

Limebug's '51 Tempo Matador Pickup Truck

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DROP THE TEMPO Limebug Marathon Build of a 1951 Tempo Matador from Wreck to Show Truck in 8 weeks

Eight Weeks?, You mean Eight Years, Right?

Words by Ned Faux – Hayburner Magazine (Issue 11)

Nope...

Weeks!... That's how long it took Craig and a couple of friends to fully restore this 63-year-old truck. It's not just any old resto. We are talking about a Tempo Matador. You can't just pick up the phone to GSF and order parts. You have to source original stock or fabricate your own. There are no haynes manuals for when you get stuck. Plus, you have to have the vision in the first place. It's all very well buying such a unusual, rare piece of kit and having a bash at something different, but to execute it like Craig did is whole other ballgame.

Let me tell you a little bit about Craig Shaw and Leanne Gwilliam. They are a couple and the owners of Lime Bug, a Stoke-on-Trent-based parts and accessories company with their own showroom and workshop where they spend their evenings along with staff and friends, building projects. I first met the couple around 5 years ago. Back then Lime Bug was a small business run out of a bedroom. I used to run into them at weekends as they would have a small trade plot at the shows. Since then, through hard work, determination and innovative ideas, the business has gone from strength to strength and it is now one of the main players in the UK scene.

I have personally been a huge Tempo Matador fan for a very long time. I have hunted for a panel van since I saw the old Bus Barn's slammed-out Tempo a good few years ago. When I got the phone call from Craig, looking for more info on these vehicles and saying he had the cash and was genuinely in the market for a Matador, I was excited for him.

My knowledge of Tempos is mostly theory. I can tell you geeky facts about years, types, etc.. and I have one or two contacts for people who own them around the world. But as for my hands-on knowledge, well ... let's call it limited. Luckily my good friend Bobby Wilcox from Milkandtwo did the full show-winning nut and bolt restoration on Phil Jarvis's Matador a couple of years ago.

This worked in well, because when Craig eventually found

“the one”, he had a couple of people to vet it for him. before taking the plunge and sending the cash.

It was an unusual sale. The truck was not actually for sale when he bought it. The owner was a Porsche enthusiast and had this and a Deserter among his collection. Initially the truck was bought to make a novelty bar in his man-cave. But he said it quickly became apparent that the truck was too good to turn into a beer plate. The main difficulties were not with the seller but with trying to organize a container, being 250 miles from the nearest shore and 140 miles from the owner himself (who was initially reluctant to even send him a few snaps). They did look initially at trying to put two vehicles in the container, but the second vehicle (a bay window) turned out to be an online scam – saying it was kept offshore, on an island, in a container, couldn't answer the phone etc., etc.

After getting over this, and subscribing the scammer to a great number of “male interest websites”, they managed to organize a small deposit to the owner for him to trailer it to an independent company they chose. It then sat there so that both parties had control over what happened next.

Craig said: “I was scared that I had bought the world’s most expensive hotwheels toy.”

Over the next few months the wait was on. I must have rang Craig 10 times to see whether it had arrived yet.

When it finally turned up at the docks, they were greeted by the token miserable jobsworth who said. “So yours is that Tempo thing? With bits falling off it” Craig had a sick feeling of “shit, I’ve just made a massive mistake.

Then the truck was rolled around the corner. Straight away he knew he had hit the jackpot.

Into the Light for the first time

The bits falling off turned out to be just the wood moving on the back of the bed. After going through the bus and the two crates of spares it came with (all chrome and Tempo-specific parts in good order). they were already finding both a 25hp and 30hp in with the deal. It was definitely a diamond truck. The opportunity to get another RHD in this condition won't come round again for anyone.

The plan was to get the pickup ready for the Volksworld show, which was roughly eight weeks away from when he first started (a crazy deadline). The first thing was to make sure it was all there. It turned out that the parts that were missing were fairly minor.

Some areas needed attention, such as the lower A-Arm bushes, the ball joints needed re-shimming, gearbox mounts, the fuel tank needed work, and the glass was scratched up. But overall, it was in amazing condition for a '51.

The hardest part to do was the air system, and the wheel choice.

Both were necessary to make the bus look like the picture Craig had in his mind, but after a while it felt like more and more of a bad decision. The things they had to quickly overcome were the 6-12v conversion and the rear bag system. Huge headaches started when they tried to work around the massively complicated front wheel drive system, the fixed width arches and the huge drive flanges. All this became a nightmare, but being so limited on wheel choice, in the end American racing rims were bolted on and looked perfect. It got to the point where Craig threw away a full set of adapters which had taken three days to make because it just wasn't going to work.

The beam was fully redesigned a total of four times,

every time clashing with something different. They threw away seized rose joints and the clashing shocks, but in the end he is proud to say that the Tempo underneath is 100% OG. If you wanted to make this a stock Tempo again, it would take around two days' work and it's still all there.

The truck was blasted by L&R Soda Blasting and a variety of rust issues were dealt with along the way. The colour of the bus is Deep Royal Green and Smoking Room Yellow. The colours have been matched as opposed to researching the original colour codes. Being a commercial, it would more than likely have been liveried, and it had been painted extremely badly and unfortunately was not in its original paint. However, the paint at the very bottom was the same colour as it has been sprayed. Craig says, "it's as right as he can get it". The paintwork was carried out by Holdcroft Auto Bodies. Just to top it off (because there obviously wasn't enough work to do already), he decided to do all the woodwork himself and completely rebuild the load bed and frame.

The interior was 100% there.

They picked up a few little missing parts along the way, mainly just interior door handles and winders. Craig had a berg shifter made and etched with a Tempo logo and with bit of struggling it works a treat.

The Finishing Details

The 30hp motor previously bolted in was been removed, being replaced by a Late Bay 1600tp, fitted with a Late Beetle Box using ZF outputs.

They had a 46-hour solid stint on the night before

Volksworld, Craig says, "He really couldn't have pulled it off without the amazing team and stamina to stick through, with only the promise of more pizza". Believe it or not, the truck was still being painted the day before

I saw Craig at the show and I will genuinely say I have never seen him or anyone so tired.

The things we do to get cars to shows are unreal. He has had to be a restoration expert, a Tempo research historian, parts finder, mechanic, painter, joiner and fabricator, and still find time to run a successful business. I would like to say a massive Hayburner “Hats off” to the whole LimeBug crew.

Was it all worth it? ... Well, just look at it!

THE SHOW SCENE

Having

Crusing the shows over the next couple of years on and off and causing a mix of: controversy, confusion and much appreciated admiration, was to be this little trucks future.

From a barn in the dusty outback of Australia, to gracing the polished show floors at:

- Volksworld (Twice)
- Fitted UK
- Spa (Le Bug Show), (Twice)
- Ultimate Stance
- Ultimate Dubs
- NEC Classic Car Show
- Ultrace

LIMEBUG

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE DETAILS

TRIBUTE BUILDS Some great little Fan Builds of our Tempo Matador