three deuces. Three twos. Tri-power. Whatever you call it, three two-barrel carburetors on any engine just screams out hot rod. And if those three carburetors happen to be Stromberg 97s, well, it just doesn’t get any more traditional than that!

The Stromberg carburetor has been the staple of hot-rod ding since before World War II. They were the factory-stock carburetor on flathead Ford V-8s in the 1930s. And after Ford replaced them with Holley 94s, Strombergs became cheap and plentiful for hot-rodders to use.

They retain their popularity with hot-rodders, although there are certainly better carburetors available. But nothing beats the traditional look of the Stromberg 97; and now, you can even buy brand-new ones, made from factory drawings to exact original specifications.

In model form, we’ve had Strombergs in many kits, in 1/25 and 1/8 scale, and it’s the large-scale ones we’re going to concern ourselves with here. A 1/25 scale Stromberg is pretty small (only ¼ inch tall) and I wouldn’t say it was impossible to add details to one, but I wouldn’t want to have to pay your optometrist bill afterwards.

Both of Monogram’s and now Revell-Monogram’s big 1/8 scale hot rod kits have had Strombergs in them from their origins in the 1960s. There are three of them in the newly reissued Big T and six of them in the Big Deuce.

In this article I’m going to show you what a real Stromberg looks like up close. Then we’ll get into adding some simple details to one to make it really come alive. And then we’re going to create the progressive linkage we need for that classic “three deuce” setup.

(A progressive linkage is really just a mechanical way to operate only the center, or primary, carburetor under most normal driving conditions. But then, as speed increases, the two secondary carbs begin to open. The linkage is adjusted so that all three carbs will reach wide open at the same time. It’s really simpler than it sounds.)

As always, read through all of the photo captions before starting and make sure you understand fully what needs to be done. It looks daunting at first, but it really is simple. The whole process, not counting paint-drying time only took me about two hours.

Let’s get started!
This is the right (passenger's) side. On stock Fords, the throttle connected on this side, and the links to the choke go up from the throttle shaft. The bright link to the right operates the accelerator pump. You can also see the idle-speed adjustment screw, and one of the idle-mixture screws.

View from the rear. You can see the extended throttle shaft on the left, and the fuel-inlet fitting. The long throttle shaft is necessary for multiple carburetor linkage, and would not be there on a carb for solo use.

This is the left (driver's) side. The fuel inlet is on this side.

In this front view, you can see the accelerator pump rod and its linkage.

Let's begin detailing our Stromberg by drilling an .020” hole in the top of the float bowl. This will be for the accelerator pump rod.

Drill an .040” hole for the pivot for the accelerator pump lever. It should be drilled slightly off-center as you view the carb from front. Glue a short length of .040” styrene rod in that hole. Make it longer than necessary for now; you can trim it later.

Drill two more .020” holes, one for the throttle shaft and one for the choke shaft, then glue a length of .020” rod into each hole. Again, make them long.

Begin making the links by drilling holes in a piece of plain .015” styrene sheet: an .040” hole for the accelerator pump lever, and .020” for the throttle and choke links. Drill the holes anywhere – we’re going to trim the plastic next.

Here’s the first trim for the accelerator pump lever. It sounds overly simple, but you just trim away everything that doesn’t look like the link you are making; it’s really that easy. You don’t need to be too exact, and you don’t really need measurements. Look at the photos included here and make them by eye, make them look close, and when painted and viewed from a normal distance, they’ll look just fine.

Here’s the nearly completed accelerator pump lever. It needs only to be trimmed to length, and we’ll do that after we have it in place.

These are all of the linkage pieces for one carburetor. Even in 1/8 scale, they are tiny! They were all made in the same manner. You can read more about this technique in “Working with Styrene” in the October 2005 issue of Scale Auto.
Time for some paint. I airbrushed Testors’ Model Master Metalizer Magnesium overall, then brush-painted the lower throttle body section with the same brand Gunmetal.

Begin adding the details by installing the accelerator pump rod. It’s just a piece of .020” rod inserted into that first hole we drilled. Then trim the lever to size and glue it in place.

Now you can add the rest of the links for the choke and throttle. Notice that I didn’t bother making the little ball ends on them, or each and every pivot. Trust me here: After these things are painted and viewed from a normal distance, you won’t notice.

Add the accelerator pump link from the throttle up to the accelerator pump lever, which is a length of .020” rod painted silver. Now you can paint all of the links. I used Metalizer Titanium, but these links can be almost any color from bright silver (or even chrome) all the way down to rust. It all depends on the condition of the carb and where it’s being used. I’ve added the two idle mixture “screws” beneath the float bowl. These are two short lengths of .040” rod painted gold.

Here’s the complete set. If you’re doing a multiple-carb setup, remember that only the center carb needs a choke, so the two end carbs are much simpler.

PROGRESSIVE THROTTLE LINKAGE

Let’s start on the progressive throttle linkage. There are holes on the left side for the kit linkage, and they’re a little oversize, but that’s okay. Taper the end of a short piece of .040” rod for each carb, and glue one piece in each hole. Glue the carbs to the intake manifold. We’ll need them in place in order to make the linkage.

Here are the three links we need, laid out in the order they go on the carbs. Make them the same way we made the choke links.

I just cut these so that they look right and clear everything. Slide them on the throttle shafts, and set them all at approximately the same angle. A touch of liquid cement will hold them. We’re not making a working linkage, so we don’t need all of the holes that would be there on the 1:1 setup.
They shouldn’t all line up; the links on the two end carbs should be a little bit farther out than the center link, so everything will clear.

Connect the two end carbs with a length of .020” rod. It should extend slightly past the links, as I’ve done here.

Do the same for the upper link from the front carb to the center one. Be sure to make this rod a little long. This is what gives the 1:1 linkage its adjustability. You can trim the excess from the ends of the .040” throttle shafts.

I made those little ends from .040” rod. On the actual linkage, the rod slides through this part and is held in place with a set screw. The stop on the upper rod is also a short length of .040” rod drilled out with an .020” drill. I should have put it on before I glued this rod in place, but I was able to slit it open and glue it in place after the fact.

Start making a return spring by winding some .010” wire around a common straight pin. Don’t worry about making the spacing of the coils even; that will take care of itself in the next step.

When you have enough windings around the pin, just push them all together.

Slide the “spring” off the pin and gently pull it apart slightly. Shape the ends into little loops or hooks, and it’s done.

The spring goes between the top of the center carb’s link and the base of the rear carb.

Here’s the finished setup, ready to go on the small-block Chevy for the Big T. The carb with the choke linkage is the primary, and goes in the center; the other two are secondaries.