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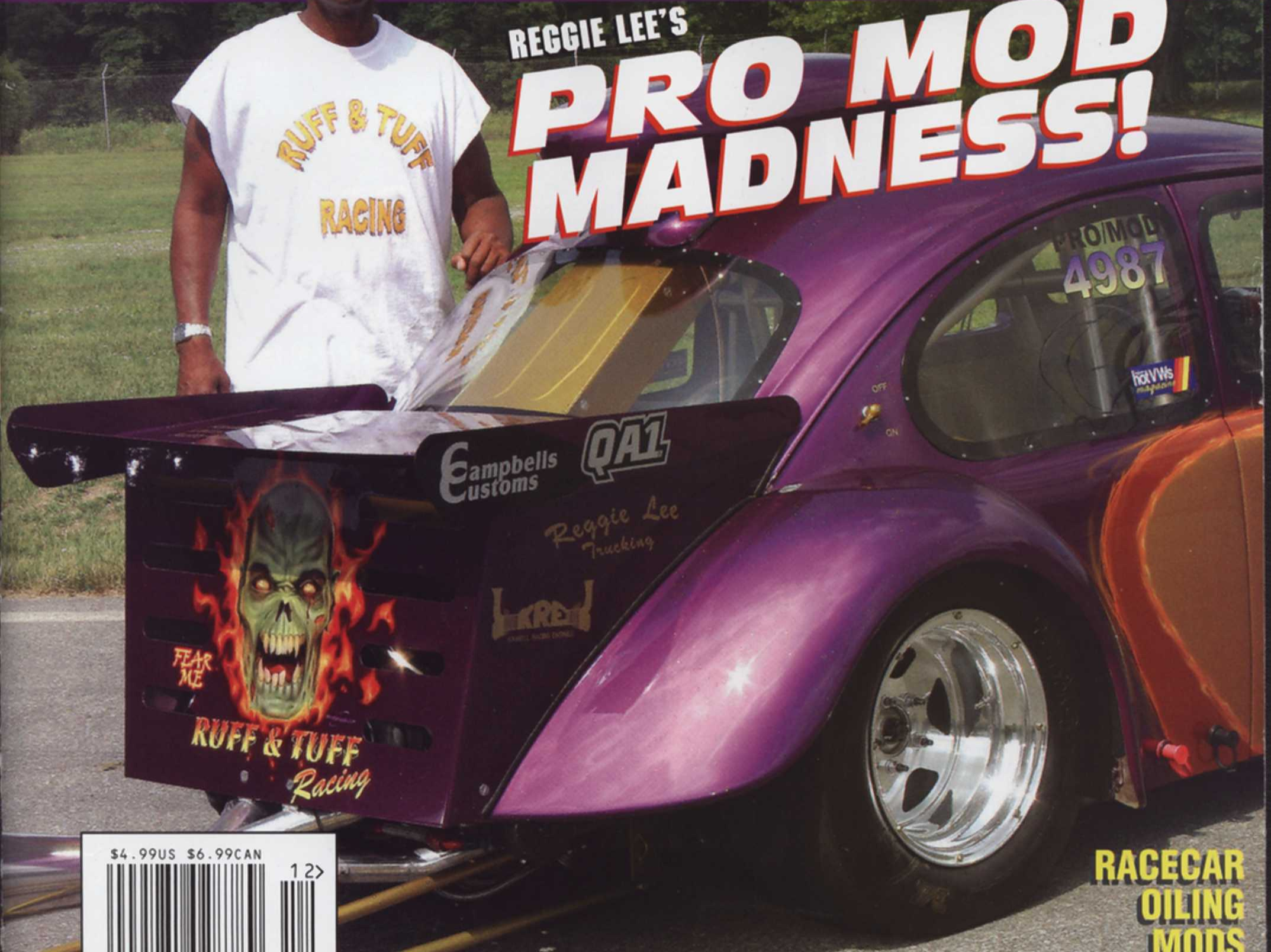


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Outstanding Notch

Bickel's Beauty



This two-tone Oval is one clean resto, with a touch of custom

BY BRUCE SIMURDA

An Auto Body Tech by profession, John Bickel of Oxford, Michigan works on a variety of different brands of cars, but unquestionably the Volkswagen is his favorite. His involvement began years ago when he bought a 1970 Beetle to restore for his father-in-law, Ed, who was more than surprised when the car showed up at his house in Crossville, Tennessee one day in May of 2006. While there with a trailer, John decided to scout around and see if he could find another VW with Ed and his wife, Jennifer. They eventually came across the names of two men who had worked on Volkswagens, but had split. One lived north of Crossville and the other south.

In pursuit, they first went north, and found one of the guys with mostly Rabbits. Then they went south, and came across a gentleman who had a few acres filled with Bugs and buses. However none of them was





Owner John Bickel did most of the work on his '57, including the PPG black and Cobalt Red paint job with clear coat. Interior features upholstery by West Coast Classic Restoration, with German wool square-weave carpet.



what John was looking for. Richard, the man's current partner, asked them to wait, and went inside the house and got a few sheets of paper with pictures of a Beetle that he knew was for sale by a man named Gus. Gus had just sold them acres of Beetle parts and Bugs, but he kept a 1957 Beetle that was stored in his garage for around 12 years.

According to John, "Through the years Gus had offers from others to purchase it, but he wanted it restored to an original state and not turned into a hot rod, so he was very selective about who he would sell the car to. Richard assured us that it was worth the call, and the drive to look at it. That night we made arrangements to see it and, just as Richard had said, it was sitting in a heated garage. Gus told us that he had bought the Oval from the original owner, who had stored it prior for at least 15 years in a barn. The car was originally red, and boxes of parts were packed inside. Gus had been purchasing parts and saving them through the years until he could restore the vehicle himself. I bought the car and the whole lot of parts for \$4,200, loaded it onto the trailer the next day, and drove home to Michigan."

John started the restoration in the Fall of 2006, which went full body-off resto, working out of his restoration facility, State of Mind Customs. His first order of business was to revive the chassis, which received complete new pan halves and restoration of the suspension and brakes. Keeping a stock theme, the only modification was the addition of a two-inch adjustable beam, before the pan was sprayed with Sikkens Chassis Black. The original 1192cc 36-horse engine

and transaxle were retained, but detailed to a show finish.

The body came next, with John and Andrew McKenney handling the bodywork chores. After it was media blasted clean, rust in the lower cowl and heater channel were repaired and all panels straightened, then everything was sprayed with epoxy primer inside and out. Finally, John loaded the spray gun with PPG Gloss Black first, and then Cobalt Red. Final gloss was added by a top coat of PPG clear. To minimize paint chipping, the inner fenders were coated with a tintable truck bed liner.

Inside, upholstery came from Lenny Copp's West Coast Classic Restoration in California, with European fabrics in Striefen Braun with brown piping, colors from a 1951 Beetle. John chose and installed tan German cloth for the headliner, and tan German square-weave for the carpet, which is covered by black rubber mats and cocoa mats. Steering wheel is a recast unit, and a Blaupunkt AM/FM/short-wave radio with NOS face plate resides in the stock dash. To minimize vibration and noise, Dyna Mats and Dyna Pads were used on all inner body panels.

Final details on Bickel's Beauty came with the addition of painted wheels with vintage Coker 165-15 whitewall tires and chrome hubcaps, fresh front and rear chrome bumpers, fresh chrome trim, and a bunch of TLC on assembly. Of course, the results speak for themselves, and this Oval is a true attention getter every show it attends.

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