

BIG RED

TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY BRIAN McCORMICK



CRAIG ELDER

Fallbrook, CA
2000 Ford F-350

TRUCK

BIGGER & BADDER

CAN ACTUALLY
DOMINATE THE
CUSTOM
TRUCK WORLD



Anyone who has been around the custom truck scene for a while probably has heard of a guy named Craig Elder. If you haven't, then it is quite possible you have missed out on seeing some of the most outrageous vehicles built over the past seven years. Craig has always been one to go way out there on a limb and do things more extreme than the next guy. While there have been a few body dropped Bowties to drag their way from his creative garage, the most impressive for many folks have been the list of absolutely crazy lifted trucks. If memory escapes you, does a giant orange Excursion, bright yellow Hummer or the incredible yellow and purple crew cab Chevy with a Caddy front end joggle your memory? Amazingly enough, that is only half of the metal monsters with Elder's name attached.

The giant red Ford beast you see before you is actually a reconstructed version of the truck completed about four years ago. Craig wasn't happy with the overall appearance and functions of the truck and wanted to take it more than a few leaps ahead. Basically the 2000 Ford Super Duty was taken apart and reconstructed with a bunch of new ideas. Most of those can be found on the chassis.

It should be quite evident this chassis is far and beyond what you would expect to see on your daily trip to work, or even at most shows. Craig had the guys at Temecula Rods & Customs start from scratch on the chassis. The frame had al-



▲ A peak from the rear reveals some of the nine Kicker amplifiers mounted to cross bars of the chrome roll cage. The bodies of the amps have been powdercoated red to match the exterior.

▼ There are a total of six monitors installed in the cab, one of which is a giant 13-inch model nestled between the two 7-inch Rosen models in the sun visors.

► A pair of leather-trimmed bucket seats in the rear are divided by a massive vertical subwoofer enclosure designed around a pair of Kicker Solo X 18-inch subwoofers powered by 10,000 watts of juice.





◀ The entire dash has been smoothed out and painted to match the exterior as well as the custom made fiberglass center console. The seats are two tone tan leather featuring red flamed stitching. Of course, with a truck this high, a multi-point chrome plated roll cage is a nice security feature.



ready been stripped and painted once by Gonzalo's Auto Body, but all the new work meant everything would need to be painted again after the extensive suspension work was completed. You probably can notice this isn't your ordinary truck suspension. In fact, it isn't something you will see often on a truck of any kind. Craig and the guys at Temecula Rods & Customs designed and built the front and rear cantilever four-link suspension set up with rides on Firestone air bags to smooth out the ride as well as provide massive ride height adjustment. The top bars of the four link systems host the air bag mounting locations which then mount to pads welded to the frame. The lower bars straddle giant traction bars whose long lengths coming from the front and rear meet in the middle.

The front suspension system, while functionally the same as the rear, is quite different than the back end. Front and rear Sway-A-Way sway bar systems have been created to stabilize the giant Ford with the front bars mimicking the massive tubular and dimple die track bars. The rear sway bar mounts with thick end links and heim joints to the top four link bar, then continue down to the Xtreme Fabrication-built axle housings which were assembled by IMZZ Industries. The axle housings are damn near bulletproof thanks to near total truss and plated encapsulation.

Oh yes, there is more. With such a massive lift, the steering system was swapped out for a Lee Manufacturing hydraulic cross-over steering system to easily handle the massive size and weight of the behemoth Goodyear 53x19.5/24 inch tires surrounding 24-inch Oasis Ludacris wheels. The functioning four-wheel drive requires the use of high angle driveline shafts mated to an NP205 divorce mounted transfer case while three Viair compressors and eight Parker valves feed the air suspension system. Finalizing the suspension magic was the installation of four 14-inch travel King reservoir shocks in the front along with four

