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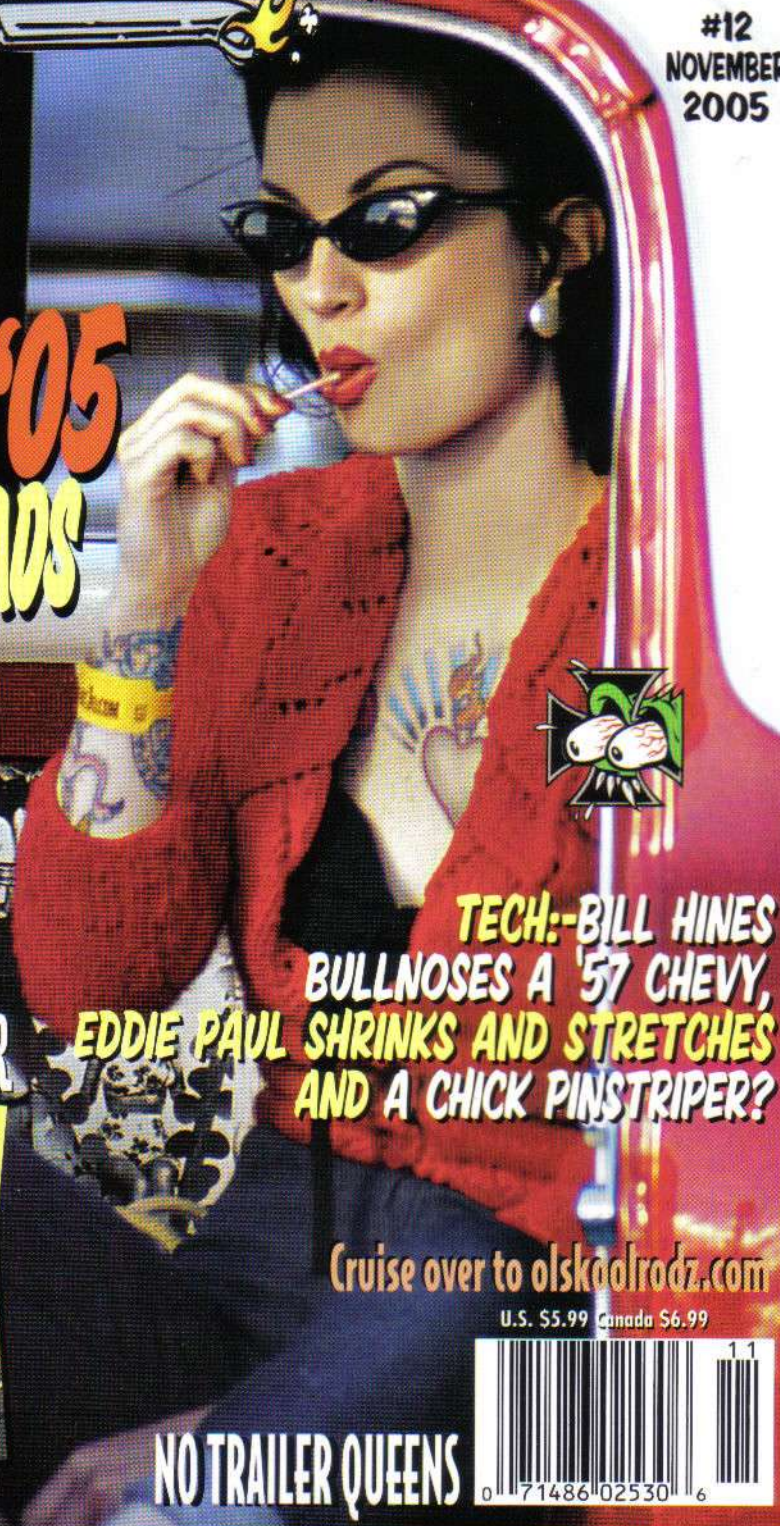


FROM FINLAND -
TIMO'S '50 CADDY KUSTOM

THE HOT ROD KULTURE MAG

#12
NOVEMBER
2005

VIVA LAS VEGAS '05 VINTAGE BANDS AND BROADS



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FINNISH DESIGN

1950 CADILLAC KUSTOM ÄLA TIMO HERSTI OF RECYCLERS

Text & photo by Pekka Polvinen

This stretched and chopped 1950 Cadillac Coupe is one good example of the strong old school style kustom and rod movement that Finland has had for many years. Along with Sweden and other Scandinavian countries, the Finnish scene is quite impressive.

