

All Tore Up: Texas Hot Rod Portraits

George Brainard



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The Texas hot rod scene encompasses the exhaust, speed, rust, and chrome beloved not just by greasers and gearheads but also by families and pinup girls, bikers and rockabilly dolls, rockers and regular Joes. The Lonestar Rod & Kustom Round Up, one of America's premier car shows, attracts hot rod and custom car fans from around the world, bringing them to Austin every spring. George Brainard began photographing the Round Up in 2003 on behalf of the show hosts, The Kontinentals Car Club. Finding himself interested as much in the crowd and the culture as in the cars, he began taking pictures of people at the show.

All Tore Up presents portraits of these people, who are as distinctive as the cars they love. As Brainard observes, "Hot rods and customized cars are works of art. You take an old car, cut it into pieces, and put it back together following your own vision. You bring something to life that previously existed only in your imagination." The people who do this "are drawn to aesthetic expression, and they materialize it in their own selves, their clothes, and their bodies." Allowing his subjects to pose themselves against a plain white background and write their own captions for their photographs, Brainard cuts through the visual spectacle of the car show and finds the essence of the people who are a part of it, capturing a fascinating pop subculture of American life.



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