

OSCAR RIDES THE

Living in the purest reaches of imagination

◆ TEXT: Ro McGonegal | PHOTOS: Tim Sutton



* **Regular *CHP* readers** might realize this is the third time one of Drake Kelley's old-school tantrums has appeared on these pulpy pages. Two of them were about as subtle as napalm at midnight. First, the '57 150 Black Widow, then the Wily E. Coyote '64 Chevelle, both jacked-up gassers brandishing stick-axle credentials. One look at these creatures and you could not resist their funky charm and crusty, nostalgic imperative.

Against his gassers, Drake's new 210 is a might conservative—close to the ground with conventional suspension, steel wheels, a reliable but snotty small-block, and an honest-to-Pete Muncie four-speed. The '55 marks a departure for Drake. While he's built at least 13 cars, this one was done by Rick Reed, a through-and-through Ford guy in Murrieta, California. Reed is an acknowledged master. You can see that clearly in the extremely smooth exterior; custom trim work; slick, tucked bumpers; immaculate engine bay; and a cogent, pin-neat interior.



E GROUCH



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"Rick's builds always have a meticulous attention to detail. Every piece of the car has been touched and massaged at some point, with the goal being 'old time sleeper.' The color is undoubtedly the conversation starter, which is followed by compliments on the stance, the interior, and how well the steelies work with the overall build," Drake imparted.

About a year ago, Drake was hosting a cruise night in Lake Elsinore and stumbled upon a recurring dream, in the metal in the flesh. "Sitting there on Main Street was an almost identical



Oscar the Grouch



car to the one I'd built in my head and drawn on paper countless times. I went off to find the owner but when I got back, the car was gone. At the time, I was just finishing up the '57 and was looking to begin building the '55 I'd envisioned for so long."

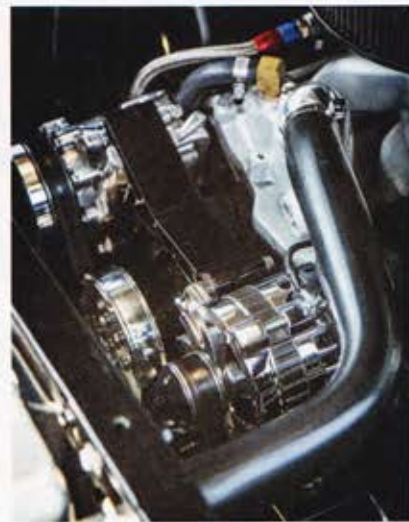
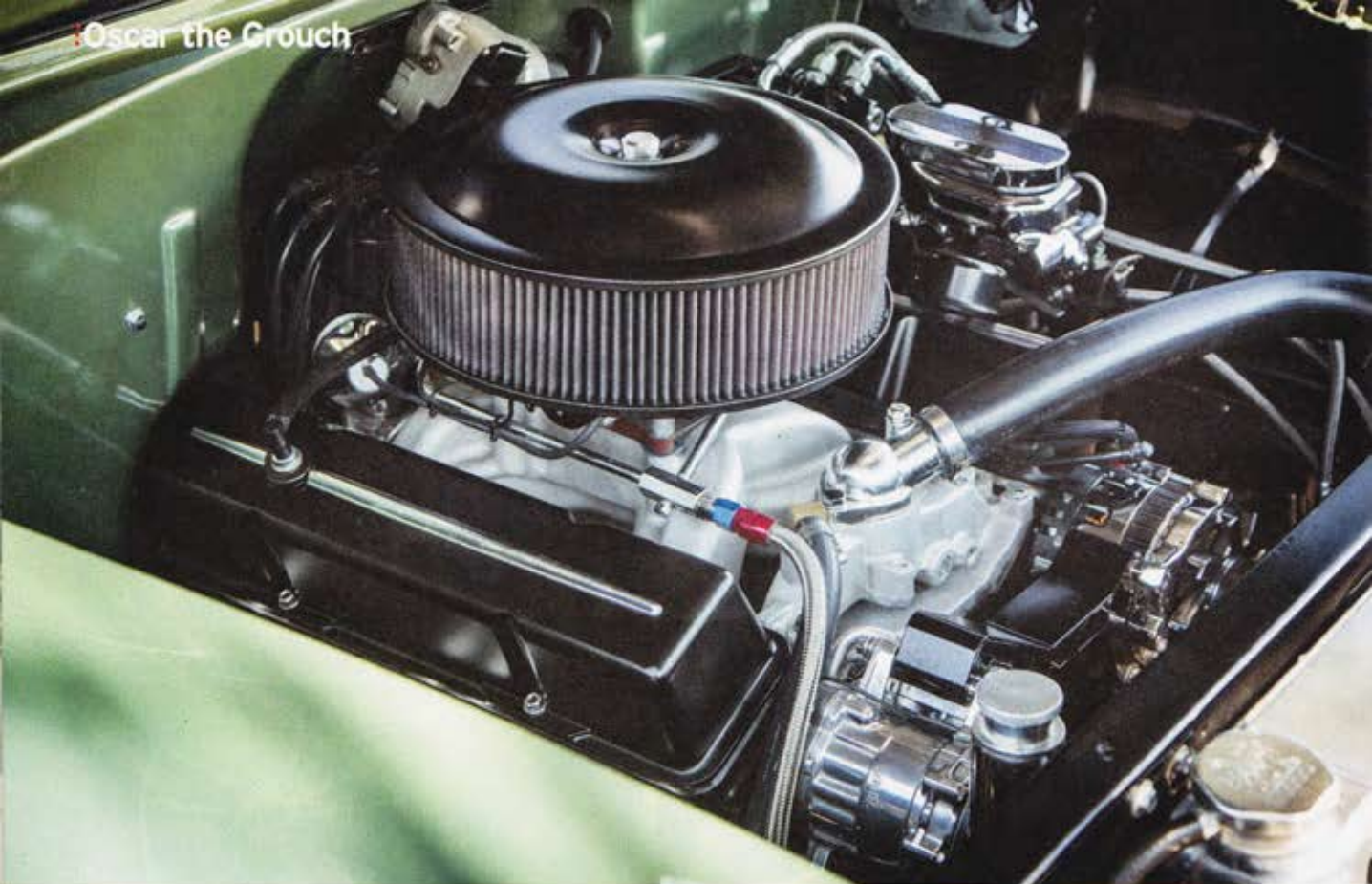
Crank it forward to the Grand National Roadster Show in Pomona, February 2017. Drake was walking the venue with his dad. He spotted the elusive shoebox. A small sticker on the back window read "available" and

