

Sleek contours of the Davis car are displayed in side views above and upper left. The body, hand-built by Emil Deidt, has no doors. Instead entry is obtained into the tight driver compartment aircraft-style, by stepping over the panels

ALMOST AIRBORNE

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY WAYNE THOMS

PRACTICALLY airborne seems to be the simplest way to describe the aluminum bodied custom belonging to Air Force Officer Jim Davis of Manhattan Beach, Calif. An unusual true custom, this super-aerodynamic roadster is the brain-child of former aircraft manufacturer Larry Timm, who designed and built it over a three year period ending in 1948. Even though it was completed and in running order, the car saw little practical service for the next three or four years except as a showpiece at occasional auto exhibitions until it was purchased in 1952 by Davis and first registered for road use.

And what a road machine it is. Performance is almost as fantastic as the appearance. The unusual seating position—well forward in a tiny aircraft type cockpit that is a squeeze for two people—adds to the illusion of near flight on wheels. Acceleration can't help but be impressive when you consider the total weight of 2200 pounds coupled to a '48 Buick engine which has been hopped up to develop in the region of 200 h.p. Although no clocked figures are available, a top speed of 120 mph should be no problem.

As anyone who has ever built a roadster or hopped up a stock car knows, performance alone can be dangerous unless handling characteristics are built in at the time of construction or are altered to suit. Fortunately, this car has the essential ingredients—precise steering, flat cornering, positive brakes—all necessary safety factors which are too important to overlook. Suspension is through conventional transverse leaf springs front and rear with tubular shocks all around. A De Dion type rear axle provides independent suspension for the rear wheels, needed because the engine, transmission and differential are in line, virtually as a unit, with no drive shaft separating transmission and rear end. If this is confusing, remember that the engine is in the rear, the only thing in front

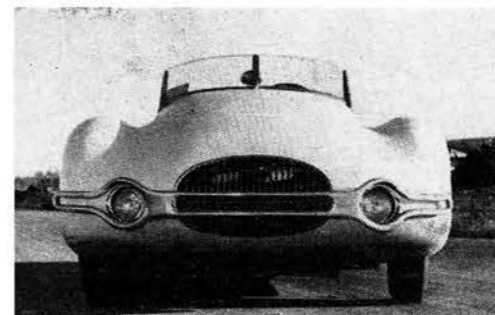
of the driver and passenger being the radiator which, incidentally, mounts a small electric fan for auxiliary cooling.

Chassis construction is unique, definitely showing an aircraft influence. First impression on opening the hydraulically operated hood—actually the rear half of the car hinged at the center—is that you are looking at the hydraulic system of an airplane with its maze of lines, tanks and fittings. The frame rails are built from four-inch diameter steel tubing that also serves as pressure tank to power a raucous sounding pair of air horns. A 12-inch high frame kick-up at the rear allows the full belly pan on the underside of the car a scant six inches ground clearance.

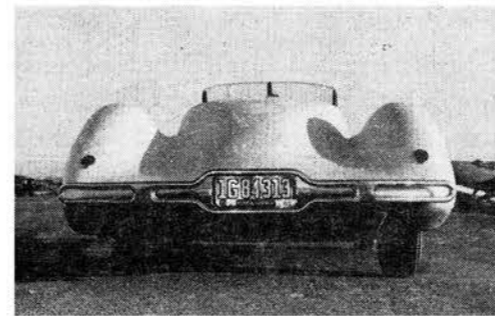
The car appears lengthy—and is. Actually, wheelbase is only 115 inches, but an extensive overhang at the rear together with the flowing fender lines and a total height, exclusive of the plexiglass windshield, of 39 inches, gives the appearance of great length. It is fortunate that the car is low since, like many open aircraft, there are no doors. One step built into each side of the body and you go over the top into the narrow, tan leather seat that faces an array of Stewart-Warner instruments surpassing many light planes in sheer numbers if not in practicality. Speedometer, tachometer, manifold vacuum, hydraulic pressure, air pressure (for the horns), oil pressure, water temperature, ammeter, and gasoline plus a control lever for raising the hood, make for a full panel. Steering column and ignition lock are Ford but power and drive mechanisms are basically '48 Buick including engine, transmission, differential, clutch, steering and brakes.

An aluminum body, hand-built by Emil Deidt, reputedly cost Timm \$8,000. The unusual airfoil shapes and curves had to be formed in panels and welded together and the fact that the panel joints cannot be seen on the outside and are virtually invisible underside shows the builder's craftsmanship.

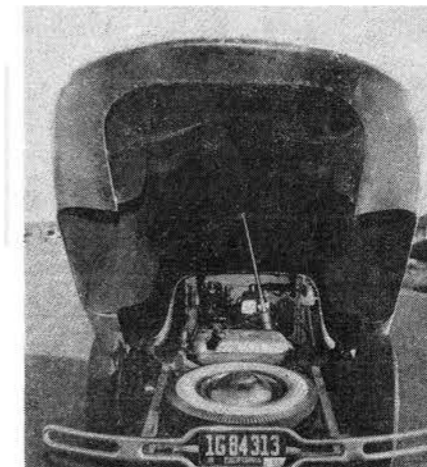
HERE IS A SLEEK CUSTOM THAT HAS LOOKS PLUS TOPS IN PERFORMANCE



Frontal view above shows clean appearance of grille treatment with headlights recessed into the simple but functional bumpers for a neat and novel effect

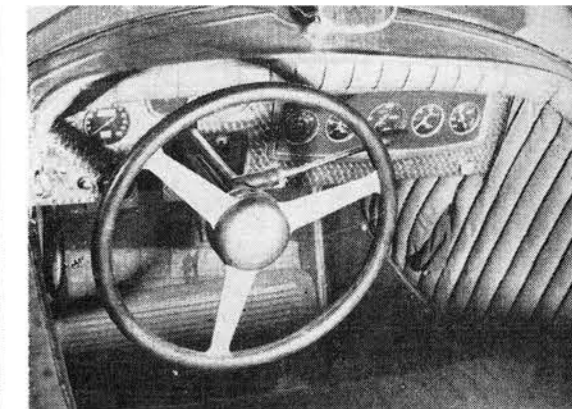


The rear view below emphasizes the 39-inch overall height of the car and gives a ground-hugging look. Clearance is adequate for normal road conditions



Rear half of body serves as hydraulically operated hood for access to running gear. Extensive overhang accommodates the spare tire between the frame rails

Photo below shows suspension and the four-inch diameter steel tubing for frame



Cockpit, which is barely large enough for two persons, faces an extraordinary array of instruments, but no oil temperature gauge. Steering column, which mounts the gear shift, is from a Ford

Side view of car with rear portion of body raised emphasizes the extensive overhang and the tapering design. Actual wheelbase of car is only 115 inches

