

MASTERPIECE IN METAL

If anything, nobody in the off-road or publishing world can accuse us of being lazy, short sighted or unwilling to take on the big challenges. And, there is no other testament to this magazine's spirit than the absolutely incredible Ford Bronco pre-runner you see before you.

Owned by off-road veteran Ron DeWolf and fabricated by Ruben Arzate, John Evans, Bejay Magnuson and Andy Petersen of Speed Unlimited in Paramount, California, this mind-blowing *Dirt Sports* project vehicle was born on the pages of our December 2004 issue. Since then, this storyline has been one of the most popular features *Dirt Sports* has ever published. Thanks to the drive and passion of everyone involved, Project Retro Bronco has morphed and evolved into what arguably is the nicest four-wheel drive Bronco we've ever seen.

Long-time readers may remember the Retro Bronco started life as a simple premise of taking an older utility off-roader and giving it some modern updates with little money and time. Long-time Baja off-road racer and chase

crew team member for Herzog Racing, DeWolf, of Long Beach, California, had just the vehicle we were looking for. Purchased for just over \$20,000 before 2004's SCORE Baja 1000, DeWolf's 1984 Ford Bronco had three seats, was fully caged and, unlike many pre-runners of today, was four-wheel drive. It was also in need of wiring, shock updating and some long-overdue TLC.

As we said, that was a long time and many shop hours ago. After enduring lots of starts and stops with several flakey shops that shall be unnamed, DeWolf's Bronco finally found a home at with Arzate and his new Speed Unlimited shop. Wanting to expand his reputation in the off-road industry by building a true rolling showcase, Arzate, his crew and DeWolf threw out conventional wisdom (and our story's original concept) by taking the tired Bronco to the highest level possible – and then some.

The

road to Boyd Jaynes' Masterpiece in Metal studio has been a long and expensive one. Only the cab, doors and a few interior roll cage bars remain of the original Bronco, and from the Speed Unlimited shop has emerged a longer, wider and fully maxed-out new Ford Bronco that simply shatters the gold standard for magazine project builds.

Thanks to DeWolf, Speed Unlimited and a host of very special (and very patient) Retro Bronco suppliers and sponsors, it is our very special honor to finally present this completed *Dirt Sports* project.



RETURN OF THE RETRO BRONCO



NEARLY FOUR YEARS AFTER WE STARTED, OUR BELOVED PROJECT
BRONCO FINALLY CROSSES THE FINISH LINE

STORY BY MARTY FIOLEHA

PHOTOS BY BOYD JAYNES



TOP:

Originally, Project Retro Bronco was a simple buildup where *Dirt Sports* modernized the '94 Bronco without breaking the bank (above). Now, the Bronco is a stunning vehicle worthy of being called a Masterpiece in Metal.



TOP:

The custom one-piece front end is another contribution from Fiberwerx and is a modification that incorporates the flowing bulges of widened front fenders and a custom grill. The Bronco's widened stance is obvious from this view, as is the fully integrated roll cage.

RIGHT:

Speed Unlimited's work on this Bronco's front end is just spectacular. A King bypass shock and coil-over work in unison to control four-inch-wider Speed Unlimited I-beams, while the Davis Headers fabricated exhaust system is just visible to the right. This setup is good for 16.5 vertical inches of wheel travel. Front hubs are stock Ford Dana 44, while Pro-Am six-piston calipers control Pro-Am 14-inch rotors. The Bronco uses twin polished UMP air filters as well as stout triple Mastercraft limit straps.



BELOW RIGHT:

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ABOVE LEFT:

From any angle, the proportions and stance of the Retro Bronco are perfect. The very nicely turned-out fiberglass rear fenders by Fiberwerx help disguise the face that Speed Unlimited added eight inches of wheel track and a whopping 12 inches of overall length and wheelbase to the chassis. The latter was accomplished by sectioning in a foot of new bodywork to the steel cab and perfectly stretched fiberglass top. Outstanding body and paintwork by Dave Wachter completes the transformation. Polished Walker Evans Racing wheels are fitted with massive 37-inch Toyo Open Country rubber.



LEFT:

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RIGHT:

Craftsmanship on the rear is as stunning as up front. Speed Unlimited devised this long-travel four-link that controls a Dirt Tech/Currie 9-inch rear end suspended via Dirt Tech trailing arms. Again, Pro-Am's full floating hubs mount Pro-Am 14-inch rotors and Pro-Am six-piston calipers. The CNC-machined sway bar setup is from Desert Specialties. The Bronco's 22 inches of rear wheel travel is dampened by twin King shocks per side coupled with a King hydraulic bump stop. Once again, Mastercraft straps provide much needed down travel control.



BELOW RIGHT:

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ABOVE RIGHT:

Not content to stick with stock suspension seats, DeWolf and Arzate had House of Trim refinish the low-back Mastercrafts in grey suede and leather. Bright red Mastercraft shoulder harnesses and lap belts go a long way to complete the interior and keep all three occupants safe.



LEFT:

The Bronco's rich interior is as nice as any luxury automobile. The custom dash was fabbed by Alpha Performance. Accented with one-off carbon-fiber trim pieces like the glove compartment, Lowrance GPS cover, and door panel inserts, the Bronco's interior is the masterwork of House of Trim in Paramount, California, who laid down the rich leather, suede and carpet. Air conditioning comes courtesy of Vintage Air, while engine monitoring, speed and even the turn signal indicator are all found in the single Racepak dash. **ds**



SPECIFICATIONS: PROJECT RETRO BRONCO

POWERTRAIN

ENGINE:
Ford SVO Windsor 392 cu. in.

BUILDER:
Edelbrock, Torrance, CA

MAX HORSEPOWER:
400+

MAX TORQUE:
N/A

INDUCTION:
Edelbrock Pro-Flo EFI Fuel Injection

TRANSMISSION:
Specially built C-6 by Hughes Phoenix, AZ

TRANSFER CASE:
Specially built by Rockland

SUSPENSION

FRONT:
Speed Unlimited 4-inch wider Ford I-beam, King 3-inch, three-tube bypass with 3.0 King coilovers and King springs; 16 inches of wheel travel

REAR:
Four-link rear suspension by Suspensions Unlimited; Dirt Tech/Currie 9-inch rear end; Dirt Tech trailing arms, Desert Specialties sway bar; King 3.0 three-tube bypass with 3-inch King coilovers, King 2.0 bump stops; 22 inches of wheel travel

BRAKES

FRONT:
ProAm Racing disc, 6-piston calipers w/14-inch rotors

REAR:
ProAm Racing disc, 6-piston calipers w/14-inch rotors

WHEELS/TIRES

WHEELS:
Walker Evans Racing polished

TIRES:
Toyo Open Country 37x13.5x15

INTERIOR

Custom-upholstered Mastercraft seats, Mastercraft harnesses, Momo steering wheel and Flaming River steering column, custom dash by Alpha Performance, Racepak digital dash, Lowrance GPS, Art Carr shifter, PCI Race Radios intercom and headphones, Kenwood and Icom radio systems, Vintage Air air-conditioning, custom leather, carbon fiber and carpet by House of Trim.

EXTERIOR

CHASSIS:
1984 Ford Bronco cab and extended shell; custom rear fenders and one-piece hood by Fiberwerx.

PAINT:
Body finishing and paint by Dave Wachter

PLATING:
Powdercoat and plating by Embee

GENERAL

DIMENSIONS:
Wheelbase: 114 inches
Overall Length: 192 inches
Overall Width: 92 inches
Weight: 7,000 pounds (est.)