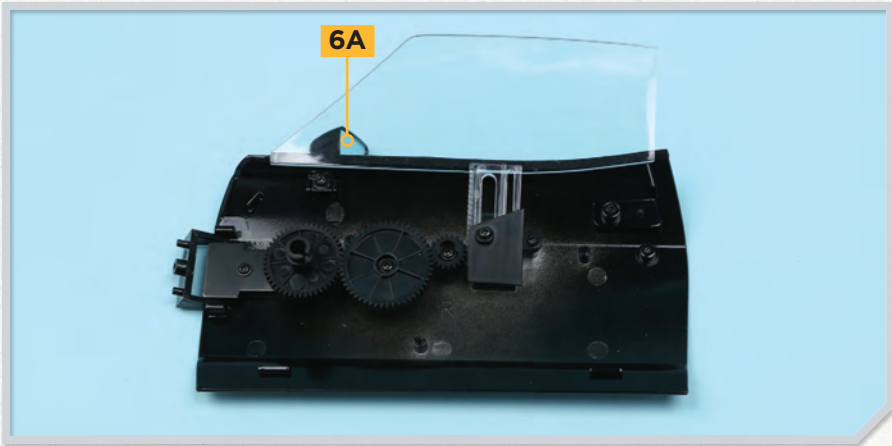
STEP 2

Identify the fixing point for the handle in a recess on the inner panel **7A** and check the fit.



STEP 3

Hold the handle in place and turn the panel **7A** over. Fix the handle in place with a **PS14** screw.

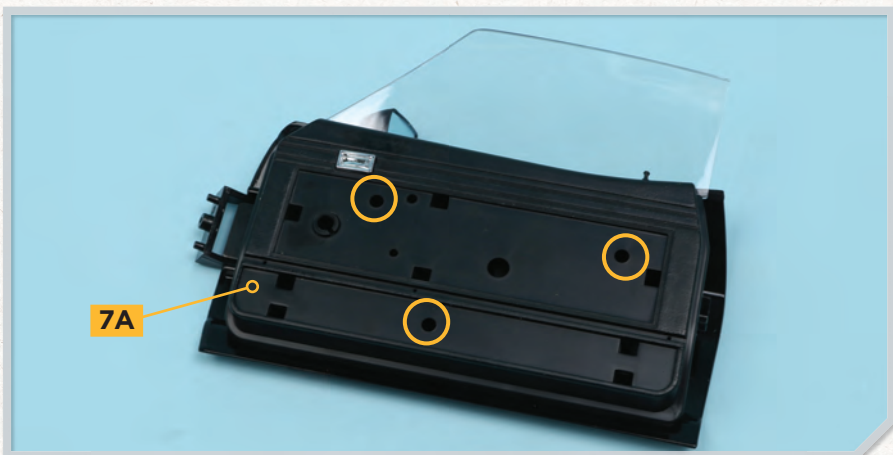
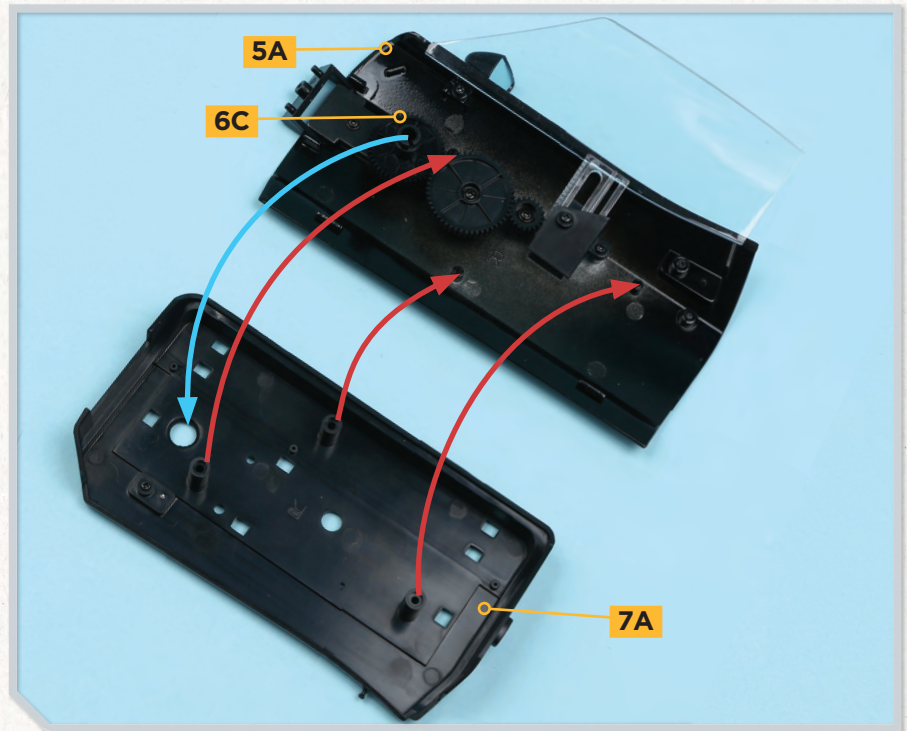


