

PERFORMANCE REPORT

INFORMATION & VIEWPOINTS

Pertinent Fiction Dept. Sometimes It's OK To Smell A "Rat"

Self-proclaimed high performance automotive dignitaries from around the country convened recently to take part in a forum assembled to decide, once and for all, just what constituted acceptable terminology for the car that has been up to this time referred to as a "rat rod." These cars have taken the rodding world by storm, and more are being built every day. Before we report on this gathering, though, we must clear up something. Quite frankly, we were somewhat reluctant to attend, even as observers. We did not want to give any more credibility than necessary to what might just be viewed as a complete waste of time by many responsible members of the aftermarket industry. Shakespeare would likely have called it "much ado about nothing" and dismissed it as pure, ego-driven pap. However, since the meeting concerned a vital aspect of our industry, we were compelled to attend, but in a strictly "wallflower" mode.

The first speaker, from the Irrational Street Rod Association, took an immediate stand by saying he hated the name rat rod and viewed it as not only distasteful, but downright insulting. He should have sat down then, but instead he rambled on with reckless abandon. "At ISRA we're all about family. Rat rod is a throwback to the old days and another equally disgust-

ing term, 'hot rod'. Both of these call to mind an image of hooligans dressed in leather jackets and chinos and tearing up the streets in radically altered early model cars," he said. Then he added, "At ISRA we have worked hard to promote proper image of a street rod through the use of small blocks, aluminum billet, real leather, power windows, door locks and deck lids, cruise control, air conditioning and even

onboard, mini-laptop computers, digital gauges and fax machines." It occurred to us that this amalgam could be a street rod... or it could just as easily be a 2007 Cadillac.

Fortunately, the moderator made this dude sit down, but the next guy, from a carburetor company, was equally opinionated. "I hate the term rat rod too...I much prefer to call them "retro-rods". With that, he sat down. We guessed he was a man of few words... and not rational ones at that.

Next up, a rep from the Average Guy's Rod Association offered up the opinion that he secretly kind of liked the term rat rod, but also acknowledged that a core group within the rodding sport took offense at the term, so his organization tried to downplay the whole scene by calling the cars "traditional" hot rods (There's that distasteful word, hot rod, again). We did like it when he called them simple, old-fashioned hot rods, though.



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INFORMATION & VIEWPOINTS

It's OK To Smell A "Rat"

(cont. from page 1)

After a brief delay, a guy from one of the major magazines, who spoke with a phony sounding accent, walked to the podium, cleared his throat and began, in a nasally tone, "I don't like the term rat rod. It's disgusting. Call it a nostalgia rod, a retro rod...even call it a jalopy, but never call it a rat rod." He paused a moment for effect, then went on. "Rat rods violate every one of my aesthetic senses...and I have many. They are an affront to the sensibilities of anyone who has ever built a true street rod."

Several other speakers stepped up and made their feelings known. Other than a quick, one-hour lunch break, the forum ran for a full eight and a half hours, offering more and more of the oldsters a chance to catch a nap and every speaker a chance to offer an opinion on the topic of rat rodding. We sat through the entire affair, biting our tongues on more than one occasion in an effort to remain quiet. Why? Several of the participants took it upon themselves to speak on behalf of rat rodders everywhere, and some expressed the sentiment that even the rat rodders themselves do not like the term rat rod. We were bothered by the fact that not one authentic, dyed-in-the-wool rat rodder was in attendance to offer a firsthand opinion. Representatives of magazines, manufacturers, suppliers, rodding organizations and even show car promotion companies put in their two-cents' worth, but no one heard from a real rat rodder.

What these nabobs failed to realize is that to hang any label more specific than "hot rod" on any car is in violation of the very spirit upon which the whole sport is based. To arbitrarily call the vehicle by any other name is no more than a blatant attempt to stifle the very creativity that makes every new rod we see so exciting. Maybe some don't like the term "rat rod." To them we say, "TOUGH!" Don't like the term "hot rod"? Again we say, "TOUGH!" A magazine by the name of

"Hot Rod" has been around for darn near sixty years and it's still going strong. Several publishers have tried variations on the name "street rod", but none has been as successful as "Hot Rod." Hoodlums? Come on, for crying out loud! Today's young rodders can identify with the glamor and rebellion of the fifties much more readily than they can the uptight, look-down-your-nose attitude of many car enthusiasts who came along decades later. Besides, many of those so-called "hoodlums" just happen to be the pioneers that made the whole aftermarket possible.

