

CLASSIC DRIVER

[This rather ratty Rolls-Royce is a derelict Icon](#)

Lead

On a deserted and dusty canyon road high above Los Angeles, a majestic yet, on closer inspection, rather tired-looking Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud blasts past a lone cyclist in an eruption of V8 thunder and tyre smoke. Something doesn't quite add up...

Why should we be worried about using our classic cars? It's a question that Jonathan Ward, founder of the cult California customisation brand [Icon](#), found himself asking a lot in the early days of his personal classic car history.



"I would worry about that first scratch or parking lot ding and I ended up tiptoeing around my cars," he recalls. "It negatively impacted on how much I used them and, at the end of the day, the whole point is that they're functioning sculptures."

Equally, he didn't really see the point of restoring old cars to the nth degree - factory specification mechanicals on a 70-year-old car are, after all, out-dated. "I realised I have no patience for archaic mechanical experiences, either" Ward comments. "I love the perversions of modern cars and all their functionality, from creature comforts to safety and emissions standards."



So, prompted by his attitude and freed from the constraints of what people said was the 'right' way of going about such activities, Ward built the very first Icon Derelict - a rather beat up looking 1952 DeSoto Station Wagon that he still cherishes and uses today. "I wanted a car that I didn't need to worry about - something I could use for swap meets or taking my dogs to the park or my kids to the skate park. It's the perfect storm for me!"

Given the explosive increase in demand for classic cars over the past decade, it was perhaps inevitable that people soon took note of Ward's Derelict and began to understand the philosophy behind it. And so, as a result, he began offering these ultra-patinated classics, which are teeming with cleverly concealed modern technology, to his customers.



This rather ratty 1958 Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud is one of Ward's more recent commissions. He'd always wanted to build a Derelict Rolls, predominantly because he used to own a Silver Cloud, but also just to rattle a few purists' cages. Imagine his delight then, when the car's Australian owner asked him to build a car with which he could disrupt his brother's traditional Rolls-Royce club meetings.

"It's a bit like when everyone's wearing a Tuxedo and that one guy shows up in a kilt with no underwear on," quips Ward. The duo hunted down a Silver Cloud with an appropriately ironic backstory – it originally belonged to an American cosmetics company, which used it to impress visiting clients, before it was gifted to the CEO as a retirement present. "He had a trivial electrical failure so he stored it and it sat neglected for decades."



Mechanically, the Silver Cloud is now fitted with a Chevrolet LS7 V8, independent front suspension, big Brembo brakes, rack-and-pinion steering, and creature comforts such as navigation, air-conditioning, and cruise control, the latter of which are controlled by repurposed Rolls-Royce knobs with period-correct typefaces, installed in a reshaped hardwood dash.

"This car is kick ass to drive," exclaims Ward, excitedly. "When it blasts past at 150kph, people do scratch their heads – the performance and noise don't match the aesthetic and it's that dichotomy that is so much fun for me. It makes people smile. A concours-standard Silver Cloud, on the other hand, brings a lot of assumptions and judgement."

The craftsmanship that's gone into the Rolls is quite remarkable – to create something that looks so, for want of a better word, tatty, but boasts all the usability, functionality, and reliability of a modern car is no mean feat.



"The Derelicts are simply another way of visiting classic transportation design in a modern context," concludes Ward. "Some people get it but a lot of people don't. They ask why they'd spend so much money on something that looks like shit. But when you drive one, it's an entirely different interaction - you lose all the social bullshit and baggage and, above all, you don't tiptoe around it." We wonder what will be next to receive the Derelict treatment - an Hispano-Suiza or a Duesy, perhaps? Why the hell not!



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Gallery

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