STEP 4

Take the door assembly from the previous issue. Check that the window **6A** is fully raised.

STEP 5

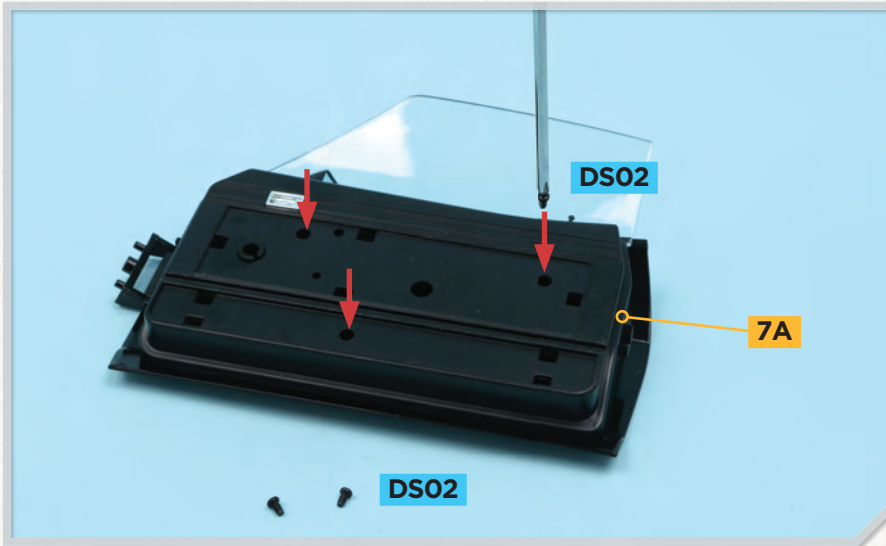
Take the door panel **7A** and check how it fits against the inside of the door **5A**. Three pegs with screw holes on the inside of part **7A** fit over raised screw sockets on the inside of the door **5A** (red arrows). At the same time, the hub of the cog **6C** fits into a hole in the door panel **7A** (blue arrow).



STEP 6

Identify the three fixing points on the door panel **7A** (circled). These screw sockets are deeply recessed.

