

# Road Tour '08: Part III

## A look at the ASC Speed33

BY RON CERIDONO  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF ASC



*Ford's Model 40 roadster was beautiful in stock form, but Mark Trostle's American Speed Company has made them even better. The Speed33 lends itself to a variety of building styles, including full fenders and running boards.*

**G**iven the popularity of the Deuce today, it's ironic analysts were saying the Ford Motor Company's glory days were over at the end of the short '32 model year. The FoMoCo had gone from being one of the greatest revenue-producing businesses in the country to one of the biggest losers. Chevrolet was outselling Ford by a huge margin, Plymouth was closing in, and, worst of all, 70-year-old Henry Ford was viewed by many insiders and consumers as being out of touch with the car-buying public.

But, Henry was not the kind of guy to give up, and while his vast personal wealth certainly made it easier for the company to hang on when times were tough, it was his tenacity and mechanical savvy that led him to make his cars more desirable by improving the V-8 engine. He also realized a big investment would be required to produce a new, more stylish and comfortable car to regain his sales lead. Henry was wise enough to assign that responsibility to an extremely talented, and arguably one of the best, designers of the era—his son, Edsel.

Much like the preceding year, the Fords for 1933 got off to a rough start. Thanks to a strike at the Briggs body plant, and the problems inherent in designing and producing what were for all practical purposes completely new cars, the new Model 40s weren't introduced until February 9, 1933. The handsome new body styles were well received, but their late introduction again gave Chevrolet and Plymouth a head start in sales. However, the public's confidence in the Flathead V-8 was growing, and Ford was ready to pounce on the competition when 1934 rolled around.



*The Speed33 looks great as a highboy, especially when combined with the Roadster Shop's pinched and bobbed frame.*



*While the ASC body is unique in many regards, it can still be mounted on an original frame with a stock hood, grille shell, and fenders.*



*The now-you-see it, now-you-don't top is the best part of ASC's Speed33. Stowage begins by lifting the rear of the top and opening the tonneau cover/tulip panel. First, the rear of the panel rises ...*



*... then it moves to the rear, the front disengages from its guides, and the panel opens fully.*



*With the windshield latches released, the header assembly can be moved up and back.*

Starting in October 1933, Ford began an advertising campaign touting the virtues of the Model 40, which was beginning its second year of production ('33s and '34s were both designated as Model 40s). The pinnacle of this public relations blitz was the company's display at the '34 Chicago World's Fair.

Mechanically, there were some minor changes for 1934; the most notable was the introduction of the Stromberg two-barrel carburetor as a replacement for the single-barrel Detroit Lubricator.

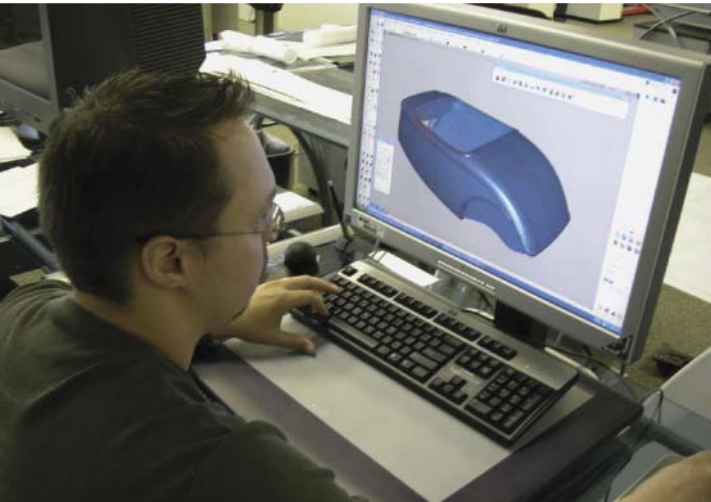
Visually, there were a number of differences between '33s and '34s. All '33s had black fenders, regardless of the body color, while '34 fenders were body color and black fenders were an option. Other changes for the '34 included a new, straight grille with fewer bars and a wider surround, hood louvers were straight instead of curved, and there were two hood latches rather than one. Headlamps and cowl-light buckets came to more of a



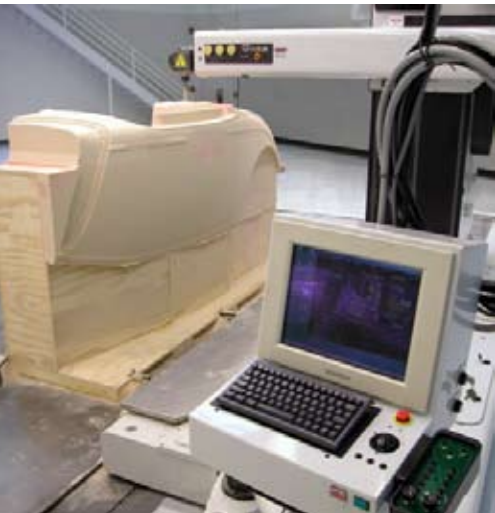
*The top assembly folds easily and is completely hidden in a well behind the seats.*



*With the top stowed, the tonneau cover/tulip panel is closed and latched, and you're ready to cruise in the sun.*



*All the design work was done with the latest CAD equipment. This procedure is almost the reverse of how things were once done. Rather than take dimensions off of a clay model, a foam model is now made from the dimensions established by a 3-D computer program.*



*Directed by the computer-established coordinates, a five-axis free-arm mill carved this half-body in urethane foam so its shape and features could be studied, then tweaked as necessary.*



*One of the greatest challenges had to be the windshield posts, which had to be slim and stylish while incorporating channels for roll-up windows. Production versions are investment-cast in stainless steel.*

point on '33s, hubcaps were changed, and '34s wore three pinstripes on the body, while the '33s had two. Inside, the '33's engine-turned dash insert was replaced with woodgrain, door pulls were changed (those small items had a number of variants) and eventually eliminated, and the windows in closed cars moved back, as well as down, for enhanced ventilation.

