

BENJI >

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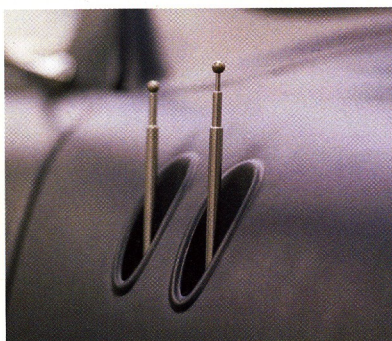
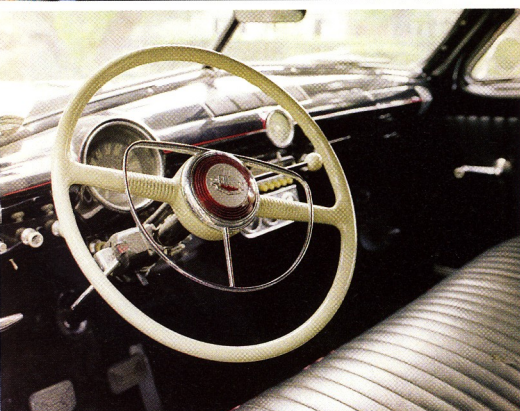
The Automotive Chronicles: **Benji** and **Joel** Madden of

Good Charlotte

PHOTOS GREG G. / WORDS TAMARA WARREN



Benji's Shoebox has a flathead engine, which boasts a 24-stud V8 that produces in the 100 horsepower range. 



 Custom double Frenched antennas..

slew of hit songs including their most recent "I Just Wanna Live" from *The Chronicles of Life and Death* (Epic). Earlier smashes score triple platinum status including "Anthem", "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous", and "Girls & Boys". These songs spoke to their young audiences, laced with lyrics that touch on class issues and coming of age angst.

Girls don't like boys/Girls like cars and money— Girls & Boys

Though they have become grown 26-year old men with cars and money, it wasn't handed to them on a silver guitar string and perhaps that's why they savor their moments behind the wheel. Benji favors flash. His Cadillac Escalade is edged with 24-inch KMC Tempest and 305/35R24 Cooper Zeon XST Tires, Sebring Exhaust, a custom Billet Grille and brass knuckles on the door handles that he had done at 310 Motoring. "I had the back lowered an inch," he says. "I wanted to give the truck a lowered look without it being a low rider."

Benji's extra proud of his 1950 Ford Shoebox, with a hard-to-come by flathead engine, a 24-stud V8 that produces in the 100 horsepower range. "For old car enthusiasts, that's exciting to see the flat head." His peppermint green 1963 Ford Galaxy was polished and preened by NEXT Motorsports, with a refurbished engine. "I like some import cars too. It depends on my mood."

Joel is more of a traditionalist, preferring

LIKE THE CAR WE HAD THAT WOULDN'T START
WE HAD TO WALK AROUND TO GET AROUND/ CAN
I GET A RIDE?

- FROM "LITTLE THINGS" GOOD CHARLOTTE
[EPIC] 2000



Benji goes "retro punk" with his 1950 Ford Shoebox.



This black beauty is all stock except for
the pin striping and decal on the side.

Joel Madden, lead singer of Good Charlotte, reminisces. Both in passing and over electric-charged guitar riffs, his stories trace back to days when he and his twin brother guitarist Benji Madden were young, struggling and not even almost famous, growing up in Southern Maryland.