Stage 7: Right Door (3)

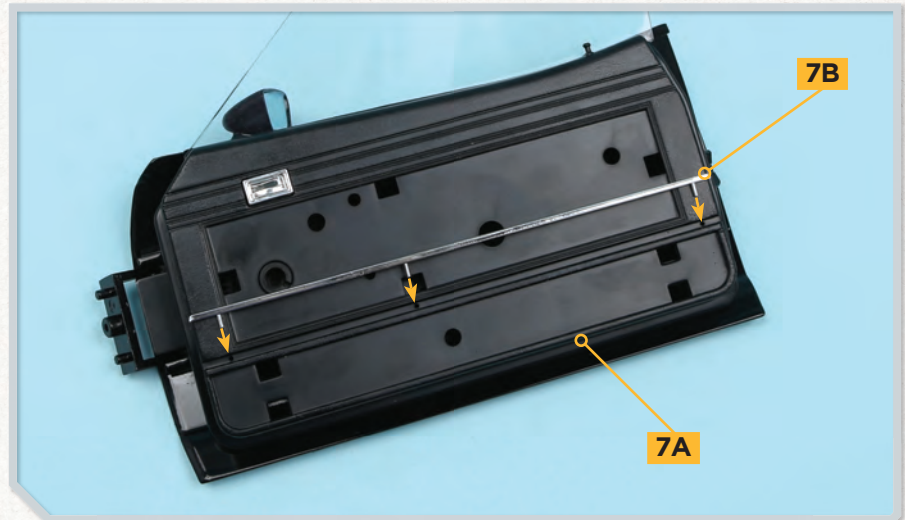


STEP 7

Fix the inner panel **7A** in place with three **DS02** screws (arrows). It may be helpful to use a screwdriver with a magnetised tip.

STEP 8

Take the trim **7B** and identify the fixing points across the inner panel **7A**. Push the trim in place. It fits snugly into a channel in the panel, so no glue is needed.



COMPLETED ASSEMBLY

The inner door handle and trim have been fitted to the inner door panel, and the panel has been attached to the outer door.



The Bug's Life

COMPETITION FOR THE FORD FALCON

After World War II, the American motoring market was looking for economy, reliability and innovation. But a new, popular compact car came from a surprising source.



In the years since motoring morphed from being a curious occupation for the idle rich or mechanically curious, to a vital part of the economic and social fabric, car companies have usually been created by visionaries such as Henry Ford, Enzo Ferrari or William Lyons (Jaguar). Governments don't usually start car companies although they often rescue them when they get into financial trouble in order to save jobs, British

Leyland and Renault being obvious examples, although many others have benefitted from government funding. However, one government did effectively start a car company. Volkswagen, which is now one of the biggest car manufacturers on the planet and owner of many brands that had been started by individual entrepreneurs – including Bentley, Porsche and Bugatti – was created by Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime in order to motorise the

Above: An early VW, modified for racing, takes part in a race at the Goodwood Revival in 2018, owned and driven by antique dealer and TV presenter Drew Pritchard.

German nation. At a meeting in Koblenz on 27 July 1936 it was decided that Volkswagenwerk (Peoples' Car Factory) would be founded under sole ownership of central government. The factory's foundation stone was laid down in front of Hitler on 26 May 1938, and

A Bug's Life



Left: Volkswagens roll down the production line at Wolfsburg soon after World War II.

by 3 July 1938, the *New York Times* had disparagingly referred to the prototype Volkswagen Type 1 as a 'Beetle'. German citizens were invited to buy stamps to save up for their *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through Joy) car, a small air-cooled utilitarian design developed by Professor Ferdinand Porsche, who had previously worked for the Mercedes-Benz company.

The few VW Beetles made before World War II were allocated to party officials and the new factory spent the war producing aircraft components, munitions and the Type 82 Kübelwagen, a VW Beetle-based Scout, the

German army's Jeep, of which over 55,000 were made.

After the war, KdF-stadt was renamed Wolfsburg and an Englishman, Major Ivan Hirst, was put in charge of VW by the allied forces occupying Germany. About 60 percent of the buildings and 80 percent of the production machinery had been destroyed by Allied bombing but, amazingly, a production line for the Beetle was found in the basement, intact, and both Hirst and the British government reasoned it was a good idea to get the German economy moving and create employment by producing cars. By March 1946, the factory had celebrated the production of the 1,000th Beetle.