Tacking names, any names, on a group as diverse as hot rodders is at best an exercise in futility. We do think there is one name that we should all keep in mind with regard to all rodders of the rat, street, retro, nostalgia, traditional or whatever category, and that name is CUSTOMER! ©MSR

IMAGINE THIS...

Shown below is Billy Gibbons' (ZZ Top) '35 Ford rat...street...retro...nostalgia...traditional...hot rod basking in the warm California sun. It has all the trimmings of what many still consider to be a rat rod, including chopped top, deep channel over a z'd frame and a righteous, twin-carbed flat-head V8 with aluminum heads. One interesting option is the vintage Coke machine bottle opener mounted on the side of the pickup box, just aft of rear tire. The wide white-wall tires on stock 16" wires add just the right amount of discord.

Our erstwhile editor caught this scene on film during a recent visit to California. The background of the photo is quite ironic. Known as a hot rodder's shrine, it's the National HOT ROD Museum in Pomona. ©MSR



Quick Fuel Technology

Super Street Series Gasoline Carburetors

Available in CFM ratings from 650 to 830, with a choice of mechanical or vacuum secondaries and annular boosters, the Quick Fuel Super Street Series carburetors have electric chokes and many innovations. Rodders will be excited with features like billet metering blocks and throttle bodies, changeable air bleeds and aluminum main bodies and fuel bowls. All in all, Super Street Series carbs are very impressive and ideal for maximum performance. All have standard, square mounting flanges and are up to 5lbs. lighter than standard carbs.

Q-Series 750 CFM E85 Carburetor QFTQ-750-E85

Many cities now have stations offering E85 fuel, a blend that is 85% ethanol and 15% gasoline. Quick Fuel offers one of the first performance carburetors to be engineered, tuned and dyno tested for maximum power potential running on E85. The billet metering blocks are calibrated for E85 and the floats are compatible with alcohol. Many of the carb's components are stainless steel for long life. Some calibration may be required for maximum performance.



Ram Clutches - Three For The Road

RAM Street Dual-Disc Clutch Kits

The advantage of a dual disc clutch is found in its smooth engagement and almost effortless pedal action, even when it's backing an engine with as much as 1,000 horsepower and 900 lbs./ft. of torque. Ram's diaphragm style pressure plate, 300 Series friction disc material and a floater plate/retainer combination that eliminates plate rattle result in a clutch that is second to none. The kits also include aluminum bellhousings and are available to fit GM LS1, Ford 4.6 L with 1-1/16-10 spline, 6- or 8- bolt, and 164 teeth.

RAM Street Hydraulic Release Bearing

Ram's floating hydraulic release bearing is ideal for stock replacement, hot rod build-ups, circle track cars using stock style clutches, or just about anywhere space is too limited for a mechanical clutch linkage. The Ram Street Hydraulic Bearing requires a minimum master cylinder bore of 7/8" and connects to the master cylinder with a -4AN line.

RAM 7.25" Stock Car Clutch

Two lighter pressure springs in Ram's new 7.25" diameter pressure plate apply higher clamp pressure without stiffening the pedal action. The disc's friction material is thicker to withstand much higher heat and loads. Plate and disc weigh only 8.2 lbs. and are available to fit Chevy 1-1/8"-10 or -26 spline input shafts.



