



BUILDING PARTS & PRIZE-WINNING CARS AT SCOTT'S HOT RODS

Justin Padfield started Scott's Hot Rods when he was in his early twenties. Sixteen years later, he has a successful parts business, a reputation for building high-quality custom hot rods and two AMBR Award wins under his belt.

BY: ASHLEY MAJESKI SMISSEN | PHOTOS: HENRY DE KUYPER

People called him crazy when he said he was going to open a hot rod shop even though he was barely out of his teens. They called him nuts when he asked to sign a 20-year lease for the building that would house his shop. And people called him downright loony when he began building another car to compete for America's Most Beautiful Roadster just days after winning the award the first time.

Now people just call Justin Padfield if they want him to build them an award-winning hot rod.

"All of my career people have been calling me crazy," says Justin, who opened Oxnard, California-based Scott's Hot Rod shop when he was only 24 years old. "At this point it kind of drives me."

Over the last 16 years, Justin has managed to prove his critics wrong. Today, his shop (named for his middle name, Scott) now has 18 full-time employees, includes a full parts store and has earned a reputation for churning out exquisite, eye-popping hot rods.

Justin started his journey into the hot rod industry at the age of 14 when, while working at his dad's motorcycle shop, he built a 1932 Ford roadster for one of his dad's customers.

"He trusted me to build it even though I was really young," Justin said.

A dedicated athlete in his youth, Justin had always planned to play baseball, but a career-ending injury at the age of 19 forced him to look at other job options. His father eventually convinced him to come to work at his motorcycle shop for two years.

"During that time I realized I wanted to work on cars," he said. "I told my dad that I planned to open my own hot rod shop and his first response to me was, 'Why?' He thought I was crazy."

Crazy or not, Justin knew what he wanted. While driving down the freeway near his house one day, Justin saw a building he knew would be perfect to use for his shop. He called the owner and made a very strange request.

"I asked him to give me a 20-year lease!" he said. "Here I was, this crazy kid, asking him to rent me his building for 20 years."

He didn't get the 20-year lease, but he did get the building.

"I ended up staying there for 13 years until we outgrew it," Justin said.

His shop became successful—so successful, in fact, that he actually got in over his head at one point.

"We just grew too fast. During the years of about 2000 to 2004, we went through growing pains," he said. "We just did too much. We built a truck for TLC's reality show *Rides* in 90 days, which was just crazy. In one month, we sold 170 front ends. But it got to the point that we were getting further and further behind."

Eventually, Justin decided to totally reinvent his company, cutting down in both staff and the number of products and cars he produced, concentrating on quality rather than quantity. It's a formula that has worked well for the young entrepreneur. In addition to developing a thriving parts company, he took home the AMBR (America's Most Beautiful Roadster)



Justin Padfield, owner of Scott's Hot Rods, and some of his shop's 18 employees, stand in front of the Chevy C-10 truck that is being built as Goodguys' 2015 Giveaway Truck.



The walls of Scott's Hot Rods document the shop's history. Framed magazine articles and renderings that showcase some of the shop's most notorious builds fill the halls.

FABRICATION



Justin's brother, Tyler Padfield, is a member of the shop's fabrication team. Part of his job is performing quality assurance on the parts the shop manufactures.



Scott's Hot Rods manufactures a full line of hot rod products. Nearly all the parts and raw goods used for the shop's builds are made at the Oxnard shop or its machine shop, which is located in nearby Camarillo, California.



"One of my passions is buying equipment for the shop," Justin said, adding that he is always looking for his next piece of machinery. "I like to put my money back into my business by investing in new equipment."

award in 2008 and again in 2010. Those builds helped establish his shop as one of the industry's major players.

"Our first win really showed people the level of build that our shop is capable of," he said.

Oddly, that car, a metallic-beige completely custom 1932 roadster built for customer Rudy Necoechea, is still at Justin's shop, six years after its big win.

"I can't get him to take it home!" he said of the car, which was named "Undisputed." "The owner has never even sat in it! He wanted a car that would get his name on the [AMBR] trophy. That's really what he wanted.

And for me, as a builder, that was a big dream for me and all of us at the shop. It was on our bucket list."