None of the vehicles had been supplied to private individuals but were instead being used by

government officials, the post office and Allied forces.

Various members of the British motor industry evaluated the Beetle with the idea of the intellectual property (the design) and production lines being ceded to Britain as war reparations, but it was universally dismissed as an oddity that had no future. Lord Rootes, of the Rootes Group (Singer, Hillman and Humber), turned down the opportunity to take ownership of Volkswagen for free soon after the end of World War II, because he said the car was both too noisy and too ugly.

In June 1948 Ernest Breech, Ford USA Board Chairman, and Henry Ford II, met with the British authorities in Germany to consider a proposal that Ford take over Volkswagen. Breech's advice to Henry Ford II: "I don't think what we're being offered is worth a dime." Manufacturers in the USA and UK manufacturers all felt the same. There is no doubt it was an



Above: Major Ivan Hirst, newly appointed to run the VW Wolfsburg plant, drives the 1,000th Volkswagen off the assembly line.

"I don't think that what we're being offered is worth a dime."

Ford Chairman to Henry Ford II

Right: The high standards of workmanship were promoted in VW ad campaigns. It was a tough little vehicle that remains sought after today.



oddity: a car that already looked a bit out of date by 1945, was underpowered, and used more fuel than an equivalent small, water-cooled car would because it needed additional power to cool the combustion chambers. However, it was much more economical than the massive American V8 land yachts of the 1950s because it was small, light and relatively aerodynamic. It was also beautifully built at a time when North American cars just were not.

MAKING THE GRADE

It seems remarkable then that this charming little car, seen as a design dead end by seemingly every other automotive engineer in the world, and which had been created at the behest of the 20th century's most

reviled dictator, should end up becoming the bestselling car ever made, but it did, it still is, and probably always will be. Back in 1945, however, the Beetle did not look promising. Its design was already nearly 10 years old and was then being almost handmade in small quantities by a workforce in a bombed-out site that lacked

machine tools. By 1973 most Americans, and most of the free world, had changed their ideas because a particular VW was classified as a Lemon and not ready for export to America: "The Chrome strip on the glove compartment is blemished and must be replaced. Chances are you wouldn't have noticed it; inspector Kurt Kroner did. There are 3,389 men at our Wolfsburg factory with only one job: to inspect Volkswagens at each stage of production."

That ad, a piece of copywriting genius, launched in late 1960 is the most famous line from probably one of the most innovative advertising campaigns of all time. It was created by the advertising agency Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB), at the time a small advertising agency founded by three young executives who, in July 1959, signed a contract with VW to market the Beetle. Their innovative approach played on the stereotype of German workers being careful, quality driven individuals and so created VW's image for reliability. The VW hit the American market full force. The successful marketing proved to Ford that there was a high demand for compact, economical vehicles. ■

Touching the American psyche

Woody Allen made the time-travelling film *Sleeper*, in which his character wakes up 200 years in the future, in 1973. Allen always championed his Jewish heritage – something of an irony in the scene below. At the time the Beetle had established such a place in the American psyche that audiences all over the country rocked with laughter at these lines:

Luna Schlosser (Diane Keaton): What is it?

Miles Monroe (Woody Allen): It's a 200-year-old Volkswagen

Allen then reaches into the filthy VW which is, inexplicably, in a cave, turns the key and it starts first time, producing that characteristic air-cooled hum.

Monroe: Boy they really built these things, didn't they?!

The pair then drive off in the Beetle.

That joke only works if the vast majority of the audience already accept, without question, that VW Beetles are the most reliable cars ever made.

The Language of Customisation: Technical Terms

Continuing our guide to interpreting the key words, names and phrases used when it comes to the main structure of a vehicle. Note that over time definitions can and will change and adapt, but we've tried to include those that have already stood the test of time.



A lot of customising work involves altering the car chassis to adjust the height or modifying the bodywork for an individual look.