Xceldyne Timing Systems

XTS Pro-Series Belt Drive Timing System bolts on with no machining, in most cases, and can improve cam timing and consistency through use of a Goodyear Super Torque belt that precisely matches pulley teeth. Newly designed belt guards keep belt failures to a minimum and the low drag cam thrust assembly with captured cam seal and ceramic bearings makes setting of end play easy. Available to fit standard or raised cam small block Chevys and big block Chevys, with grooved or solid pan rails, and for drag race (slotted spider style) or circle track and road race (solid spider style) use. ©MSR



accepts:



INDUSTRY NOTES

SEMA Study Proves Effectiveness of Tonneau Covers

For years, owners of pickup trucks have maintained that running down the road with the tailgate open made the truck more aerodynamic, and improved fuel mileage to boot. Most of these conjectures were not scientifically arrived at, but just seemed to make perfect sense because it seemed that air would move through an open-sided box more easily.

When tonneau covers were introduced to the modern trucking scene, the same basic argument about improved aerodynamics was made by their manufacturers. Again, no real scientific studies had been undertaken, but it just seemed logical that a big box with a closed top would pass more smoothly through the air than one with no top.

After a recent study undertaken by SEMA's Research and Information Specialist, Megan McKernan, there should be no doubt as to the effectiveness of tonneau style covers for the boxes on modern pickup trucks.

After a strenuous, and, for the most part, fruitless effort to get the truck manufacturers to provide test vehicles, the SEMA crew was forced to regroup and pursue other avenues. They ended up renting and borrowing pickups to complete the testing. The tests were conducted in the A2 Wind Tunnel at AeroDyne Wind Tunnel, LLC, in Mooresville, North Carolina. Getting a reservation at AeroDyne was no small feat in itself due to the fact that the facility runs a 5-day, 24 hour schedule to keep up with the testing demands of NASCAR teams. The facility is often booked 18 months in advance.

A series of tests conducted on Dodge 1500, Ford F-150 and Chevrolet/GMC half ton pickups yielded some con-



crete proof that tonneaus do increase the streamlining of the trucks while lowering the coefficient of drag.

Regardless of which tonneau covers were tested, and there were thirteen in all, the improvement averaged a 5.73% reduction in aerodynamic drag. The best performers were the fiberglass tonneaus and two of the roll-up style soft vinyl tonneaus all of which racked up an impressive 6.5% reduction.

How does this translate into fuel savings? Well, aerodynamicists maintain that a 10% reduction in aerodynamic drag is good for a 2-3% improvement in gas mileage. An improvement of 5.73% would, therefore, mean a 1.8% improvement in fuel mileage. Now, when gas was less than a buck a gallon, this might have not meant much, but with prices at the pump hovering right around the three dollar mark, any reduction...especially nearly 2%... can amount to a tidy sum at year's end.

Our hat's off to Ms. McKernan and her team for putting facts down on paper. The information gained can become an real valuable selling tool. ©MSR

CHARLIE JOBBER'S PICK

Overdrive is Where It's At These Days

Richmond Gear's New Manual Overdrive



There used to be a time when Ford and GM built manual transmissions that were capable of handling the horsepower and torque of the engines they put in front of them. These days it's all a matter of saving weight, and what better way to save a few pounds than to "chintz" on the transmission? Richmond Gear has a solution for *transmission terminitis* with their new 5-speed manual overdrive transmission. Available in a half dozen configurations to fit various GM and Ford applications, the Richmond 5-Speed Manual Overdrive Transmission has a stout 3.33 first gear followed by a 1.89 second gear, 1.31 third gear, 1:1 fourth and a fifth (overdrive) gear of

.77. That means a rodger can stuff a fairly stout 3.73 rear gear in his favorite ride, bolt in a Richmond 5-gear, tear up the road or the strip through fourth gear, and when he hits fifth gear, his car can romp merrily along like it has a 2.87 rear ratio. Want a 4.11 for even more fun? It will be the equivalent of a 3.17 gear once the Richmond 5-gear is in fifth. There aren't too many ways we gearheads can have our cake, and eat it too, these days, but I think the fine folks at Richmond have really hit upon one here. Give the dudes at Motor State a call.



