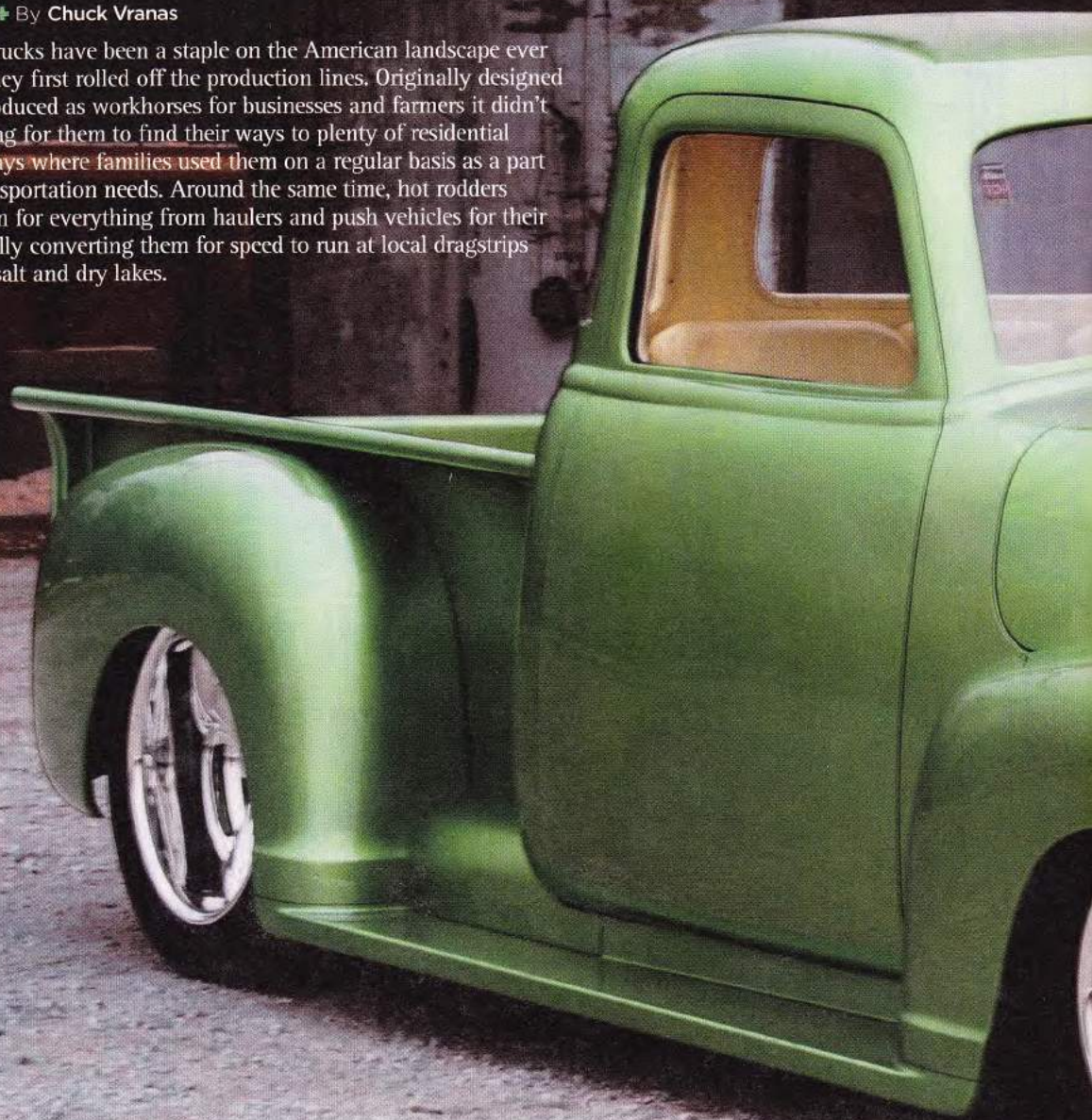


Perfectly Sublime

Tom and Pat Holmes' Alluring '48 Chevy

Feature Story / By Chuck Vranas

Pickup trucks have been a staple on the American landscape ever since they first rolled off the production lines. Originally designed and produced as workhorses for businesses and farmers it didn't take long for them to find their ways to plenty of residential driveways where families used them on a regular basis as a part of their daily transportation needs. Around the same time, hot rodders started using them for everything from haulers and push vehicles for their race cars to actually converting them for speed to run at local dragstrips and even on the salt and dry lakes.



A photograph of a green classic car, likely a 1950s model, with a prominent chrome grille and round headlights. The car is parked in front of a concrete wall. The text is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

It didn't take long for a young Tom Holmes, growing up in Independence, Missouri, to get deeply involved in his local race scene in the early '50s by first watching the older neighborhood kids work on their hot rods. His fascination grew with every hop-up publication he read, scale model he built, and Flathead V-8 he heard roar past him as he sat on his front porch. It all came full throttle when he tagged along with his mentors, spending every weekend at the nearby Kansas

City Dragway once it opened in July 1955. It was here he found his calling among the nitro-filled air as he watched the hottest 'Rails and Gassers

in the country launch from the lights to see who had what it took to claim the top spot of the weekend's racing.

