

## GMP 1:18-scale 1934 Ford So-Cal Coupe Ltd. Ed. of 3000

**J**im Gray and Russell Lanthorne of SO-CAL Speed Shop built the highly modified '34 Coupe to run at Bonneville in 1951 and also to run at the dragstrip. From there, I'm sure the two men had no idea what an enduring and



checked history their creation would have. In 1952, Alex Xydias bought the coupe, dropped in a super-charged '48 Merc flathead and ran it in 1953. It topped 177-mph on the flats, setting the C Competition Coupe/Sedan record. At the drags, it ran 121-mph quarter miles, setting the NHRA B Modified record. In 1954, with a more radical chop and new Ardun heads, the engine made 460 hp and turned in 132-mph quarter mile runs. It was dubbed "The Double Threat Coupe" by *Hot Rod Magazine*. Then, tragedy struck and the car burned due to a clutch explosion, along with driver Dave DeLangton, who later died from his injuries. Xydias sold the car to John Moxley, who repaired it and ran it as "Miss 400" at Bonneville. In 1956, the coupe was then sold to Jerry Eisert, who kept it until 1969 and sold it to Jim Travis. Travis ran it at the drags in the late '70s and at Bonneville until 1996! Before it was retired, the amazing coupe ran a respectable 236-mph, running with a blown Chevy engine. Its competition days were not done, however. Sold once again to Don Orosco, it was painstakingly restored to its 1954 specs, including the Ardun heads. In 2001, at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance Historical Hot Rod Coupe Class, the veteran road warrior went up against Art Christian's Model A and the Pierson Brothers Coupe. Not surprisingly, fifty years after it was first pushed into life on the Bonneville Salt Flats by its service truck, the little coupe won its class.

Make no mistake—this 1:18 scale model ain't some K-Mart item—we're talking DETAILS here! And they really shine in the larger scale. Nuts, bolts, fasteners, and other smaller details really stand out. You can really appreciate the innovations of the designers. There's so much to look at, I hardly know where to begin. When I took the image out of the box, and turned it over to remove the plastic retaining strips, I immediately noticed the brushed aluminum belly pan, that runs from just in front of the doors to the rear of the body—sharp! There's also a white-painted pan under the engine. Topside, starting from the nose, by lifting the double-hinged hood panels (for which there are two notches in the cowl in which to rest the bottom edges), you'll see some astonishing engine details. I do believe GMP's included just about every hose, pipe, and wire on the 1:1 coupe—including the speedometer cable that connects to the back of the gauge panel! In fact, there's a line that runs to each of the other gauges! The interior's the same—a wealth of fine detail. I suggest you read the care and handling instructions, for you might not intuit that the rear-hinged doors open by turning the handle! This is a feature I've not seen on any image thus far—what a neat trick! The trunk lid affixes by three magnets, since there were no hinges—the original screwed on (shown by simulated screw heads, with slots, painted on the lid). Lift it off and you can see the fuel tank, and other rear interior details. Sticking out the back, like on the 1:1 car, is a single bracket (no,

the right side's not missing) for pushing the vehicle—no starter, you see. A few standout items: One, you can really see the detail on the super-charger assembly, enough to figure out how it works. Two, inside the cockpit, next to the driver, is a large, yellow tank. Simply reading the clearly legible printing on the side tells you it's an alcohol tank for the primitive fuel mixture system. Three, GMP packs a large-format booklet that's a features, handling, and care guide for the 1:18 image, as well as a wealth of information on the 1:1 vehicle. GMP sure seems to be out to please the collector. One little nit to pick: Though the literature says the model has working suspensions, I noticed very little play on my image. This may be a weak design, a flaw in my example, or that the 1:1 coupe rode like a buckboard wagon. No matter—it's not a big deal.

GMP has taken the humble 1:18 image, once relegated to the realm of “cheapie” toy store items, into new territory. So, is this image worth the \$149.95 price? Yes, indeed. Aside from the fact you get a larger image, with oodles of detail, this stunning replica undeniably invades the kingdom of the “precision” 1:24 scale images. Though I don't usually collect 1:18 images, the appeal of this beauty cannot be denied. GMP seems to have the knack of doing things right. I can't think of a more fitting tribute to a truly unique modified car—the 1934 SO-CAL Coupe—at home on the Bonneville Salt Flats AND the dragstrip for 40-plus years!

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