CHARLIE JOBBER

A LITTLE NICENESS GOES A LONG WAY



So, there I was, just after dark on a cold Sunday night. Fifty miles from nowhere, driving my ancient crew cab, pulling my equally age challenged race car trailer. I was on the return trip from a weekend long drag race. My periodic squint at the gauges revealed that the fuel level was still sufficient to get me home. The temp and oil pressure were normal. The ammeter needle, however, appeared to be welded to the negative side. I'd thought the headlights and dash lights were looking a little dim, but chalked it up to fatigue. I looked for a spot to pull over, hoping it was just a belt (I had a spare), but fearing the worst (a fried alternator).

I got off at the next exit and pulled into a gas station. This was not a repair type station, but one of those mini-market joints, with three time worn pumps outside. I opened the hood and the smoke coming from the alternator confirmed my worst fears. This unit had seen its best charging days. I went inside the store to use a phone to see about making some arrangements for towing, lodging, repairs, what-

ever it would take. I was not optimistic as I explained my plight to the polite young lady behind the counter. Before she could reply, a young man holding a handful of ice cream bars interrupted my story with a question.

"Got an alternator problem, Buddy? My brother rebuilds 'em," he said.

The next thing I knew, Lee (his name) was on the cell phone, talking to someone named Steve, who I assumed was his brother. Within a minute, he hung up, tossed his ice cream back in the freezer and told me his brother was on the way. Then he asked if I had any tools.

We went out to my truck and I pulled my toolbox out of the back. He took it, grabbed a pair of wrenches, and in

less time than it would have taken me, he had the wires off and the euchred alternator was perched on the tailgate of my truck. Within minutes his brother arrived, took the alternator and said he'd have to take it back to his shop. With a promise that they would return within the hour, the brothers were off in a cloud of dust. I climbed back into my truck, leaned back and closed my eyes. Here I was, a hundred and fifty miles from home, with no alternator now. I was at the mercy of two strangers.

I must have dozed for a few moments, but I awoke suddenly to the sound of my hood being closed. Barely an hour had passed and these two had already replaced the alternator while I slept. Before I could apologize, they told me to start the truck. The battery was sluggish, but

had enough juice to spin the starter sufficiently to start the truck. I was back in business again and still stood a good chance of making it home in about three hours.

I asked Steve how much I owed him and he said, "Sixty bucks is fine."

This was not fine. I pushed a hundred dollar bill in his shirt pocket, and felt that was still not enough, especially in light of all the potential grief these two Samaritans had warded off with their kindness. At the very least, before their intervention I was looking at the possibility of spending the

night and then missing a whole day's work the next day. Instead, after some grateful words and a farewell, I was on my way home again in less than two hours. I would even make it there before midnight.

As I drove on in silence, I thought of these two men and their helpfulness. There was a customer service lesson in all of this. It was certainly well after Steve's regular business hours, a Sunday evening no less, and I'm sure I took him away from something much more pleasant than replacing an alternator. How many times have we, at the end of a particularly trying day, been tempted to ignore a phone call that comes about thirty seconds before closing time? Or, while at a car show or swap meet,

(Continued on page 8)

ARGGGG



AFTER WAITING IN LINE FOR 20 MINUTES WITH LITTLE JIMMY CUSTOMER SERVICE WAS PRIORITY ONE

Matt Hauck '07

Allstar Performance

Allstar's New Features



Small Block Chevy Timing Cover with Big Block Seal **ALL90012**

Many racers using small block Chevy engines are now specifying a crankshaft with a big block Chevy snout. The big block snout offers more strength, a critical factor in engines with lots of accessories being driven off the front of the crank. Now Allstar Performance offers a stamped steel timing cover that accepts the big block seal for the small block Chevrolets using big block crank snouts.



Quick Change Oil Plug Wrench **ALL11141**

With the new Allstar double-ended Oil Plug Wrench, it's possible to remove the 1" plugs on quick change center sections and side bells and the 1-3/8" inspection/fill plugs on Winters 9" Ford housings. The blue anodized aluminum wrench has 12-point ends for easy use in tight locations.



Aluminum Axle Tube **ALL68203**

The latest axle tube from Allstar is this 3" diameter, 26-5/8" long wide 5 replacement tube for Rocket Chassis.



