

RAT ROD ROAD RUN

Rat Rod Addiction describes their ethos: Building rat rods is a therapy. A person can take an old car or truck and bring it back to life, while showing their personality and creativity at the same time. It may come from an old barn or farm field, battered from years of use and neglect, now reborn to make its bold comeback, and there's no right or wrong look. It's all up to what's available and the builder's imagination.

The hardest part is finding that perfect car or truck that fits you. From there, you can fabricate many parts with just a grinder and 120 welder. The parts you can't fab, you should be able to pick up on eBay, Craigslist, wrecking and scrap yards, and back yards. With family and friends, when it comes to finding parts, the hunt is half the fun. The time involved is another story. For every hour of hands-on work, you might spend four hours scratching your head on how to make it work. As for paint, just let mother nature give her touch.

There are many different opinions on what makes up a rat rod. Some builders order their parts, assemble them, give it a vintage paint job and then call it a rat rod. Rat rod purists are not so sure about that approach, though they're finding that the popularity of rat rods is creating a market where old school, pull-off parts—the blood of a traditional rat rod—are getting ridiculously expensive and harder to find.

"I'm sure the rodder in you can see yourself building a ride of your own," say the folks at Rat Rod Addiction, "and believe me, you can."

One of the last events we caught before things went into fairly total lockdown over the coronavirus pandemic was a Rat Rod Addiction cruise to Canyon Lake from Apache Junction, in March. Rat rods—described by the group as “family backyard builds”—have long caught our eye. We may even have the bug.

The group gathered at Fry's supermarket in AJ in the morning, then headed caravan-style up AZ Highway 88 to Canyon Lake (the second-up of the Saguaro-Canyon-Apache-Roosevelt series), about a 15-mile drive featuring classic cactus and canyon scenery, plenty of twisties and elevation changes, smooth pavement and an open road.

(Actually, traffic picked up quite a bit as the day wore on—turns out we weren't the only people thinking we'd have the whole thing to ourselves these days.)

Building rat rods is the group's hobby, but they've also created a Rat Rod Addiction line of shirts, hats, hoodies, goodies and other accessories, found at www.ratrodaddiction.com. You can also follow things on Facebook and YouTube at @ratrodaddiction.

With quarantine rules amped up since then, this summer's events have been cancelled or postponed. Up next, as of now, is their 4th Annual Cruise to the Pines, centered around Pinetop-Lakeside in the White Mountains of Arizona, September 25-27, 2020. Other events are also already on the calendar for 2021. ■

