

“New Deal” ’57 cHEVY

By Michael Curry

Michael Curry explains the origins and building process of the "New Deal" '57 cHEVY



Fewer than a dozen of the literally hundreds of models I built in the late 1950s, '60s, and early '70s are still in my possession, as my entire kit collection, both build-ups and boxed models were discarded by my father shortly after I left home. The red Deals Wheels '57 Chevy shown in this article is an original issue kit which I built in 1970. It was done right out of the box except for the decals (the original kit had no decals) which were applied directly on top of the "rattle can" Pactra metalflake red. It took about three evenings to complete, so I could move on to the next model, which was pretty much how I built kits back then.

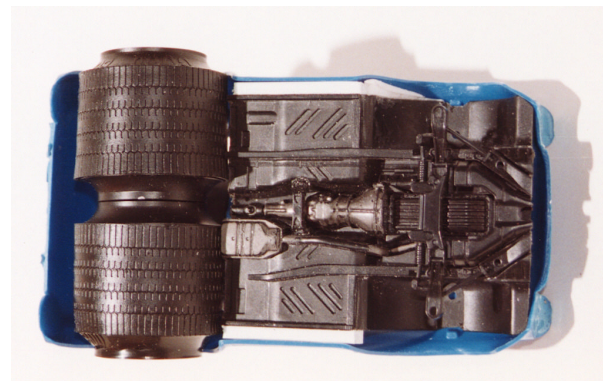
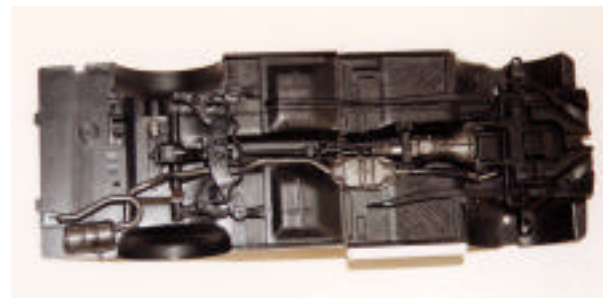


The Revell Funster Chevy (a 1980's reissue of the original Deal's Wheels 57 cHEAVY kit) which is the subject of this article was a \$5.00 find at a swap meet, already built (probably by a youngster), but, fortunately, all there. I wanted to build a '90s style pro street cartoon car, to see what might be if Dave Deal had penned this for Revell today. As it turned out, it also shows me how far my building skills have improved over thirty years. Randy Koger, who took the photos shown here and who shares my love for cartoon cars, show cars and "odd rods" wanted to chronicle the restoration and buildup. Many thanks for his foresight and photography skills.

Once I got the built-up Chevy Funster home, disassembly was the first order of business, so glue debonder was applied followed by a lot of gentle prying and breath holding - thankfully, none of the almost-irreplaceable body parts were damaged. Next came stripping the paint and chrome, so all the parts were sprayed with oven cleaner and sealed in a Tupperware container overnight.

During the period of time I was cleaning up the parting lines and all the rough edges, I decided that car would have to sit very low, with tires tucked in and sport a better-proportioned cartoon engine to bring my "New Deal" car into the '90s. My parts box donated a Tamiya Nissan chassis with poseable steering.

After adding Plastistruct strips to widen it to fit the Deals body, it was cut almost in half just ahead of where the fat Deals rear tires would go all the way across the car. This allowed the first mock up to establish the car's stance - the most important single aspect of any model car to my eye.



A Monogram SSP Groovy Grader reissue gave up its blower, injectors and scoop for a taller engine, with the Groovy Grader blade becoming the rear wing, narrowed to fit in between the trademark fins of the Chevy for a very integrated wing complete with rivets. The spoiler was finished with radio controlled self-stick sheet aluminum and Bare Metal Foil on the rivet area for a contrasting metal finishes (very fast, and no painting).



Another Deal's Wheels reissue, the ZZZ-28 Camaro, supplied the exhaust dumps, which I molded into one piece with baking soda and super glue. (This method of gluing/filling is very fast. You can sand or grind parts literally 30 seconds after the baking soda is sprinkled onto the wet super glue - but do this process only in a very well ventilated area.) The scratch built front air dam is made of laminated strips and sheets of Plastistruct so that the dam would actually rest on the ground in true cartoon fashion. This helped balance the "overbite" from the long hood trim strip and give me a spot to mount a 1/12 scale Monogram '57 Chevy emblem after trimming off the horizontal grill bar that housed the Funster Chevy's turn signals.