included contact information. Drake punched it up immediately. A couple of minutes later Reed appeared. They chatted about the weather and they chatted about the numbers and such.

"We had an hour and a half ride back home in the straight-axle '57, which gave me lots of time to think about the '55. By the time I pulled into the driveway, I decided the '55 would be the next car in my garage. I wasn't sure about buying something that was completely finished, as I

usually put my spin on a car, but it was exactly what I wanted and it was ready to be enjoyed now. Rick and I came to an agreement and the day the '57 left, the '55 rolled into my driveway. How did all of this settle on Rick? "If anyone is wondering," said Drake, "Rick bought a '32 sedan to park next to his '32 roadster and is now back in his comfort zone. Ha ha!"

Rather than build cars designed to overwhelm regardless of cost, Rick Reed takes a stealthy, low-down



approach, and the idea flourishes simple, direct, and without compromise. The car is a cruiser and has no aspirations as a track star or a Pro Touring wonder. In this realm, in this way of thinking, it stands out just as clearly as if it had wings welded to its hindquarters.

When Rick began, he swabbed the original 'rails and based everything on them. There was no need for an aftermarket frame, but he did anoint it with a slew of aftermarket bits,

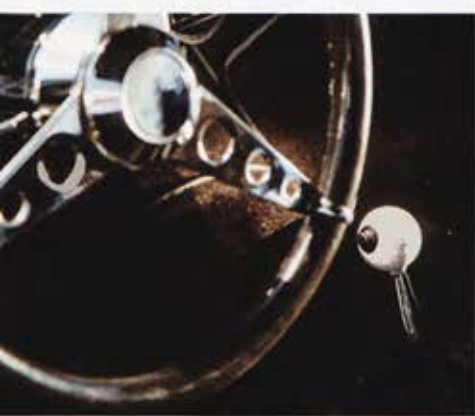
most of which he was able to bolt on. From experience, he gathered stronger components, including a 9-inch axle with 4.11s. He craved some nostalgia close to his right hand. Because nobody uses them anymore, what better period piece than a Muncie? He wanted the engine to relax on the highway and married the M21 to multifaceted Gear Vendors magic.