The short summers last just a few months and the long, cold and dark winters make life sometimes a bit more challenging. Surprisingly, finding old American iron is actually not that difficult thanks to the active importing from the US during the 1980s and early 1990s. In the summer you would

be surprised by the number of old American cars on the streets during the cruise nights and other events.

HAPO WÖRKING MAN

Timo Hersti is one true, hard working kustom car and old school hot rod freak from Helsinki, Finland. There must be more than thirty cars on the streets in Finland and Sweden that have passed through his hands, some with restoration as the main theme but most with extensive, traditional kustom treatment as the common denominator. This 1950 Cadillac is one good example of the latter type of activity. And it is proof of the fact that you can get a nice

rolling piece of art without investing \$50,000 USD – just do as much as you can yourself...and be creative! In less than six months Timo did most of the work on this car. Sure, the good rust free original condition helped but when you see the outcome with the amount of work he invested, one becomes impressed. This car was actually supposed to be in a museum as an example of a well-preserved original. It had already received the hard-to-get local museum plates when Timo managed to strike a deal with the owner. That same week it arrived in the club garage of the Recyclers and Timo got his hands on the Caddy. He started to cut the roof into several pieces. The sawzalls and torches did not get much rest the next few days!

The view on how the Caddy would look when completed had been clear in Timo's mind for years. Larry Watson once painted his 1959 Cadillac purple with the silver striped roof and the paint looked so tremendous to Timo that he decided to build an early 1950s Cadillac with a similar theme. It took years to find a candidate for the planned kustom treatment but finally in late 2003 this car became available.

Even though Timo had also some clear thoughts on how to upgrade the drivetrain he decided to leave the smoothly running 331 CID V8 with a 4-bbl carb and Hydramatic mostly untouched. The focus was on the look and feel after all. So let's start with the body.

THE BODY...

The door handles were shaved. The roof was cut in several pieces and it was also widened three quarters of an inch on both sides and extended slightly in order to accommodate the 4-inch chop without touching the lower rear window frame and moldings, which Timo wanted to remain in original dimensions and location.

The side windows got a new profile and it was important for Timo that the power windows would perform flawlessly after the chop. The side window frames were modified to match the lowered roof. All the glass on the car is new and custom made. Timo built molds for all the glass and Kuttilan Autolasi made the windows. In