After the polished plastic parts were mounted and sent out for chrome re-plating, the body was prepared and painted Testors Boyd's True Blue metallic sprayed over Boyd's Pure White primer. The trim was applied with Bare Metal Foil and the front "V" hood emblem came from an AMT '57 Chevy while the rear "V" came from the Monogram 1/12 scale '57. I painted both emblems gold. The front air dam is flat black directly from a rattle can.



The glass was sanded and polished to remove several glue spots, and a tiny Rat Fink decal from Revells Beatnik Bandit II covered one glue spot on the vent window I couldn't fix. As with all the Deal's kits I have built, "rescuing" the Chevy's driver was entrusted to Randy's painting skills.





As for the interior, the dashboard is body color, as was the case with most 1950s cars, and the rest is simply gray primer. The seat has an upholstery decal from Scale Motorsports, with the floor flocked in dark gray. A Chevy bowtie logo fills up a previously-empty space on the dashboard and the driver looks over photocopied gauges with Micro Kristal Klear "lenses". He shifts a Hurst-style shifter made from a tapered square piece of plastic covered with Bare Metal Foil and with a white hat pin shift knob nestled into the drivers right hand.

Other details added during the final construction include the following. Original Revell Parts Pack front wheels (replated). Rear wheels from the 1/20 scale reissue of the AMT Popcorn Wagon in hogged out Deals tires with tread that was sanded to lend the look that the tires have had a couple of burnouts. Sewing trim, blackened with a permanent marker is the blower belt (again, it's fast and easy) on a photo-etched pulley put the final touches on the engine towering out of the hood.

That is a fairly complete chronicle of what was done to the scrap-heap model I started with, and I think the results were quite worth the effort. The car has garnered a lot of compliments at the shows it's been in, and I like to think that this little auto has helped keep the spirit of the wonderful kits that Revell and Dave Deal blessed us with back in the early 1970s. The folks at the shows have enjoyed seeing this piece of my work and now thanks to the Internet I am hoping you will too. Thanks for reading!



A 1/25 scale photo-reduced model car box and dog-eared model car magazine add some interest to the package shelf.



In closing, here is a list of 10 rules of modeling that pretty much adhere to whenever I am immersed in a project.

1. Numero uno - Know when to quit! Focus on why you are building the model, and try not to do so much that it detracts from the piece - or worse, keeps you from finishing the project.
2. Don't over think things. Keep it simple, this is supposed to be FUN!
3. Build in 3 dimensions what a 2-dimensional drawing allows. Who cares if the driver couldn't see around the huge engine or the tires go all the way across the back of the car. Remember that reality in a model does not necessarily equate believability. Engineering and reality be damned...it's a cartoon!
4. Test fit, mock up, repeat, and repeat, and repeat and repeat some more if necessary. Everything has to fit and look like it belongs, even in cartoons.
5. Play shiny paints and chrome against more organic material and texture...driver skin tones, interior textures, etc. This is far more interesting to the eye, helps to "balance" the overall look of the model and draws your attention and keeps you looking at the finished piece.
6. "Just because you can, doesn't mean you should." Careful not to over-detail with engine wiring, or worse yet, complicated paint jobs that slice up the already-distorted cartoon shape (you still have to recognize the car you're tooning). Refer to rule # 1.
7. Don't be afraid to mix scales and kitbash (I believe it is easier to modify an existing part than to scratchbuild one).

8. REMEMBER...No one knows what you were "going to do" on the kit. Randy brought this to my attention years ago, and I have found it to be truer than I ever imagined. People will accept what you present. Try not to "should'a, would'a, could'a" your built-up kit to death for your audience. Put the model down on the show table, be willing to share your building skills and tips with whomever is interested and keep your mouth shut when it comes to what you had hoped the kit would be. Emphasize the things that are RIGHT about your built-up and forget about what you didn't get done...save it for the next project. No doubt you will have learned a new building skill or technique, and you'll build the next model just a bit better than your last project. And that, after all, is what this model building stuff is all about.
9. Build for yourself. Since you are going to be at any model project for a while, you should love the subject or at least know what you can and can't do so you can get through it. I have a friend whose model club members cut open doors, trunks, etc., on every kit they build. My friend thinks he has to do that to get their approval, but he can't finish a project because he is bogged down in being not very good at making hinges, so he has a lot of model cars with door panels cut out, sitting unfinished in boxes.
10. Be open to changes in the project as it progresses. You may find one idea just doesn't work when you are well into building a model, but it will perhaps force you to find a creative solution that just might turn out better than the original idea.