Justin wasn't the only person in the area with the goal of winning the AMBR. Just one day after his big win, another customer came into his shop and congratulated him.

"I told him 'Thanks, but that's old news.' He was kind of surprised, because we had just won the award literally the night before. But I was already on to the next big thing," he said.

The shop's "next big thing" turned out to involve that customer, car

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IN THE SHOP



The shop's current projects include a 1950 custom Mercury, a radical 1934 Ford pickup truck, a completely customized 1972 'Cuda, and a 1954 Chevy Bel Air.



"I always try to build the next one better," Justin says of the cars his shop builds. "You're only as good as your customer lets you be, though."



collector Mike Dingman. He would go on to build a regal 1933 Ford roadster for him, which earned him the second AMBR win of his career. While he calls the wins "extremely gratifying," Justin says it's unlikely he will try to win the award for a third time.

"I've done it, I've been able to cross it off my bucket list," he said. "Now I am focusing on other things."

One of Justin's biggest focuses today is his ever-expanding parts business. Some people thought he was crazy when he built an airbag independent front suspension for a customer's truck. As usual, his "crazy idea" proved to be anything but.

"The parts business is something we are very proud of," he said, adding that his company now manufactures everything from firewalls to column drops to transmission mounts. "That's really been the focus of our business."

But make no mistake—Scott's Hot Rods is no fancy parts showroom.

"This is a hot rod shop, this is not a parts shop with a coffee bar and couches," he said. "We are very much a hot rod shop that builds from the ground-up."

Despite the success of the parts business, Justin says he will never stop working on cars.

"At the end of the day, I still love to work on the cars, and I get to do what I love to do every day. It's just so gratifying to get to see the customers' faces when their cars are completed. I'll sell you washers and bolts, or build you a whole car. No job is too small or too big."

All of the cars built at the shop feature the shop's products. In fact, 98 percent of the products and raw goods being used were built in-house at Scott's Hot Rods. Padfield said he's proud that he's been able to keep the price points down and quality level high for his products, while keeping the production in the United States.

"That's really what this whole thing's about," he said. "Keeping it

GOODGUYS 1970 G/10 GIVEAWAY TRUCK

The shop is currently building this 1970 Chevrolet C-10 truck, which will make its debut in July at the Goodguys 17th PPG Nationals. The build team took the original design done by Eric Black and modified it to suit their vision for the truck.



"We all decided that we are going to build something over the top that people will remember forever," Justin said of the Giveaway Truck's radical design. The truck will feature a paint job by Palmer's Customs and an interior by Ron Mangus.



WINNING BUILDS



The shop built this 1965 Ford Mustang Fastback for customer Ryan Venturine. The car, known as "Vendetta," features a 600 horsepower 427 FE Roush motor and absolutely no fiberglass.



This 1934 Ford coupe was hand built by Scott's Hot Rods using flat sheet metal. It features an injected 454 big block motor.

CONTACT

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American-made is very important."

Many members of Justin's team have been with him for over 12 years. He now employs 18 people (including four staff members that work in a separate machine shop location nearby.) His 21 year-old brother, Tyler, works at the shop in the parts department.

"The people I have here now are all assets to my company," he said. "This whole company is run by a team; it's a total joint effort."

Their next big project definitely requires a lot of team work. The shop was commissioned to build the Goodguys 2015 Giveaway Truck. Designed by Eric Black, the radical 1970 Chevrolet C-10 will make its debut at the 17th PPG Nationals in Columbus, Ohio in July. After a year-long tour around the county, the truck will be given away to one lucky Goodguys member in 2015. For Justin, it is another dream project for his shop.

"Trucks are my passion, and we were really given free rein to build it

how we wanted to," he said.

The truck, which will sit very low—only 4 inches off the ground!—will be full of modifications, including a chopped top, reshaped bed radius, recessed grill and headlights, side exit exhaust, raised bumpers, and a reduced drip rail, to name just a few.

"We went a little overboard, I'll admit!" Justin said. "But for me it's really an opportunity to build this truck and go out and promote it and promote our shop. The truck [goes] on tour for one full year before it is given away. They're going to drive it like crazy which is great to show off our parts. You honestly can't get better promotion than that! It's a great opportunity to show what Scott's Hot Rods can do."

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