

Michael Tabbe's

COURTESY OF MICHAEL TABBE

Last issue we looked at Michael's SC540 in its early stages of the build, well we can report that he has completed the build, and all in 6 months! Hard to believe? Consider the fact that the average time to complete a hand built car is closer to 30 months. The added benefit of this car is that you only need one donor car to provide all your parts, therefore there is less time wasted running around chasing parts from different sources; leaving more time to actually complete the build.



DRB SC540





So what is it that made this such a quick build? Quality of the kit is the first and most important aspect. Peter and the crew at DRB got this kit right well before it was released. You only need to look at the photos in the last issue to see how well everything fitted together; this was because the kit was built specifically for the BA-BF Ford. If Michael decided that he wanted to fit a GM engine and gearbox to the SC540 he would have been in all sorts of trouble. This is what differentiates this kit from others; it is also a limiting factor as well, but that hasn't stopped Michael.

He states that this kit was actually fun to build because he could achieve a great deal in only a few hours. Being

manager of a busy Motel could have presented problems, fortunately for Michael it also had advantages; guests leave in the mornings and don't check-in until later in the afternoon, so the middle of the day he's free to play in the garage, while his wife Mandy keeps an eye on the business. This worked very well, and suited Michael's desire to get the car built as soon as was possible so that he could start the driving experience.

A handy hint for all builders, is to tag all components really well when they are removed. Lost labels can also be a problem, especially when dealing with the electrical system. Another big plus here was the re-use of the total electrical system including

the computer. Having said that there are some changes that are needed to convert your donor BA-BF Ford into a SC540, the air bag is made in-operable for safety reasons, the tail shaft requires shortening and the consul inside the car also requires a simple cut-and-shut to make it fit like the original. The whole car has a factory look and feel, quality is very evident.

Take a look at the photo showing the steering wheel and you will notice the Ford badge in the centre, this brilliant idea was to cover the words "Air Bag", simple but very effective. Another problem was solved almost by accident, the build CD that is supplied with the kit states that the original seats are too

1. Michael in his completed SC540, concept to reality in only six months.
2. Interior view is factory quality because it is straight from the donor car, only minor changes are required, build time is therefore very quick.
3. Tilt bonnet not only looks real good but is very practical as everything is accessible.



4. Rims are 19 inch with low profile tyres for dynamic handling. These rims are made with a rolled outer edge no steps at all; this gives a beautiful smooth style that really suits the car.

5. The passenger side houses the driver side seat, this way all the factory luxury components are utilised. Note the Cobra embossed kick plate inside door opening, practical and great aesthetics.

wide and you therefore need to source others, apparently Michael overlooked this point and accidentally or fortunately depending upon your point of view lifted the seats into the car to find that they fitted perfectly. The only difference was that he had the driver's seat on the passenger's side which placed the adjuster on the other side

of the seat. It was this adjuster that had interfered with the rear suspension mounts and caused all the problems. Well in this case problem solved!

The SC540 was designed to incorporate the very large modular V8 Ford engine, with a 5.4 litre capacity that generates around 300 Kw straight from the factory, this

is enough power for most purposes especially when you consider the 540 weighs in at only 1440 kg. The enhanced power-to-weight makes for very enthusiastic driving, coupled with excellent economy. While we are on the topic of fuel the other non-Ford part is the stainless marine 60 Lt fuel tank which is tucked away in the ▶



boot behind the seating area. This location keeps the weight between the wheels which improves handling and safety.

This car also retains the original ABS brakes as well as the stability control, to satisfy the engineer that the ABS would work the same as the factory intended, the tyre sizing was very important because the computer needed the car to respond in the same manner as the original. Consider the effects if the computer thinks your front wheels are going a different speed to those on the rear where in fact they are not? This was resolved by fitting 245 – 40 – 19 Tyres on the front and 285 – 35 – 19 on the rears.

Check out the photos, and look carefully at the rims that Michael chose for his car, they are made by Dragway and

feature a very nice rolled and polished edge for that ultimate smooth appearance. All balance weights are located on the inside to further enhance street appeal while being practical.

Michael and Mandy regularly venture out in the SC540 to enjoy the pleasures of being in a convertible, while enjoying the comfort of a factory sedan. They both admit the car is truly a pleasure to drive with soft suspension to absorb those pesky bumps and ruts, coupled with road sensitive power steering and enough power to play with when needed. When it's time to just relax and cruise you simply click on the cruise control and crank-up the stereo.

The SC540 has it all, a hand built car with the refinements of a factory finish.

To complete the build Michael included custom designed tail pipes that really finish the look from the rear. The paint was chosen from the Ford colour range and compliments the shape and style of the exterior.

With the car now finished and a few miles under the belt, it's a great time to enjoy what has to be one of Australia's success stories. Michael has the privilege of owning a fantastic looking car which will attract attention where-ever he (or Mandy) goes. It is now a matter of time before we know if this SC540 design becomes a classic in its own right. You decide, especially when you too could have one of these parked in your driveway in just a matter of months. 

1. The 5.4 Lt Modular engine is massive in size and boasts 290 kw of performance, however it fits like a glove in the SC540. Brilliantly designed and executed by Dennis Bedford, order yours through DRB Sports Cars.
2. All of the accessories from the single donor vehicle are incorporated into the build, you therefore get modern engineering as well as modern comforts.
3. Michael custom made many individual bits and pieces that add that touch of individuality. The Cobra 540 decal located next to the gear-shift is just one example of what makes this one very special car.
4. The side view highlights the creative design of the SC540, the sleek curves and flowing lines all work seamlessly together to make this the true success that it is. The great guys at DRB have developed a very unique original in the SC540.