40" Aluminum Shifter Rod **ALL54119**

Allstar now offers a gold anodized, aluminum shifter rod for use on Allstar lightweight shifters or in many other applications as well. Ends are tapped for left and right hand 3/8" rod ends.



Lower Seat Mounts

Available in layback (ALL60070) and upright (ALL60071) styles, Allstar Lower Seat Mounts are installed via bolts that pass through the floor and tie in to a bar or plate welded to the left frame rail or roll cage. The mounts provide a secure, safe mounting point for the seat as well as the anti-submarine belt. The layback mount is raised and the upright style has a low profile.



Economy Power Steering Tank with Bracket **ALL36130**

Just because a car is built on a budget doesn't mean it has to be ugly. Allstar's attractive aluminum tank measures 8" tall x 3" diameter with a -6 return fitting on the side and a -10 fitting on the bottom. Designed with no internal baffles, the tank includes a mounting bracket that can be clamped to 1-3/4" round tubing.



Quick Change Panhard Bar Mount **ALL60280**

Allstar's latest Panhard Bar Mount is of the quick change variety and was designed by noted dirt late model racer, Scott Bloomquist. The "all business" billet aluminum mount is anodized and has two serrated slots to ease adjustment. ©MSR



Intercomp®

This issue, our spotlight shines upon a company that has been committed to serving the high performance racing industry from day one. It would be quite safe to say that most circle track race cars would be nowhere near as nimble or quick through the turns and down the straightaways without the innovations from Intercomp Racing Systems.

The Intercomp Company is an electronics manufacturer responsible for a wealth of industry firsts involving scale systems, dynamometers, shock, spring and torque testers, lap timers and other race management software components. Among the firsts that can be directly attributed to Intercomp are such items as the first scale systems to have Baseline Setup Recall of weights and percentages; Low Profile Billet Scale Pads; Integrated Scales Systems with C/G calculation and printout; Digital Turn Plates, Digital Caster/Camber Gauges, Digital Torsion Bar Testers, and Digital Bump Steer Gauges. The innovations didn't stop here, not by a long shot. Intercomp went on to develop systems with Standard Serial Output, then added more digital systems with their Digital Shock Pressure Gauge and Digital Leaf Spring Tester. More recently, Intercomp has pioneered a 20K Scale System and has developed systems that can display weight percentages in hundredths.

Intercomp is dedicated to keeping an eye on the future needs of racers and car builders...many of us believe that when we finally got to the 21st Century that Intercomp Racing Systems was already here, waiting for us to catch up! ©MSR



CHARLIE JOBBER

A LITTLE NICENESS GOES A LONG WAY

(cont. from page 5)

ever felt like growling at someone who comes up asking about a part they're thinking of buying from your shop? I'm sure we've all been there. This very instance, and it happens with alarming frequency, is the absolute "moment of truth" in the existence of anyone involved in customer service. How we react to the situation can very well determine the future of our particular enterprise.

I remember a fellow I once worked with who started the countdown to closing about forty-five minutes before six o'clock each day, and was stationed at the door, ready to lock it at about five minutes before it was time. He was also at the door in the morning, watching people outside, huddled against the cold and waiting for him to unlock the door at exactly nine o'clock, and not a second sooner. This guy would not very likely have helped me with my alternator problem. He would have told me to sleep in the truck and see him at nine the next morning.

The point here is that to a great extent, good customer service cannot be governed by any clock. It's either switched on all the time, or it's not on at all. I'm not advocating staying until the wee hours every day, nor am I condemning all good customer servants to a life of constant indenture. What I am advocating here is the wherewithal to recognize a situation and to not be afraid to lend a helping hand when we have the ability to rectify a problem. ©MSR

Thanks to Motor State customer, Terry Rosebush, for providing the details of the true story upon which this Charlie Jobber is based. He did have alternator problems on a Sunday night...right here in Watervliet...and was helped out by off duty Motor State employee, Lee Milnickel, and his brother, Steve.

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8300 Lane Drive • Watervliet, Michigan 49098 • www.motorstate.com
Toll Free 800.772.2678 • Phone 269.463.4113 • Fax 800.772.2618