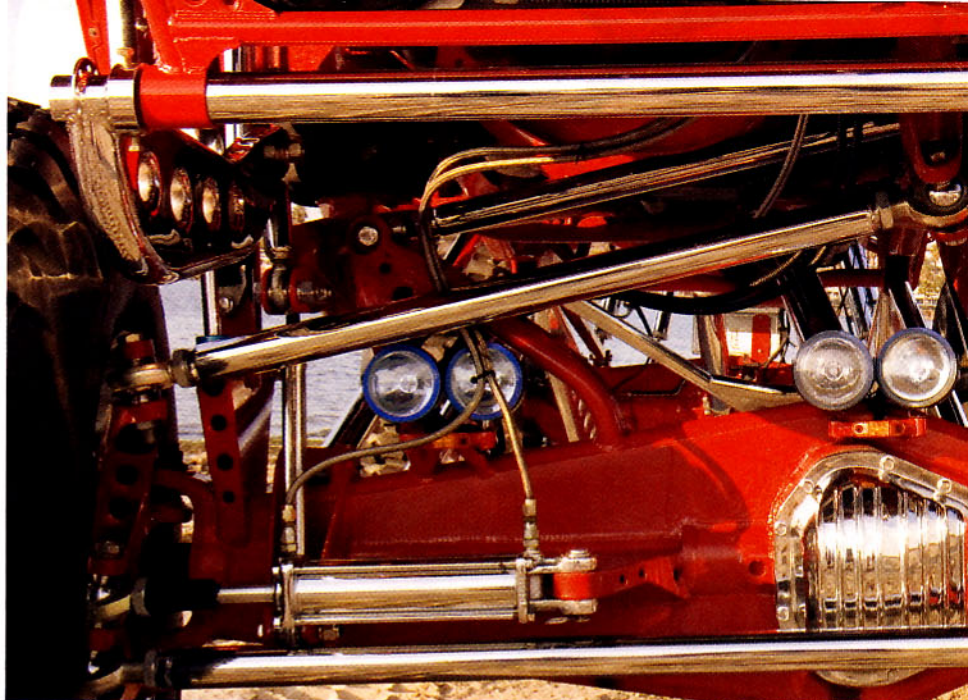
more in the rear. Of course, since this truck is no where near legal, depending on the mood of the officer, Craig went so far as to have functioning taillights mounted into the axle trusses along with APC driving lights and turn signals mounted to the front axle. When the total custom chassis construction was complete, every part was either powdercoated red by Olympic Coating or chrome plated by Long Beach Plating.

To solve the dilemma of actually getting in and out of the giant Ford, Craig had a set of Kodiak retractable steps lengthened so they would extend down enough to be able to get a decent foot on the chrome plated assembly. Even with the longer steps, it is still hard to get up into this beast.

Powering Elder's big red truck is a 7.4-liter Ford diesel. While the factory diesel is probably strong enough to lug this big truck around quite efficiently, Craig decided to pump up performance by a large margin thanks to an Edge programmer teamed with a Gibson custom exhaust system. Now the powerplant is more than capable of some crankin' power that really comes to life thanks to 5.13 axle gears.

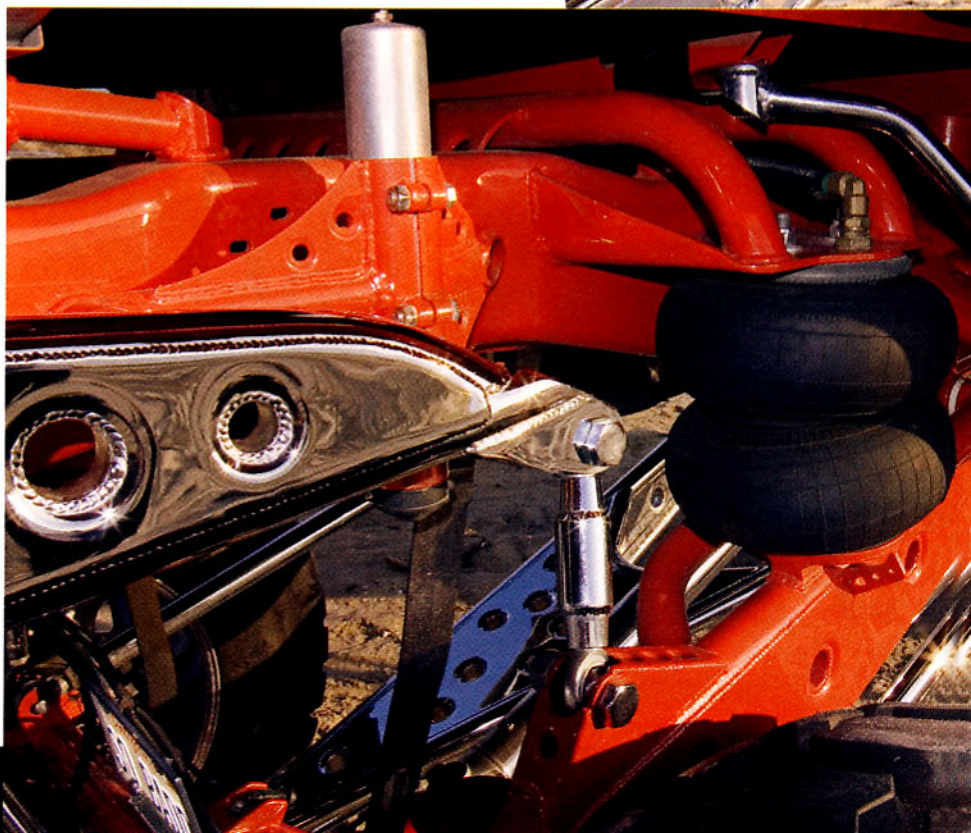
Above the bright red and chrome jungle gym suspension is an equally impressive Super Duty crew cab body. Craig wanted the truck to look as smooth as possible and thus, had New Image Autobody & Paint remove the taillights, tailgate handle, side marker lights and headlights, along with shaving the trim and emblems while the previous areas were filled in. A molded Sir Mike's roll pan replaces the rear bumper and helps to provide the smooth appearance in the rear. Up front the front bumper was smoothed out and graced with a Trenz insert to match the custom phantom grille that Trenz constructed to cover up the entire front end opening. From there the door handles and mirrors were smoothed out to match the body, followed by repainting the entire truck the factory Ford red.