CHASSIS, WHEELBASE AND HEIGHT

C'd Frame C'ing or Ceeing a frame involves cutting a rounded C-shaped notch out of each chassis leg above the rear axle to allow the suspension more travel and (with lowered

suspension) to allow the vehicle to sit much lower to the ground while still being functional. Extra metal is added on top and / or to the sides of the frame rails to strengthen the frame.

Z'd (chassis) Removing the rear portion of the chassis and welding it back on in a step, one part on top of the other, to form a Z was a straightforward way to lower the rear of a hot rod.

Above: A 1932 Plymouth 3, with bodywork lowered by channelling, on show in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Boxed Frame Older car chassis were made of a C-shaped steel channel and when more power was added there was a tendency for that chassis to twist, so a fourth wall of metal was welded on to the open inside edge to create a much stronger D-shaped boxed-section construction.

Channelled Channelling (or bodydropping) involves lowering the body over the frame of the vehicle to make it lower while retaining all the standard suspension travel. Relatively easy on pre-World War II cars, but more complicated on later vehicles.

Dropped Axle A method of lowering the front of a vehicle with a solid (non-independent suspension) front. The ends of the axle are heated and bent upwards then straightened out rather like stretching out a letter S. Done correctly, the suspension remains the same but the mountings for the front wheels are moved upwards, thus lowering the front without any compromise in handling.

Dropped Spindles Another way of lowering the front, in this case the mounting spindles for the wheels are cut off and re-welded back on higher up. Perfectly safe if done correctly.

Kick-up Raising the frame rails at the rear, usually by bending or cutting out a sliver, to mount the axle higher up and thus lower the rear of the vehicle.

Lowering Blocks Added between the axle and the leaf spring to remount that axle further upward and thus lower the car.

Slammed/Stanced A vehicle lowered right to the ground, or very nearly. Sometimes for improved handling, usually just for appearance.

Altered / AWB An altered or Altered Wheel Base car has its front, rear or both axles repositioned from the standard location. Usually one or both are moved forwards to increase the weight on the rear – and thus the traction on the driven back tyres – during hard acceleration. Which is especially useful in a drag race.

BODYWORK AND TECHNIQUES

Chopped The act of lowering the roof of a vehicle by removing metal from the roof pillars. Initially done as a way of improving aerodynamics it soon became equally popular for improved appearance. Relatively straightforward on boxy 1930s and earlier cars, it becomes increasingly

complicated for vehicles from the mid-1950s onwards and usually involves complicated metalwork.

Sectioning Cutting the vehicle body horizontally in half then removing a slice and welding the top and bottom halves together again. Immensely complicated since so much of the vehicle has to be modified, sectioning is the single biggest visual change that can be made to customise a car.

Leadsled When cars were customised in the days before lightweight putties and fillers, the holes and joins had to be filled with melted lead – which was also the way many cars were constructed in the factory. Lead was heavy and tended to make heavily customised cars slow, so hot rodders – who were all about speed – often derided these cars as leadsleds. Customisers generally adopted the phrase as a badge of honour.

Below: A 1931 Ford takes on a new look after it has been chopped. This model was on display at a show in Essex, England, in 2017.



The Language of Customisation: Technical Terms

Bodykit Panels attached to the outside of a car to change or disguise its appearance, often as a means of fitting wider wheel and tyres without them extending illegally beyond the bodywork and allowing extra airflow to cool the brakes.

Scoop An angular hole in the body of a vehicle to take in air, release air pressure or just for appearance.

Louvres Slots to increase cooling airflow or relieve a build up of air pressure. Sometimes functional, sometimes just for appearance, they vary in size but are always straight.

Bubble Arch Circular or rounded bodywork extensions to cover wider wheels and tyres. Also known as flares or flared arches in the 1970s no rally-inspired Ford Escort was complete without a set.

Box Arch As a bubble arch but a more square / boxy appearance. Also sometimes known today as a 'widebody conversion,' especially when part of a bodykit.