He didn't need the hassle and expense of a custom-built power unit, either. A Year One crate engine,

though one detailed in a highly structured setting, was just enough—ported Dart Iron Eagle cylinder heads, a roller camshaft, and tri-Y headers.

For the accommodations and the creature comforts, Rick deferred to Westminster Auto Upholstery in Anaheim, California, to dress out the ProCar buckets in leather and suede and cover the custom console the same way. In keeping with the theme, Westminster continued with leather door panels.

Oscar the Grouch



"The car doesn't disappoint. It's a turnkey driver that snaps necks wherever we take it. The more I drive it, the more I realize that there's not one thing I would change about the build. I'm thankful for the opportunity to own such a rad car and glad that I talked myself into forgoing the year to build my own car and instead enjoying instant gratification that this one brought.

"My wife, Chelsea, loves the air conditioning (first car we've owned with that) and my son loves the camshaft. He named the car "Oscar the Grouch" after his favorite Sesame Street character because it's green and sounds angry. We look to many more miles behind that rounded windshield."

TECH CHECK

Owner: Drake Kelley, Canyon Lake, California
Vehicle: 1955 210

Engine

- Type: 2012 Year One crate
- Displacement: 350 ci
- Compression Ratio: 9.7:1
- Bore: 4.000 inches
- Stroke: 3.480 inches
- Cylinder Heads: Ported 23-degree Dart Iron Eagle, 76cc combustion chambers, 1.94/1.50 stainless steel valves
- Rotating Assembly: Cast-iron crankshaft, Eagle forged steel connecting rods, hypereutectic pistons, SRP ring packs
- Valvetrain: Premium springs, locks, retainers, studs, guideplates and seals; 5/16-inch pushrods, 1.6:1 stamped steel rocker arms; Billet Specialties rocker covers
- Camshaft: Year One hydraulic roller (specs proprietary)
- Induction: Pro Products Crosswind dual-plane manifold, Quick Fuel 750-cfm carburetor, Speedway Motors air cleaner
- Ignition: MSD, MSD primary wires
- Exhaust: Doug's long-tube tri-Y, 1 5/8-inch primaries, 2.5-inch system, Flowmaster 40 mufflers
- Ancillaries: Dynamat insulation, Griffin aluminum radiator, wiring by Rick Reed (Murrieta, CA)
- Output (at the crank): 415 hp at 5,800 rpm, 406 lb-ft at 4,900 rpm
- Machine Work: Year One (Braselton, GA)
- Built By: Year One

Drivetrain

- Transmission: Muncie M21 four-speed (assembled by Dyno Trans (Temecula, CA)), Centerforce flywheel and clutch assembly, Gear Vendors Under/Overdrive
- Rear Axle: 9-inch type, 4.11:1 gears, limited-slip differential, Moser 31-spline axleshafts, shortened prop shaft

Chassis

- Front Suspension: CPP 2-inch drop spindles, lowering kit, springs/shocks, antisway bar
- Rear Suspension: CPP springs/shocks
- Brakes: CPP 13-inch rotors, four-piston calipers, front; CPP drums, rear; ABS Power Brakes master cylinder/booster

Wheels & Tires

- Wheels: Wheel Smith 15x5 front, 15x8 rear
- Tires: Classic All Season 165/80 front, Mastercraft Avenger GT 255/70 rear

Interior

- Upholstery: Westminster Auto Interiors (Anaheim, CA)
- Material: Leather/suede
- Seats: ProCar front, stock rear
- Steering: Flaming River tilt column, CPP power steering conversion, Con2R wheel
- Shifter: Hurst
- Dash: Stock w/ Danchuk insert
- Instrumentation: Classic Industries
- Audio: N/A head unit, Rockford Fosgate amps, Rockford 6.5-inch front speakers, 6x9 rear speakers; installation by Rick Reed
- HVAC: Vintage Air

Exterior

- Bodywork: Rick Reed, modified trim, shaved emblems, smoothed firewall, tucked bumpers, Pete's Custom Paint (Temecula, CA) rehab after small wreck at show; Abe's Custom Painting (Riverside, CA)
- Paint By: Pete's Custom Paint
- Paint: Custom Green Mist blend with Pearl
- Hood: Stock
- Grille: Danchuk stainless steel
- Bumpers: Danchuk Smoothies front and rear