

NOTHING SACRED

EVEN NEW TRUCKS AREN'T SAFE FROM A GOOD OL' SAWZALL AND WELDER

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY KEVIN AGUIAR

ALL THINGS CHANGE WITH TIME, AND THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE FOR NEW STYLES OF TRUCKS. Though we all might have a favorite truck design, manufacturers constantly mix things up to offering new and improved styles as a way to stay competitive in the market. One of the most recent trucks to get a dramatic new look is Dodge's full-size truck line. The '09 Ram pickup is completely different from its predecessor and has incorporated some of the trendy looks of the hot-selling Chevrolet. With a good-looking new platform available, the custom scene has some catching up to do.

One of the individuals who really got caught up in the new Ram is Dan Dattalo of Friendwood, Texas. Currently deep into a custom build of a Dodge Ram, Dan has become very intrigued with all things Mopar. Though he has always been into custom trucks, he was never fixed up enough to actually build one, until he saw this body style. Not only was the new Dodge tempting, Dan was also lured by what his friend David "Pete" Williams had to say about fixing one up. Trying to private his shop, The Kustom Edge in Webster, Texas, Peter made an offer to Dan about doing a simple "tag job" on a Ram. Dan was sold on the idea and took Peter up on it.

Even though his wife "Trecinda" wasn't too thrilled about it, Dan ended up purchasing a new SLT model crew cab Ram with the intention of cutting it up. At The Kustom Edge, Peter and Robbie "Rebbo" Crowell jacked

up the truck and removed the bed for the rear suspension work. When they got the bar bar realized that the rest of the frame had already complicated with a 4-link coil system and reinforcements, running every which way. By the look of it, they knew it was going to take a lot more work in modifications than simply hacking off the back end and starting from scratch. Once they cut off the back, Peter and Rebbo made a back half frame out of 2x4x1/4-inch steel tubing. It was designed with a notch in it to compensate for travel of the rear axle. For added strength, they made a lot of subrails that ran under the notch and missed the frame in the very back.

For the suspension, a simple tag-over-leaf 2-link was created with a winstone 2-link for lateral stability. To brace the notched rails, a trick bridge was made out of several curved pieces of 1 1/2-inch round tubing. This bridge also has two bar mounts for the RE-7 Ram Spenster airbags. The suspension runs on the inside of the rails, which means that the fuel tank had to be removed from its factory location. Instead of making the old tank fit the new frame, a new 30-gallon aluminum tank was made to fit on the frame behind the axle. Then to be able to tack huge wheels between the bedsides, the axle was removed and sent to Pyle Brothers in Baytown, Texas, so it could be narrowed. There, 3 inches were taken off both sides of the housing. Then, axles were sent to Mazer where they were cut and respined.



trucks
DAN DATTALO
2009 Dodge Ram 1500
Friendwood, TX
Aftermath



1. Things were kept pretty simple under the hood. The factory wheel wells were replaced with trailer fenders. Routing power out of the 4.3L V-6 is a K&N intake on the front and a Borla muffler with custom exhaust behind it.

2. The trick suspension and back half is clearly visible through the hole cut for it in the bed. Cleaning up the rest of the bed is a set of trailer tube and 16-gauge sheet metal that was welded in and covered in a color-matched Rhino Lining.

of a set of McGaughey's drop spindles. To minimize negative camber, the upper control arms were raised 7 inches from the factory location. For better tie, the steering was bolted to the bottom of its spindle mount with the use of a Heim joint at the end.

With the truck able to lay frame over the 24-inch Boss Motorsports 330 wheels with Yokohama rubber, Dan decided that he wanted the body 2 inches lower so it could hit the ground. To do this, the body mounts on the frame were lowered 2 inches, and the cab floor was cut in the front for the frame rails. The front frame horns were modified to keep the

The front end also needed a considerable amount of work to tack large wheels. First of all, the front clip was 2 1/2 inches, and then custom control arms were made. For the lowers, Potter made 3-inch narrower versions of the originals from 1 1/2-inch round tubing with

1/4-inch plate to mount the RE-8 Siam Specialties airbags. The uppers were made from the same round tubing but required the use of a uni-ball instead of a standard press-in ball joint like the lowers have. The outer rings of the uni-balls were made to bolt on to the top



3. Inside the cab, the seats were recovered with Katkin leather covers. For some extra style, a custom center console was made to display three Kicker subwoofers.

4. Since the fuel door was shaved on the exterior, the guys got a little creative with its replacement. Housing for the filler hose was made to fit the rear of the lower bed, and a custom cap was mounted for a clean appearance.

bumper in line with the body. Under the hood, the inner wheel wells were removed and replaced with a set of trailer fenders. In the bed, Robbo cut out the floor for the notch, added trailer fenders, welded up 16-gauge sheet metal for a smooth finish, and made a custom chrome fuel filler.

On the exterior, Dan wanted to keep it very simple, yet cleaner than stock. The body was shaved of two antennas, the fuel door, rear emblems and tailgate handle. On the front, T-Rex billet grilles were added for that extra shine. Then Gerardo Vargas and Felix Lucio Jr. did some bodywork and painted the truck in Sherwin-Williams Tidewater Blue Metallic. The bed was coated in a color-matched Rhino Lining spray-on liner. Lastly, the interior was lined with sound-deadening material topped

with AcoustiShield and carpet on the floor of the cab. For the stereo, a Clarion DVD head unit was added, and three 10-inch Kicker subwoofers were placed in a custom center console and powered by a 1,500-watt amp. The accents on the dash were painted, while the seats wear black leather Katkin covers with gray suede inserts.

Around the time this project was still having its suspension work done, Potter thought it would be a good idea to finish it in time for the 2009 SEMA show in Las Vegas for the Rhino Linings booth. Luckily, the project was started early and the truck was in Vegas with plenty of time to spare. While there, it got a lot of attention and proved that even if new trucks are more complicated, they can still be planted flat on the ground for a head-turning stance. ■



bonspeed
WHEELS
HIGH
INTENSITY
FORGED ALLOYS
bonspeedwheels.com

NOW AVAILABLE IN SIZES UP TO **26"**
1.888.999.7258