



Michael Tabe's **DRB 540 COBRA**

Concept to Completion in 6 Months. It appears almost unattainable, but we talked to Michael and he convinced us that you could build one of these superbly finished cars in your own shed in the same amount of time.

Michael's story began after a conversation with his brother Murray who was completing his Cobra build and decided to fit his car with a soft top. The best way to achieve this was to go back to DRB's factory and check them out fist-hand.

While he was there Peter the owner, asked if he had seen their new car. Kit builders are a curious bunch, so naturally he couldn't resist an opportunity to be one of the first to check out something new. The DRB 540 was a totally new concept to Murray. As with most kit builders, he was familiar with steel chassis

and fibreglass constructed bodies. He was also conscious of the fact that most kits are made up from components that originate from many different manufacturers. This however was a bold step into a great new era in construction and fitment. Just one donor for all your parts, that's not only the driveline but also the interior, motor and gearbox.

The chassis was very well built and constructed entirely from aluminium. The weight saving must be exceptional; it looks pretty good as well. The fibreglass bodywork was of a very high standard and the

shape was modern, with a style that was certainly linked by DNA to the original AC Cobra.

Looking at the front of the 540 Murray could see that very distinctive grill area and open mouth that is so Cobra like. The body lines curved around the mechanical components with flowing motions culminating at the boot area, where it abruptly ended in a gentle curve and then dropped off to the ground. Aerodynamically this 540 appears to be very fluid in design, and would be just as well suited to the race track as it would parked outside your mansion in Double Bay. ▶

Above: Michael standing next to his DRB540. The quality of this kit is outstanding, look out for the finished product in the next issue of CKC.



1. Front and rear views of the bare DRB540 Cobra kit as it leaves the factory.
2. The large Ford 5.4lt V8 fits like a glove, this one donor concept is a great idea and the kit is built to precision from light-weight aluminium.
3. Fitment of the dash only required minor adjustments and has that hard to attain factory finished look.
4. Radiator now in place, it is looking like a car, the best thing, according to Michael is that it all just bolts in and in record time.
5. Underneath the exhaust tucks away up nice and high. The bright alloy sure looks great.
6. Dash has been assembled and the wiring loom fitted straight from the donor. Holes are already in the kit to allow wires to pass straight through.
7. Insulation and heat shielding are fitted before the engine and gearbox, to increase the comfort level of the driver and passenger.

Murray thinks that only time will tell whether the 540 becomes as true classic in its own right. It must be remembered that the 540 is not a replica, it is an original design, with some true classic Cobra lines thrown in to help carry the thoroughbred bloodlines into the next generation of enthusiasts.

Murray was suitably impressed, so much so that he contacted his brother Michael to tell him of the new design and how amazing it looked. Michael remembered what it took to build Murray's Cobra, and that he wanted a car that was an easier build. The whole concept was appealing to Michael, so sight unseen he took his brother's word and promptly ordered a DRB 540 for himself. In only around 3 months the kit was ready for dispatch. It was January 09 when Michael took delivery of his very own DRB 540 Cobra. He was very impressed with the quality of the kit, and wasted no time in get starting.

In that 3 months Michael had already planned what he was going to do with the build, and had already started looking around for a suitable donor,

but he was having trouble finding something that suited his specific requirements. There was no shortage of cars, but most had more damage, or kilometres on the odometer than Michael wanted.

After a short time of researching and watching online auctions Michael finally found his perfect donor vehicle. It was a damaged uneconomical write-off with only 6,000 kms on the speedo and was only 4 months old. The online photos indicated rear end damage only, plus it was an XR 8. Perfect, but what about the price?

Michael, an astute business man had set a budget of \$20k for the donor. He needed to place a \$2,000 deposit before he could bid at the online auction. So far so good! He watched the auction on his computer, after opening with a bid of \$10k he anxiously waited for the next bid, to gauge the interest in the car. Another bid was lodged at \$11k. "That's OK" thought Michael, he was expecting quite a savage price jump with multiple bidders. He bid another \$200 and waited for the next move. Silence... Then the auctioneer said "sold



at \$11,200". Michael couldn't believe his luck, he was sure it would go for around \$20k. He quickly arranged for the car to be freighted to his place, where the plan was to strip and tag everything that was needed for the build. Because the car was so new, all of the components were still in as new condition. There was no need for extensive (and time consuming) cleaning and repainting. Michael was on a winner, and he knew it! Michael manages a Hotel, which means he has time between when guests leave in the morning and others arrive later in the afternoon to be able to work on the car. He was very surprised



with how well everything fitted into the 540. The build progressed very well, indeed so smoothly that it was only about a month after receiving the kit that he was ready to start-up the engine. The Ford 5.4 litre engine is huge dimensionally but a very powerful design (300 KW) Michael was pleasantly surprised to find how well it all fitted together. The engine slipped effortlessly into the chassis where everything was reconnected, and the new car sprang to life. All this in just four weeks, incredible!

In our next issue we see the DRB 540 completed, and what a superb looking car it is. Stay tuned! **CKC**

8. Motor and Gearbox fitted, it is now time to fit the dash.

9. Suspension bolts directly to the alloy sheeting, donor parts are as new.

10. Front suspension in place and it only took an afternoon.

11. ABS brake pipes are also direct fitment. The DRB retains its ABS, traction control and stability control (if fitted to the donor)

12. and 13 Centre photos show how easily the engine fits, no extra space here, although Peter Rawson says the engine can be fitted from the bottom up (Clever ideal)

14. Car looks almost ready for paint, sure looks neat and tidy- the guys are DRB really have put an excellent kit together.

Specifications – DRB540

Air Conditioning:	R&D being done - relocate Air/Con pump, not enough room in engine bay for existing location
Budget:	On road cost ~ \$50 – 60,000 (depending on cost of donor vehicle)
Donor Cars:	Falcon BA/BF sedan parts – 90-95% parts also 5.4 litre (3V) XT 2006 BF (is another donor option)
Fuel Tanks:	70 litres steel or stainless rectangular tanks (standard marine fuel tank available from marine suppliers)
Hard Top:	R&D being done - attached with 4 clips (looks like a soft top)
Interior:	Door Trim GRP moulding, vacuum vinyl covered- (BA/BF handle, window control, pull handle used) Dashboard – BA/BF Console – (part of; gear shift centre console bin) Seats – suitable after market sports car seats or DRB modern Cobra seat mouldings, trimmed to suit.
Lights:	Accepts standard quartz halogen 7" headlight
Mirrors:	Prototype uses EF/EL Falcon mirrors. If windows are fitted – suitable mirrors will be sourced and require mounting on door.
Registration:	QLD – ADR 37.01 regulations, allow 98 onward motors, therefore BA/BF ok. / NSW – 2005 eng BF ok (check w local Engineer) / VIC – 2003 (Euro 3 Regulation) BA/BF ok
Seat Belts:	Ford Lap/Sash required for Registration – can fit harness later.
Wheels:	Purchase Dragway Wheels, replicas ~ \$6,000 or use BA/BF Falcon wheels OR wheels of your choice
Windows:	R&D being done for electric windows
Wipers:	None on concept car - Combination of Ford motor & VR/VS commodore linkage assembly
Build Time:	250 - 300 hrs
Wheelbase:	2540 mm
Track Front:	1560 mm
Track Rear:	1580 mm
Length:	4,040 mm
Width:	1940 mm
Height (top of screen):	1220 mm
Ground Clearance:	160 mm
Weight:	1350 kg