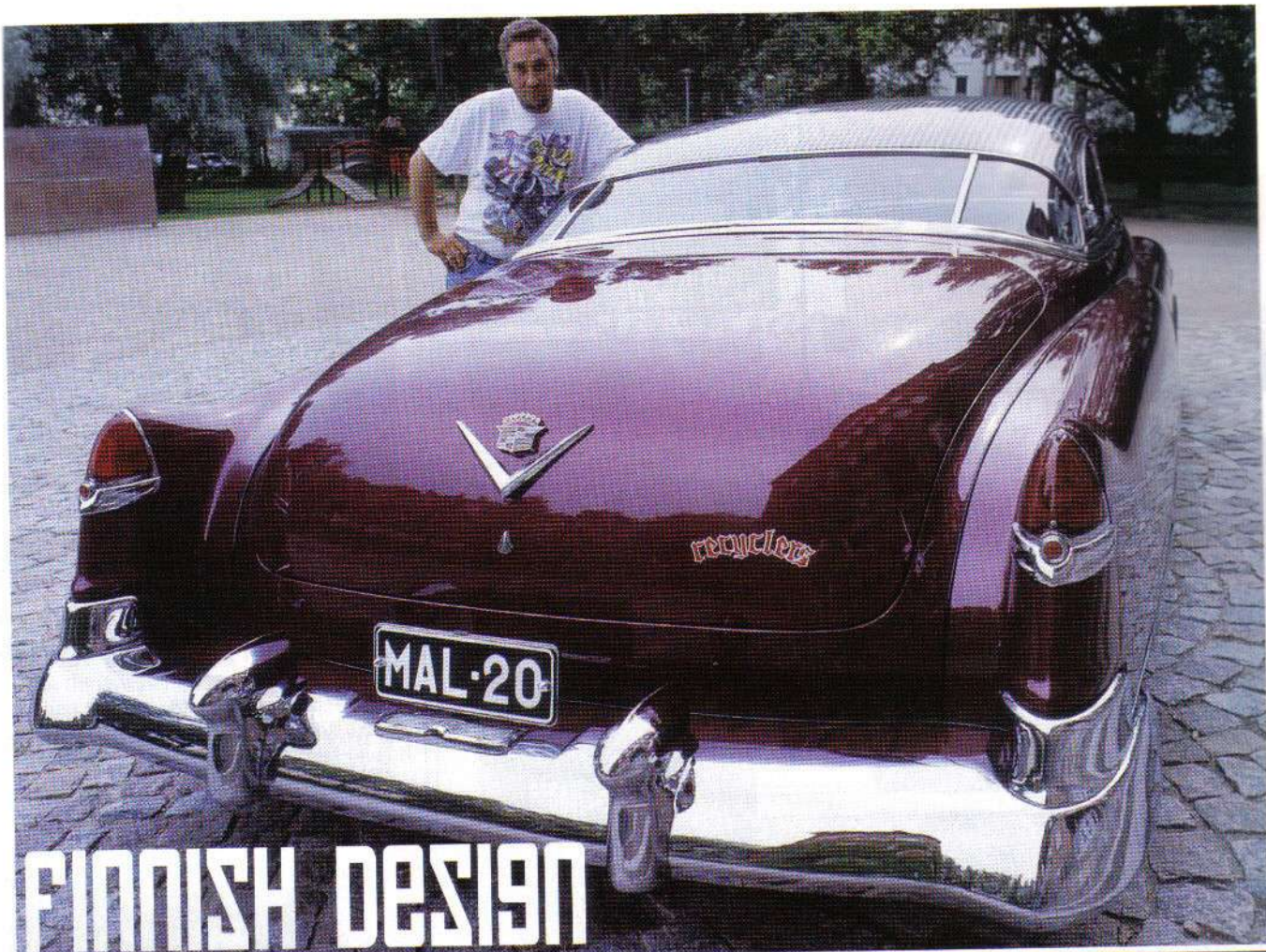
Finland there are actually two companies that make custom windows at very reasonable cost and they can make windows to almost any classic old car. They have the specs and molds for most 1950s and 1960s American cars. Actually quite a few well-known American custom cars have had their windows made in Finland.

Well, back to Timo's Cadillac. He says: "The cool 1950 Cadillac taillights do not get the justice they deserve in the stock body. Therefore I wanted to stretch the rear fenders four inches. The additional metal was welded into the very end of the rear fins. Also the part between the bumper and trunk lid was filled with some extra metal."

SUSPENSION

The lower and longer lines were begging to get closer to the ground. The solution: fitting all the corners with a custom-made air suspension. Timo made his own set of airbags to solve this. To get them in their correct position the shocks at front had to be





FINNISH DESIGN

moved slightly forward to get the space needed. In the rear some of the leaves were taken off and the airbags now take the major responsibility of smoothing the ride. To control the ride height required some work under the hood where things mostly were to be remain stock. To run the extra compressor for the air bags Timo added a twelve-volt alternator under the hood - this gives the power also to the hidden stereo system. The power windows and the lights are still operated via the original generator supplying the power to the six-volt system. The ride height can now be controlled from the driver's seat within a range of six inches.