You'll also find plenty of red inside the cab. The entire dash has been smoothed out to match the smoothed and fiber-glassed door panels. This was done to match an AS Customs-built fiberglass center console that extends back to a massive vertical fiberglass subwoofer enclosure nestled between the two rear bucket seats. The



▲ As you can see, the suspension set up on this beast is just crazy. The design floats on Firestone air bags connected to a cantilever four-link set up. Lee Manufacturing hydraulic steering, customized Sway-A-Way sway bars and APC lights mounted to the trussed axle housing are just a few of the massive custom mods done to the suspension

▼ Here is a better look at the wild cantilever four link set up in the rear. Temecula Rods & Customs spent countless hours crafting this intricate set up that allows the truck to ride nice while being able to raise and lower it over 12 inches.





▲ The headlights and grille shell have been removed and replaced with a grille that Trenz custom made to take the shape of the front end.

stery work, he also installed a total of six video monitors. Two seven-inch Rosen monitors were installed into the seat head rests along with two into the front visors. Another seven-inch Rosen was flush mounted into the now smooth dash while a much larger 13-inch flip down version was mounted to the headliner.

Audio 2000 took care of most of the wiring duties which included mating a Pioneer DVD head unit to the system as well as incorporating a Sony Playstation into the entertainment mix. Olympic Plating hooked up the red powdercoating

treatment seen on the amplifiers and Solo X subwoofers which really does a nice job of blending the sound system components into the rich red theme of the truck. Topping off the list is the patented wild red and silver flamed window tint courtesy of the crew at House of Tints.

As with any super exotic custom creation like this, there are more than a few items that will be failed to be mentioned. There is just so much on this truck that it would take days just to mention every single modification. Anyone who has had the opportunity to see Craig's big red truck in

person knows just what I am talking about. While this is definitely not a custom project that most people will have the time or money to accomplish, it does give you some great ideas on what it takes to make a truck truly unique. And I can guarantee you that this giant Super Duty is on the very short list of the truly unique custom lifted trucks that roam the show scene, as well as the popular off roading dunes on the weekend. If you want to get noticed in today's custom atmosphere, you better go big, or go home. **TEN**



spacey looking enclosure hosts a pair of 18-inch Kicker subwoofers, with 10,000 watts going individually to each subwoofer while another 2,500 watts of Kicker power going to the four and five inch mid range separates and six inch mid-bass Kicker speakers mounted into the custom door panels. In case you are bad at math, that is 22,500 watts of power coming from nine Kicker amps mounted to the Xtreme Fabrication-built, chrome plated roll cage in a manner that makes them appear to be mounted to the gray tweed headliner stitched up by the Custom Factory. Mike Cox at Custom Factory also installed the tan leather upholstery featuring red flamed stitching to match insert panels made for the door panels. While Mike was tending to the uphol-

◀ The massive suspension lift dwarfs the giant 53-inch tall Goodyear tires mounted to custom made 24-inch Oasis wheels which are actually two wheels welded together to provide the necessary diameter to match the tires.