Bubble Top A radical customising trend made popular by customisers such as Darryl Starbird and Ed 'Big Daddy' Roth: the roof of the vehicle is replaced with a hinged clear plastic bubble. These were handmade by heating and moulding a big sheet of plastic.

Flip Front A (usually) one-piece front, often made from fibreglass that is hinged and tilts or lifts forward to allow access to the engine compartment.

Frenched Recessing part of a vehicle - usually the headlights but also taillights or radio aerials - down into the bodywork. The term comes from the shape of a French shirt cuff.

Hooded A brow added over a component of a car, usually the headlight. Popularised on the 1955 Chevrolet range of cars and pickups.

Belly Tank A belly tanker or drop tank racer is a hot rod built around a jettisonable fuel tank that was hung under the wing of an aircraft. Hot rodders realised these lightweight and extremely aerodynamic tear-shaped metal tanks made a perfect body for a single seat racecar.

Rollpan Also known as a 'rolled pan,' a sheet metal panel that is curved and attached to the lower front or rear of the vehicle to give a smooth and finished look. Often the bumpers are removed to highlight the effect.

Decked The removal of badges and brightwork from the rear of a car and filling the holes for a smooth, clean appearance.

Nosed The removal of badges and brightwork from the front end of a car and filling the holes for a smooth, clean appearance.

Shaved Removing the door handles or decorative trim from (usually) the side of a vehicle and filling any mounting holes for a smooth appearance.

Solenoids When the handles are removed from the doors or other opening panels on a vehicle electrically operated solenoids are fitted to unlock that panel and pop it open.

Spoiler / Air Dam Device to arrest the airflow at the front or rear of a vehicle (although in some cases fitted to the roof) and, supposedly, improve fuel economy, grip or both.

Torched Springs A highly unsafe and unreliable method of lowering a car where blocks are placed underneath the vehicle and the coil springs are heated until they sag; at which point the car drops down onto the blocks and the lower ride height is set.

Below: A belly tanker joins a race on the beach at Margate in 2023.





The Ford Thunderbird: a 'Fifties Icon

Although it is almost 20 years since the Thunderbird name last appeared in the Ford model line-up, it remains linked to a true automotive icon that has lived in the hearts and minds of enthusiasts and in the garages of collectors for decades.

The original “T-Bird” appeared as a prime contender for the title of the definitive American sports car in 1955. Since then, the Thunderbird story has covered 11 generations of styling that included four-seater roadsters, convertibles, hardtops and luxury four-door models. Almost 5 million of them were sold over the 50 years that the Thunderbird was in the Ford catalogue, but while most of the models since 1960 were generally forgettable, the two-seaters of

the mid-1950s live on. The initial 1953 guidelines for Ford’s first interpretation of a European-style sports car called for a two-seater convertible that would make maximum use of standard production components. Design objectives included a weight of no more than 2,500 pounds, a V-8 engine, balanced weight distribution, acceleration better than the competition, and a top speed of more than 100 mph.

After the launch in 1954, the public went for the Thunderbird in

Above: The 1955 Thunderbird had the neat, refined appearance of a European-style sports car.

a big way, placing more than 3,500 orders in the first 10-day selling period when the planned volume for the entire year was only 10,000 units. Ford had explored a new market for American-built cars and had come up with a winner.

There were a few minor design changes on 1956 models, including porthole windows in the optional hard-top that have since become

The Ford Thunderbird

Right: Ads for the 1980 Thunderbird aimed to remind consumers of the iconic vehicle's origins.

an iconic feature in their own right. But the 1957 T-Bird would be the last of the two-seaters. The final one rolled off the assembly line on 13 December 1957 and an era had ended too soon.

