



# SPECIAL SURVIVOR

The Volkswagen Beetle is a classic car favourite worldwide, so the chance to restore a rare, oval window '54 model just couldn't be passed up!

## INTRODUCTION

*Resto My Ride* is an all-new TV show created by Declan McKearney and Sam Martin.

The team behind the 'EJ for EJ' resto (featured in *JUST CARS* #237), Dec and Sam have used that project as the basis for 'Resto My Ride'; a series that'll document the restoration of vehicles of all types.

In February, the *Resto My Ride* competition – *Get Resto'd* – was launched, inviting people to submit details on projects (cars, trucks, bikes, boats and more) they'd like to see restored by Dec and the team at Bodymaster Prestige Paint and Panel.

The winners not only get their restoration

documented on *Resto My Ride*, they also get it done for free!

The response to *Get Resto'd* has been outstanding, with thousands of entries received and some great and touching stories behind them. With the winners recently selected and notified, filming is now underway.

Ahead of the *Resto My Ride* series premiere, *JUST CARS* is featuring some of the winners and the stories behind their projects.

For more details on *Resto My Ride*, visit:

[restomyride.com](http://restomyride.com) and check out their social media channels. You can also watch the EJ for EJ episode on: [restomyride.tv](http://restomyride.tv)



## FIRST FLEET

In 1953, the first Volkswagen Beetles reached Australia, with New Zealand receiving the car a year later. The car you're looking at here is believed to be from the very first shipment of Beetles sent to New Zealand in 1954.

Back then, of course, the Beetle was still something of a new – and mistrusted – machine. Memories of World War II were still fresh in '54, with the Volkswagen's Nazi origins known to most, so the Beetle had a battle in establishing itself in Australia and New Zealand.

A win in the Redex Reliability Trial of 1955 helped change those negative perceptions, as did victories in the Ampol and Mobilgas Trials that followed.

By the end of the '50s, the Beetle had become so popular down under that it was being manufactured in Australia (rather than assembled from imported CKD kits) and would continue to be produced here until 1968.

This car is a product of Wolfsburg, though, which makes it – like all the early,

German-built 'split' and 'oval' window Beetles – highly desirable to collectors worldwide. Michael Ryan knows these early Beetles well and knew he'd found something special when he came across this car in New Zealand.

## RED AND GREEN...AND FEW OTHERS

Being from the 'changeover' period between the split and oval window Beetle, Michael's car carries some features of each, making it additionally appealing to classic Beetle enthusiasts.

"I have collected cars, one-by-one, over the past 25 years," Michael says. "Finding them, then slowly gathering the parts and money to restore each one.

"I've had this car sitting in New Zealand for over two years, waiting for an opportunity to bring it back."

The car is straight and solid – a bonus given its age – but has had some dodgy attempts at restoration done in the past.

Originally painted Iceland Green, the car wears a patchwork of colours now, including a respray in red that Michael charitably described as "crappy"! This was the work of a past owner, as was the application of some sort of roofing sealant to the Beetle's floorpan, but Michael's ensured the car doesn't deteriorate further with a healthy application of Dinitrol rust convertor.

"A previous owner had brushed some sort of fish oil on it, too, which collected dust and has hardened to a dirty, sandy hue."

Michael says he loves the 'hunt' for classics as much as their restoration, but concedes that the restoration of this particular Beetle may be beyond his means, hence his submission to *Get Resto'd*.

## DOUBLE THE CARBS

Aside from its rarity and significance in Beetle history, another reason to bring this car back to life is the rare, Australian-made twin carburettor system that came with it.

Back in the mid- to late-1950s, twin-carb conversion kits were produced by a number of companies, including Jay-Bee Motors, Monaro Motors and Automotive Carburettor Co., to fit everything from an FJ Holden to a Morris Minor, as well as Volkswagens.

In the case of the Beetle, a twin carb set-up like this improved acceleration and top speed by around 20 per cent; a pretty hefty performance hike!

## READY FOR RESTO

In Michael's opinion, too many early Beetles have been modified, so his plan – and instructions to the Resto My Ride team – is to have the car restored back to its C1954 original condition. But the extra pep delivered by the vintage speed equipment means that'll stay!

When this resto is completed to Resto My Ride's high standards, it's sure to appeal to both Beetle fans and those that love all classics.



Vintage twin-carb equipment came with the car and will be part of the restoration.



Dodgy red respray is one of a number of past "fixes" applied to this car.



'Oval' window Beetles like this one are second only to the preceding 'split' window version when it comes to desirability.



Aside from its rarity, an additional drawcard with this car is that it's largely complete and carries some cool details.