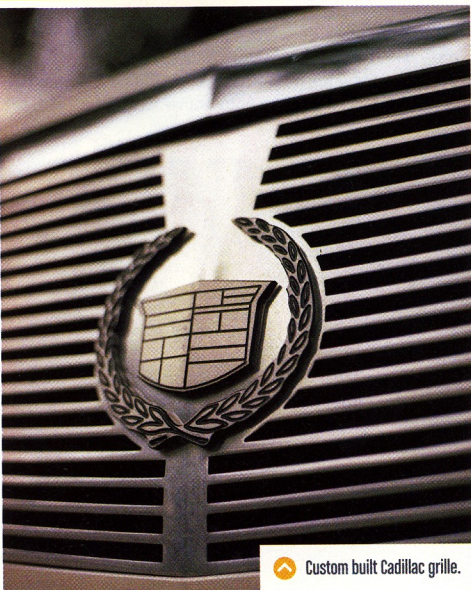
"It was summer and we were waiting tables," Joel says, thinking back to being 18 and out of the house. "We drove by and saw an '82 Ford Tempo, primer gray, sitting in this guy's front lawn."

The Madden brothers scrounged up all they had saved — \$500 — and traded it for the tepid Tempo clunker — and the independence that four wheels symbolized. "We had to pop the clutch to start it," Madden says with a chuckle, taking a moment away from his European tour. "We drove that car around for 3 months with no tags and no insurance. When it broke down we left it on the side of the road. That car was the first car that was ours. It wasn't registered. It had no stereo and no lining in the roof, but we kept it spotless."

Later, times like these would inspire the honest, heart-wrenching lyrics that have won Good Charlotte a legion of fans, as one of the most visible and adored punk-infused rock bands to strike in the wake of Green Day. They have a

miss when I'm on tour, I miss driving," Benji says. "When I get home I drive everywhere. I've got a little crew that I hang out with. All my friends love cars and hanging out with cars." The twins' shared passion for cars was ignited long before they went to see the Beastie Boys concert and took an interest in making music in high school. When cars were first deemed cool, Benji still dreamed of being a professional baseball player,

Benji shows off his sleeves, complete with an image of The Last Supper.



Custom built Cadillac grille.



Complete Sebring exhaust system



The MADE company logo, brass knuckles, engraved on the door handles.



Finishing off the Escalade are the smoked out break lights and limo tint.

guarding second base in little league.

I remember baseball games and workin' on the car/Told me that he loved me and that I would go far. — From Good Charlotte's "Hey Dad"

"My dad always loved cars. We would look at car trader papers together," Benji says. "We would look at them and circle the ones we liked. I would buy new car papers every week after school, Benji says. "My dad let us wash the cars. He had a work truck. When I was 12, he bought a used Cadillac, he loved it and that was the first nice car our family had. That car broke down a lot, but we treated it like it was brand new."

Joel had a hankering for import cars that led to his first modified Audi A4 later in life. "I was buying import racing magazines and looking at all the mods I could do," he says. He also described his attraction towards the old school, "I like the '64 Chevy low riders. I still like old cars."

The Madden boys' desire to be around snazzy, well-kept cars drove them to take

quirky jobs as a car wash attendants and valets. "I got a job washing and detailing cars just cause I wanted to be around nice cars," Benji says. "We were really broke when we were younger. One time I got a job for two weekends valet parking cars at rich people's parties. I drove Benzes, Lexus, Jaguars and other nice cars."

But it was their mom who would come through when music started calling. She sent her sons to California, the hub of the music they revered, as a high school graduation present. When they returned, bellies filled with punk rock guitar licks, they had the verve to pursue a band with bassist Paul Thomas and guitarist Billy Martin forming Good Charlotte in 1996. Named for a children's book, Good Charlotte's fairytale still loomed in the distance. The Maddens' mother came through again with much needed transportation. "Our family had this minivan, and basically when we started doing more shows and tours she let us have it," Benji says. "It was the only thing she owned. Only one of the doors she opened. That's how



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cars are built." Joel continues to take maniacal good care of his cars, vacuuming every morning before he leaves the house.

"I just love cars and I never could have them so now I appreciate them," Joel insists. "That's why I only have two cars. I put months and months of research into buying a car. I don't want 10 cars sitting around that I don't drive. Just thinking about driving makes me want to go drive."

Benji concurs. "I was always daydreaming about cars when I was younger. A lot of my dreams have come true." The Maddens still relish how many miles they've traveled from humble Waldorf, Maryland roots. It's the little things.