In terms of design, Model 40s are considered by many to be the most sophisticated of the Fords produced in the 1930s, which has always presented hot rodders with a dilemma. The fact is there isn't much you can do to improve upon Edsel's design. It can be a little like putting Mona Lisa in a tank top; go overboard with modifications and you end up with less than you had. It takes a good eye and a deft hand to make changes in classic automotive architecture, and one group that has demonstrated that ability is American Speed Company, creators of the



*This digitizer is used to pick up datum points and prove the dimensional accuracy of the computer model. If changes are necessary, they can be made before production begins.*



*While some subtle revisions were made to the shape of a few body panels (as an example, the decklid isn't as flat as a stocker), the fenderwells are dead on and will accept original fenders.*



*While original bodies are often criticized for being inaccurate, it's a wonder fit and finish wasn't much worse given the methods used for design and production back then. Speed33 bodies are produced to standards the originals couldn't come close to.*



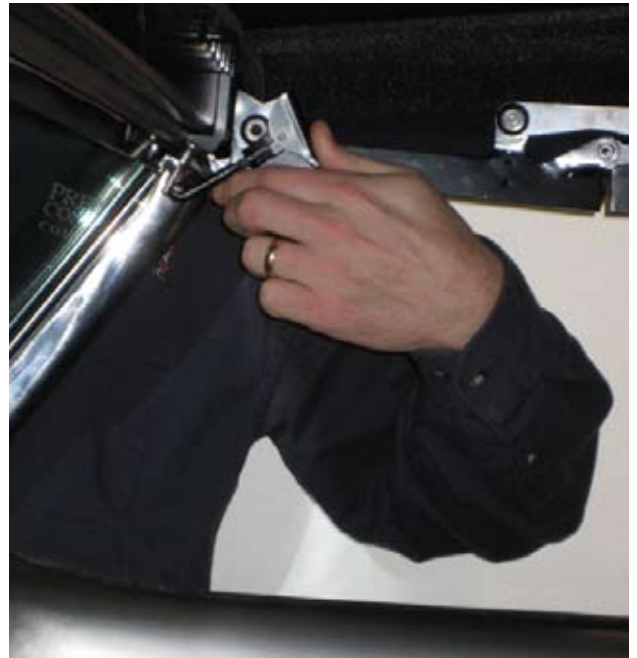
*It takes a room full of dies to make a Speed33 body. Body panels are stamped from 18-gauge steel, with all inner structure stamped from 11-gauge reinforced with 1/8-inch wall steel tubing. The floor pan is 1/8-inch steel.*



*A no-cost option for fenderless cars are factory modifications that allow the body to be channeled 1 3/4 inches over the frame. This eliminates the gap between the cowl and the frame with the stock bodies.*

Speed33—the basis of our '08 PPG / STREET RODDER Road Tour car. Having designed the Dearborn Deuce, and with 30-plus years of experience with Detroit's OEMs, ASC not only knows what to do but how to do it.

To build its bodies, ASC started with surface scan data from a pristine original '33 roadster, then the company incorporated a variety of refinements using the latest CAD software and hardware, just as the major manufacturers do it. Among the numerous subtle changes, the firewall has been modified to accept contemporary engines, and the cowl has been reworked to mount a unique curved windshield. Solid stainless steel windshield posts have been included, and access to the roomy passenger compartment (4 inches wider and 5 inches longer than a '32) is now through doors that are stretched 4 1/2 inches



*With the top up, the header is secured to the windshield frame with modern, over-center latches.*



*Brilliant packaging allows the top to fold and stow behind the seat and below the tulip panel.*



*Release latches for the tonneau cover and the trunk lid are in the hinge post. Note the hidden hinges.*



*This took some engineering: The tulip panel/tonneau cover can be opened at the same time as the trunk lid. The leading edge of the trunk lid moves to the rear as it opens.*



*The tonneau cover also goes through a variety of moves when opening. This is the hinge assembly at the back of the panel.*

over stock. But, what makes the Speed33 so unique is the fully integrated convertible top and roll-up windows. So cleverly done, these additions take nothing away from the classic roadster styling with the top up or down, yet it offers the best of the open- and closed-car worlds.

By combining the latest automotive technology with the vision of an experienced street rodder like Mark Trostle, ASC has done a remarkable job of updating a classic design while keeping its character intact. It truly is the best of both worlds, and we're sure even Henry and Edsel would approve. **SR**



*This is the right side catch that secures the front of the tonneau cover when it's in the closed position.*



*Compared to the trunk hinges used on a stock Model 40, these are an engineering masterpiece. They allow the trunk and tonneau to open simultaneously.*



*More modern hardware can be found securing the trunk lid in the closed position.*



*As you would expect, the Speed33 is equipped with modern, bear-claw door latches. This is the pin in the latch post.*



*We really like this simple hood treatment, but anything from custom solid panels to a stock original can be used.*



*Bodies are assembled on a surface plate to ensure proper panel alignment, and gaps are established to OEM tolerances. E-coat (electrocoating cathodic epoxy) dipping is also available to protect your investment.*



*Speaking of options, a rolled rear pan will be used on the '08 Road Tour car. The fuel tank will be in the trunk.*



*Here's a good look at the top bows before the Haartz cloth material was put in place. Tops are available in black, beige, and navy blue, as well as custom colors.*



*For those who want to take a nostalgic approach, the Speed33 can be equipped with stock fenders, gas tank, and cover.*

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