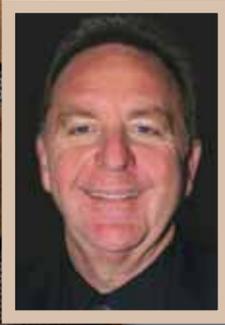


OWEN IS THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER OF MOTORACTIVE. HE IS ALSO A LEADING FIGURE WITHIN THE AUTO RE-STYLING AND VEHICLE MODIFICATION INDUSTRY



custom Corner

Owen Webb
Business Development Manager - Motoractive

Chris Bitmead's XBOSS XB Falcon



Approximately 10 years ago Chris Bitmead from Perth Western Australia had a dream to build his favourite car, an XB Falcon Coupe, to the highest elite level possible and take on the best in America for the Ridler award at Detroit Autorama. After a couple years in the planning he acquired the car, put his team together and started work.

Chris is a really well organized businessman and put together a crew of two guys permanently and outsourced any of the jobs they couldn't complete at Chris's home workshop like the body, paint and interior. He had a very clear plan and, even though it changed a little along the way, the team never lost focus and always knew their goal.

Overall the car still looks very much like an XB coupe but the undercarriage has been fabricated and smoothed, every panel has major modifications, with the front fenders bulged out to match the

huge rear quarters on the Falcon. All the grill, bumpers, rear panels, bonnet and boot have had huge hours spent perfecting the finish and gaps for perfect fitment. The interior has countless hours

of fabrication, smoothing, painting and the rest trimmed in a rich black leather. The engine bay is hugely modified and a late model, unbelievably detailed XR 8 V8 sits in there better than anything it was





designed for.

Like many projects, Chris got five years into the project and it just wasn't going right with body and paint, so he pulled the job out and shipped it to Maskell's Customs and Classics in Shepparton to redo parts of the body and apply the paint and detail the whole car to perfection. Greg had his work cut out making sure the foundation of the bodywork was good, reworking what he had to and applying paint to body. Mick Williamson from Northam in WA had painted and detailed every engine, suspension and removable part of the XB. They made platforms with jigs for every part so they could paint it properly, something required for building a car to this level.

Chris wanted to debut the car several years previously but it had blown out and, as they were running short on time, they shipped the car in December last year with some panels and buffing to be completed in the US. This was necessary as they couldn't risk the ship running late or customs holding the car and missing their goal. The car arrived in Detroit in

early February with the team turning up at Detroit Speed who supported the Australian effort unbelievably with free reign of their shop to work around the clock to get it to Autorama on time.

Chris and the team's goal was to make the Great 8, and have a fair shot at the Ridler Award, but on arrival and looking at the other cars, they were quite nervous. This is seen as the pinnacle custom show in the world, with over 700 cars and the world's top award, The Ridler, named after Don Ridler who was the driving force of this show from the early days. There were over 40 brand new, never seen cars that rocked up to shoot for the prize, so to be named in the Great 8 on Friday night was an unbelievable achievement. The first car from Australia to gain this status, it's like "qualifying for the America's Cup" and will set the path for many more entries in the years to come.

They had achieved their goal of making the Great 8, so now they could enjoy the show and hope for a fair shot at the top prize.

They were treated like celebrities with constant radio, TV and social media

interviews and amazing crowds around the car all weekend. They were ushered off to the judging room to be interviewed by the judging team. All eight finalists had to explain and sell their vehicles to the judges.

On Sunday afternoon the beautifully presented Oldsmobile painted by Charlie Hutton was announced the Ridler winner for 2016, a very deserving choice, but Chris was awarded the outstanding car of show, a deserving award for an excellent car and effort.

This was a great team effort and Chris will be bringing the car back to Australia for the WA hot rod show in June and it will be a feature at MotorEx Melbourne on July 16th and 17th. Make sure you come along and have a look at a truly exceptional vehicle that can compete on the world stage. **NCR**

Editor: I was following the results online as we went to press with our March issue and I have to say this is a remarkable achievement for Chris and his team and also recognition for Australia.