

T For Two

When Henry Ford announced his Model T in the Autumn of 1908, the most incredible motor vehicle the world has ever known was born. In fact, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the Model T rendered the horse obsolete almost overnight. Built by very advanced mass-production methods, and sold in vast numbers at rock-bottom prices, the austere, gawky looking Fords were soon a universal sight on the roads of America and the world. Apart from its low price and reliability, the real secret of the Model T was its fantastic adaptability.

A TWO-TON truck was merely the standard car chassis, lengthened slightly, and with a few extra leaves in the rear spring! There were 'Model T' fire-engines, ambulances, tipper trucks, school buses, farm wagons, airport vehicles (anybody remember the 'Hucks Starters?') not to mention a host of car body styles. Despite, or perhaps because of, its amazing versatility, the 'Model T' became the affectionate subject of Music Hall comedians and the 'star' of popular songs and early silent films. Even the term 'car' seemed inadequate to describe it, and the 'T's were known by the American public as 'Flivvers' or 'Jitney Buses'!

Throughout its production life of nearly nineteen years, the 'Model T' changed very little, only details like the radiator shell and wings being modernised from time to time. By the mid 'twenties, however, the winds of change were blowing hard in the auto-

mobile world, and even Henry Ford was feeling the draught. When the 'Model T' finally ceased production in 1927, outdated, over-bodied, and still with wooden-spoked wheels and no front brakes, over *fifteen million* had been made!

The Dinky Toys 'Model T' represents a pre-1917 car, with a rather dashing two-seat 'Runabout' body, complete with passengers. Finished in dark blue, it is a very pretty little model, and being a 'T', it is a sitting target for the conversion addict. In fact, you could safely give it almost any kind of body—with so many prototypes to choose from, you could hardly be wrong! We decided to transform our 'T' into a typical light delivery van of the pre-first war period. This conversion job proved very easy to do, and, as the photographs show, has completely altered the 'atmosphere' of the standard model. What's more, the job entails no 'surgery' of the original body at

all, and the van structure can be made easily removable in order to convert 'commercial' back to 'private' again.

The photographs and sketches will give you a good idea of how we set about building the van body. The sides and back of the body are cut from card in one piece, the rear corners being scored and folded. The two oval door windows in the back panel are best cut out with a sharp knife before folding. At this stage, make sure that the wheel arches in the body sides fit snugly over the car's rear mudguards. Next, cut a 'false' roof from 3/32in. balsa sheet, 1½ in. wide and 2½ in. long. Make it taper slightly so that it is only about 1¼ in. wide at the front edge. Fit the false roof to the body, so that the top edges of the panels are flush with the top surface of the balsa (see photo 2).

The roof proper is shaped with sandpaper from 3/16 in. balsa sheet, and the sketches

By John Brewer



will give an indication of the shape required. In plan, the roof is the same shape exactly as the false roof, but 1/16 in. shorter to allow a rebate at the front edge to take the headboard. As can be seen in the full-size sketch, the front in elevation tapers or drops towards the front, to almost a feather edge, and the corners of the sides of the roof should be gently rounded off with sandpaper to form a tight-radius curve. (Coachbuilders call this edge the 'cove panel'.) When the roof is shaped to your satisfaction, stick it to the false roof, remembering the 1/16 in. rebate at the front edge. The next job is to fill the grain of the roof with sanding sealer, giving several coats and sanding between each. Try to get a really super finish on the roof—small models are usually viewed from above!

The mouldings on the body side panels, which on the full-size van covered the joins in the various sheets, are cut from paper in one piece (see photo 4). The mouldings are 1/16 in. wide, and all your reserves of patience will be required here! Use good quality paper and a sharp knife. When sticking the mould-

ings to the body sides, be very careful not to get cement in the wrong places.

The headboard and rear-board are now cut from card and cemented in place, and a short bulkhead fixed inside the body to strengthen it. The almost completed van body should slide easily onto the car 'chassis' and the transformation is almost complete. The car's windscreen will need extending upwards to meet the roof, and this is easily done using celluloid sheet with a card frame. We painted our van body with blue enamel to match the bonnet and doors of the car. Mouldings were picked out in black, and edged with a fine yellow line, applied with a Rowney No. 1 brush. Unfortunately, the lining has entirely disappeared in the pictures! The roof is finished in white, and the name boards along the sides in bright red. 'Period' posters, from which names can be cut, are available, but our local model shop was shut, so we made up a name by cutting up a matchbox! Whatever you do, don't use modern lettering, as it would look quite wrong.

Model T Ford Technical Specification.

Maker's horse power:	20.
Number of cylinders:	4.
Bore and stroke:	3¼ in. x 4 in.
Engine Capacity:	2.9 litres.
Valves:	side.
Wheelbase:	8 ft. 4 in.
Forward Speeds:	two.
Tyres:	760 x 90.

1 The completed van body standing beside the car. Note the extension of the car's windscreen, and the short strengthening bulkhead between the sides of the body itself.

2 Fitting the false roof of ¼ in. balsa between the card sides of the body.

3 Applying a coat of sanding sealer to the shaped balsa roof. Note the small rebate at the front edge of the roof to take the headboard.

4 This view shows the mouldings for the body side panels being cut from paper. A really sharp knife is essential for this operation and you should always cut such thin strips over a hard, smooth surface. A soft one (such as balsa) will certainly result in spoil strips.

Below: side and rear elevations of the van body are drawn full size. The exploded sketch shows the general construction. a—headboard. b—balsa roof. c—rear-board. d—false roof. e—oval rear windows. f—tab bent under.