As the years passed he would resurrect an endless stream of cars on a regular basis, race them at the local track, and then sell them off to get started on the next project. His mechanical capabilities followed him as he worked as a mechanic in the Air Force in Alaska in the late '50s where he also met his wife, Pat. The pair married during the early '60s and were living in California while still involved in the drag racing scene. It was at this time they purchased a 'Rail dragster from Mickey Thompson and transported it back to Omaha, Nebraska, using their venerable '60 Chevy hauler, where they settled.



Perfectly Sublime >

Running a business and raising a family were now a priority, however they never forgot the exhilaration and enjoyment they both shared while involved in both hot rods and drag racing. A number of years ago while attending a large national car event they came across a wicked '54 Ford pickup being shown by Pete Klucas, owner of Top End Engineering in Lincoln, Nebraska. In conversation they expressed their appreciation for the style and design elements Klucas infused into his build and began to talk with him about working on a project together. Having always been classic truck fans, Tom and Pat began a search for a suitable base to get started with. Their quest led them to a local salvage yard where they purchased a '48 Chevy that had seen far better days, but within it they saw potential for greatness. After purchase the truck was hauled to their home shop for evaluation and then onto Top End Engineering to be torn down to commence the build.

After receiving the truck it was obvious that there would need to be a perfect balance of design, engineering, and style worked into the build, which meant it was time to start with the fabrication of a rock-solid base for the project to rise from. Klucas and his team got started by fabricating a custom frame constructed from 5x2.5-inch rectangular steel complete with one-off tubular crossmembers and a 4-inch stretch over stock to accommodate upcoming changes to the cab and bed. The frame was engineered to accommodate all electrical, plumbing, and air lines to run through frame from front to rear. To put down the goods a Ford 9-inch rear packed with Moser Engineering axles linked to 3.25:1 gears is suspended in place





by a custom chromed four-link and Panhard bar. Softening the bumps you'll find RideTech 'bags wearing their RidePRO e3 control system accented by chromed tube shocks. To get a right-on stance up front Klucas added a Heidts Superide II IFS complete with matching spindles, chrome control arms with the uppers modified to lower the truck an additional 1-inch, combined with flipped RideTech 'bags. If you're planning on running hard you'd better have great stopping power. Wilwood Engineering 12-inch rotors and four-piston calipers are anchored at each corner to get the job done. For a classic look a set of 18-inch front and 20-inch rear Intro Aurora wheels were shod with low-profile rubber from Kuhmo.

For plenty of seamless power nothing says "I'm here to party" like a Chevrolet Performance 502ci Ram Jet big-block crate V-8. It arrived packed with a speed shop full of go-fast goods, including a forged steel crank linked to matching rods wearing forged aluminum pistons urged by a velvety-smooth hydraulic roller cam. For seamless power a set of high-flow aluminum oval port heads are deftly matched to a distinctive Ram Jet tunnel ram-styled intake and fuel injection system. Add to that spark from GM with gases dumping through Sanderson headers to a custom stainless 3-inch exhaust singing through MagnaFlow mufflers. The power moves rearward through a GM 4L80E trans massaged by BG&S Transmissions of Lincoln to a custom driveshaft. It's one thing to just bolt the V-8 in place. Klucas however raised the bar by injecting elegance into the engine bay, upping the ante starting with handmade steel inner fenderwells complemented by a curvaceous radiator shroud working into a dazzling intake cover. What wasn't painted was chrome plated, including the one-off



Perfectly Sublime >

boltless valve covers with distinctive handmade trim.

Taking on the body of a truck covered with decades of battle scars was no feat for the faint at heart. This is where Top End Engineering nailed it on all accounts to bring the hauler into the custom world. To get started the sheetmetal was all blasted clean, removing all prior rust and filler, revealing the true base. From there Klucas got busy by first lengthening the cab 4 inches along with the doors from their centers. From there he continued by welding shut the side vents and cowl vent, added a roll down rear window, and flush-mounted the glass. The front fenders were then extended down in front 2½ inches to meet the modified '46 Chevy front bumper, which was tweaked to meet the edges along with the new front splash panel. The headlight surrounds were modified with early '30s Chevy units and filled with '35 International fluted lenses while the grille ends were welded, smoothed, and re-chromed. Finally the hood was one-pieced, bull-nosed, and given a reworked inner structure. Taking a breath, he continued rearward where he then reworked the rear fenders in all directions while increasing their height to nearly meet the bedside rails. Custom running boards were then rolled into the fenders and meeting to custom side bed covers. Out back a custom rear pan ties

it all together while the bed itself is a work of art, featuring a one-off tailgate, narrowed F-100 rear bumper, and curvaceous roll pan. The front of the bed was then given a graceful curve to accent the rear of the cab, tying in all the dramatic newfound lines. And there were far too many other updates to include here. Once everything was metal finished and gapped to perfection Klucas took his spray gun and laid down the most effervescent coating of custom-blended PPG silver pearl green, bringing it all to life.

