

To cut a long story short, Durham Classics was the result.

Today, Julian and Margaret, their son Nicholas, and a small team of craftspeople turn out white metal models of cars, vans, trucks, street rods, and ambulances ranging mostly from the 1930s to the '50s – including a replica of what is officially recognized as the world's smallest ambulance, built on the Reliant Kitten chassis from Britain – all to 1:43 scale, in limited quantities of 50-250 pieces. Enjoying a status as Canada's only producer of hand-built white metal models, Durham Classics manufactures all its parts, castings, and components, except for decals and photo-etched wheels on some models, which are sourced elsewhere.

*The Diecast Magazine* was privileged to inspect one of the many whimsical models that populate the Durham Classics range. Item #DC-38G is a fine representation of a 1954 Ford Ranch Wagon, in turquoise/white with a pair of surfboards in lurid lilac fastened to the chromed roof rack. Pick up the model and I guarantee you'll remember those memorable, heart-pumping lead guitar riffs from The Beach Boys' classic

hit *Surfin' USA*. Start examining the many attractive features giving off those *Good Vibrations*, and you'll *really* start getting "amped" – like a surfer when the surf is "going off" and "pumping"!

The next best thing to the *Little Deuce Coupe* – and much hotter than a *Little Honda* or even the T-Bird that Daddy took away when the *Fun, Fun, Fun* got out of hand – this Durham Classics 1954 Ford is the archetypal "surfin' wagon" of the '50s. It speaks to the hearts and minds of anyone captivated by those lazy days *All Summer Long* on a beach with the breakers breaking, the rollers rolling, the surfers surfing, and scantily clad *Surfer Girls* soaking up the sun, looking bored, and telling their boyfriends how cool they looked when they tubed that tube – or whatever...

Sorry, I got a bit distracted by the *Girls on the Beach*. Back to the Durham Classics model... From the delta-wing jet fighter hood ornament to the tailgate with license plate and light fitting, this Ranch Wagon exudes excellence and authenticity. Ford decals and badging at front and rear, "Ranch Wagon" titles on the rear fender, and chrome flashes, radiator grill embellishments, door handles,

headlamp surrounds, realistic headlamps and tail lamp clusters, front and rear bumper bars, all complement each other to enhance the ensemble.

Setting this wagon apart as a jazzed-up retro car rather than a bog-standard '54 Ford are those hot mag wheels, each oozing chromed class from its five spokes. Topping everything – not least the carefully applied paintwork – is an overall standard of finish that underscores why Durham Classics has earned a lofty reputation not only in the company's native Canada but also in the USA, Britain, and even as far afield as New Zealand.

But here's the thing. Because they are entirely and lovingly made by hand in very small numbers, Durham Classics models are eminently desirable and collectable. Like shifting sands on a beach, they don't hang around on stockists' shelves for long. So listen up, dude: don't "wipe out" and be a "frube" or a "paddlepuss"; make sure this 1954 Ford Ranch Wagon – with those nifty boards on top – is one wave you catch while it's still "cranking". Ride it all the way to your favorite model shop and surf on out with one of these little beauties under your arm. You'll be "stoked" – I promise.