Seldom in the history of the automobile industry has a company achieved the immediate success that Ford reached in creating the Thunderbird. The car stunned the automotive world and the effect was a lasting one. Not for nothing has the "T-Bird" name become established as an automotive legend. Those early Thunderbirds gave to the world a handsome car that was entirely in the American idiom – a practical car for both daily transportation and long trips, and a stylish sporting machine with excellent performance and intriguing pedigree.

That is why it begs the question as to why Ford management decreed that the Thunderbird's future for the next four decades belonged to the four-seaters. After all, the two-seater had given Ford the prestigious car it needed and sales had exceeded planning volumes in each of the three years it was on the market.

CHANGE IN MARKETING

Ford's market research, however, had come up with the conclusions that the economic realities of the times, combined with the public's motoring needs and Ford's market share, inhibited the potential of the car. Research pointed out the blindingly obvious fact that two-seaters were not being bought by families, unless as a second car. Thus the seating capacity and price restricted Thunderbird ownership



to multi-car, upper income families. The research also forecast that a significant amount of two-seater owners were interested in a four-passenger model so long as the Thunderbird styling was kept. That point was debatable but, armed with this rationale, Ford ushered in the new 1958 year by unveiling the four-passenger Thunderbird. The stylists had done their best to retain the classic lines of the original T-bird but the signs were obvious that Ford had moved a long way from its original concept of an American sports car. Automotive historians and enthusiasts have since postulated that Ford management had rolled over and shied away from any confrontation with the Chevrolet Corvette that had gone on sale in 1953.

In its initial planning stages Ford had felt that the T-Bird had the advantage over the Chevrolet by virtue of it having V8 power as against the pedestrian inline six-cylinder unit in the rival 'Vette. Especially as sales of those first Corvette options had been

It begs the question as to why Ford management decreed that the Thunderbird's future belonged to the four-seaters.

demonstrably poor. But when Ford launched the Thunderbird in 1955, Chevrolet immediately countered by equipping the Corvette with its own V8 – the now much-revered 327cu.ins. (5.7 litres) 'small-block' motor. In the initial head-to-head rivalry in the battle of the giants for the bragging rights for the building of "America's sports car" both claimants to that title enjoyed great success in 1955 and 1956.

Obviously there was room in the market for such a car, but was that section of the market big enough to pay dividends? Was there a long-term future for an American sports car? And, more importantly, was there room enough for two contenders for the title?

In the duel between the two giants, Ford blinked first. It folded up its sports car plans and left that field to Chevrolet. The 1958 Thunderbird was classified by Ford as a "semi-luxury" car and all subsequent versions of the car remained squarely in that mass-market sector.

When people refer to the T-Bird as an icon, it is the cars built between 1955 & 1957 that are in their minds and Ford recognised this by using its charisma to help advertise their current models in the 1980s and 1990s. ■

The starting point

The Ford Thunderbird made its first public appearance in February 1954, at the first post-war Detroit Auto Show. The styling, based on European sports cars, brought a new look to the American market. It was a racy two-seater with clean, crisp lines and was an immediate smash hit.



The final model

As a postscript to the Thunderbird story, when Ford displayed a concept car at the 1999 Detroit Auto Show to underline its heritage, it drew on the 1950s T-Birds for its styling cues. So positive was the public reaction to the concept car that it was put into limited production in 2002 and remained in the Ford model range for three more years. More than 50 years after it had itself appeared at the 1954 Detroit Auto Show, the original T-Bird was still influencing 21st century customers.



COMING IN ISSUE 8



• ASSEMBLY GUIDE

Two more panels, together with the window winder and arm rest, are fitted to the door.

• CUSTOM MADE

Certain cars are in high demand for the customisation treatment, with companies, artists and designers focus their efforts on creating custom cars.

• CARS ON SCREEN

A movie about two men with terminal cancer doesn't sound like a comedy, but *The Bucket List* (2007) deftly mixes laughter and tears in a movie featuring a 1965 Mustang.

NEW PARTS

Middle panel for the door, lower panel for the door, arm rest, window winder and screws.



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