Turning to the interior more metal fabrication abounds, starting with the re-curving the custom dash ends into the doors followed by door handles built into the sill plates and a new flowing steel console. An ididit tilt column supports a Billet Specialties steering wheel while Classic Instruments dials monitor the vitals and breezes from Vintage Air flow through '08 Cadillac CTS vents. Miles of wiring was then laid in place by team member Tim Mulhair to move the juice while the interior was covered in Italian leather with green loop carpet for accent by Weber Custom Interiors of Alexandria, Minnesota, who also created the door and kick panels, headliner, and reworked the '90s-era Lexus seats. The completed truck is absolutely breathtaking and is a tribute to Tom's vision to create something that would leave a long-lasting impression. 🚚

1948

CHEVROLET 3100

Tom and Pat Holmes

CHASSIS

➤ **FRAME:** CUSTOM BY TOP END ENGINEERING, LINCOLN, NE

➤ **MODIFICATIONS:** 4-INCH EXTENDED WHEELBASE, ALL ELECTRICAL PLUMBING, AND AIR RUN THROUGH FRAME FRONT TO REAR

➤ **REAR END / RATIO:** FORD 9-INCH / 3.25:1

➤ **REAR SUSPENSION:** CUSTOM FOUR-LINK WITH MATCHING PANHARD BAR, RIDETECH BAGS, AND TUBE SHOCKS

➤ **REAR BRAKES:** WILWOOD 12-INCH ROTORS WITH FOUR-PISTON CALIPERS

➤ **FRONT SUSPENSION:** HEIDTS SUPERIDE II IFS WITH MATCHING SPINDLES, ANTIROLL BAR, AND RIDETECH BAGS

➤ **FRONT BRAKES:** WILWOOD 12-INCH ROTORS WITH FOUR-PISTON CALIPERS

➤ **STEERING BOX:** FLAMING RIVER RACK-AND-PINION

➤ **FRONT WHEELS:** INTRO AURORA 18X7

➤ **REAR WHEELS:** INTRO AURORA 20X10

➤ **FRONT TIRES:** KUHMU P225/40/SR18

➤ **REAR TIRES:** KUHMU P305/45/SR20

➤ **GAS TANK:** CUSTOM

DRIVETRAIN

➤ **ENGINE:** CHEVROLET PERFORMANCE 502CI RAM JET CRATE V-8

➤ **HEADS:** ALUMINUM OVAL-PORT

➤ **VALVE COVERS:** CUSTOM BY TOP END ENGINEERING

➤ **MANIFOLD / INDUCTION:** CHEVROLET PERFORMANCE / RAM JET EFI

➤ **IGNITION:** CHEVROLET PERFORMANCE

➤ **HEADERS:** SANDERSON

➤ **EXHAUST / MUFFLERS:** CUSTOM 3-INCH STAINLESS / MAGNAFLOW

➤ **TRANSMISSION:** CHEVROLET 4L80E

➤ **MODIFICATIONS:** WARMED-OVER BY BG&S TRANSMISSIONS, LINCOLN, NE

➤ **SHIFTER:** CUSTOM COLUMN MOUNTED

BODY

➤ **STYLE:** PICKUP

➤ **MODIFICATIONS:** CAB AND DOORS LENGTHENED 4 INCHES, CUSTOM RUNNING BOARDS, TAILGATE, ROLL PAN, AND COUNTLESS OTHER MODIFICATIONS

➤ **FENDERS FRONT / REAR:** BOTH FRONT AND REAR REWORKED

➤ **HOOD:** CONVERTED TO ONE-PIECE WITH BULL NOSE

➤ **GRILLE:** MASSAGED

➤ **BED:** FULL CUSTOM

➤ **BODYWORK AND PAINT BY:** TOP END ENGINEERING

➤ **PAINT TYPE / COLOR:** PPG / SILVER PEARL GREEN

➤ **HEADLIGHTS / TAILLIGHTS:** '35 INTERNATIONAL / CUSTOM

➤ **BUMPERS:** FRONT, '46 CHEVY; REAR, FORD F-100

INTERIOR

➤ **DASHBOARD:** CUSTOM WITH FLOWING CONSOLE BY TOP END ENGINEERING

➤ **GAUGES:** CLASSIC INSTRUMENTS

➤ **AIR CONDITIONING:** VINTAGE AIR

➤ **STEREO SPEAKERS:** KENWOOD

➤ **STEERING WHEEL:** BILLET SPECIALTIES

➤ **STEERING COLUMN:** IDIDIT

➤ **SEATS:** '90S-ERA LEXUS

➤ **UPHOLSTERY BY:** WEBER CUSTOM INTERIORS, ALEXANDRIA, MN

➤ **MATERIAL / COLOR:** ITALIAN LEATHER / BONE

➤ **CARPET:** LOOP PILE