The wheels are true wire wheels by Vintage Wheels and the tires are 8.20 x 15 wide whitewalls, and definitely not radials as that would rule the car out from many local old school rod runs and fun parties.

PAINT, CHROME AND INTERIOR

If you were to visit the Recyclers garage it would be hard to believe that Timo has painted the car in those facilities. But he is the man who knows the secrets of shiny paint. It's all about getting the bodywork right, base coat and a lot of layers of lacquer with a lot of sanding in between and hand buffing. The color is "Spanish Rose,"



found on the Honda color chart and the roof is two-tone silver. Timo admits that the roof was the most challenging part of the paint work. A lot of masking tape went into the operation and getting the stripes run correctly along the roof was not easy. Actually Timo started to paint the car from the roof just in order to really see how it would look when striped.

The interior was stitched by Lasse V€antinen, linked to another small kustom car affiliation, Tomahawk Town of Helsinki. When it comes to custom interiors around the Arctic Circle, he is the foremost visionary. The two-tone leather on the seats and door panels match the paint color scheme perfectly.

CUSTOM AUTO Design

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All the chrome was re-plated in the neighbouring Sweden. In Finland it is really difficult to get good chroming as there are really no companies specializing in the bumpers and larger items.

GETTING THE FUN PART OUT!

When completed in 2004 the car took home a number of prizes in the shows, but still, this Caddy is more go than show. Timo is a frequently seen party man on the local events in Finland and in Sweden. You have to take a fifteen hour boat ride to cross the sea to get there from Helsinki. The Cadillac has frequently been seen on the road and it is rock 'n' roll that counts when the stereo is on. There must be a sound detector somewhere hidden under the pinstriped dash making sure that this beauty does not move until you've dialed in the correct radio station or slipped in a CD with true rock'n'roll.

And if you think that Timo has been lazy since the Caddy got completed in 2004, take a look at his 1930 Ford A. This thing was built and painted by him in just three months. And the shiny flathead-powered fun hauler took home some show prizes of its own, and like all Timo's creatures, it is driven. **We will get to it later in OSR!**



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CADILLAC COUPE DE VILLE KUSTOM
OWNER: TIMO HERSTI
BUILDER: TIMO HERSTI
OCCUPATION: CAR BUILDER/RESTORER /METAL WORKER
CITY/STATE: HELSINKI, FINLAND
COST: OWN LABOUR + 600 HOURS + COST OF MATERIALS + CAR
YEAR: 1950
MAKE: CADILLAC COUPE DE VILLE
BODY CUSTOM FABRICATION: ROOF CHOPPED 4 INCHES - ADDED 2 INCHES IN WIDTH, BODY LOWERED, REAR FENDERS STRETCHED 4 INCHES, ALL WINDOWS CUSTOM MADE, SHAVED HANDLES ETC.
COLOR: HONDA SPANISH ROSE & SILVER
PAINT TYPE: PEARL BASE W/CLEARCOAT
PAINTER: TIMO HERSTI
CUSTOM GRAPHICS: WATSON TYPE - TWO TONE SILVER
ENGINE: 331 CID CADILLAC - STOCK
TRANNY: HYDRAMATIC - STOCK
SUSPENSION INFO: AIR BAGS (OWNER FAB)
WHEELS/SIZE: VINTAGE WHEELS 6 X 15
TIRES/SIZE: 8.20 X 15 WIDE WHITEWALLS
SEATS: STOCK
UPHOLSTERY: LEATHER BY LASSE VANTTINEN - PRIMA (HELSINKI)
DASHBOARD: STOCK W/PINSTRIPES BY PLATU
INTERIOR EXTRAS: LEATHER - COLORS MATCHED TO EXTERIOR
GARAGE-BUILT STUFF: ALL BODY MODIFICATIONS, SUSPENSION, PAINT ETC.
WINDOWS: ALL TAILOR MADE, MOLDS MADE BY TIMO
CLUB AFFILIATION: RECYCLERS
ANYTHING ELSE: RE-CHROMING OF PARTS DONE IN SWEDEN