



Our latest news and chewing gum for the eyes!

Compiled by Mike Lintern, with graphics and tech work by Wojtek Samoszuk

Ramblin' on --- words and pix from Mike Collins, including personal views that are not necessarily those of the company... but are a must read!

Detroit Auto Show, Michigan, January 11-24

A four-door Raptor for 2017

January's Detroit Auto Show was chosen by Ford to announce a crew cab variant of their most feared predator, the F-150 Raptor; said to be the truck that drops jaws and snaps necks. This 2017 addition to the 4WD pickup line comes about via a 12-inch stretch to the alloy body and will be offered at \$50,000.

Precise engine performance figures have yet to be released, but the company claims this new SuperCrew Raptor's twin-turbo 3.5-litre EcoBoost V6 will produce more power with greater efficiency than the current SVT Raptor's 6.2-litre V8, which puts out a hefty 411bhp and 434ft-lb of torque.



RETURN OF THE BRONCO?

Ford says it will introduce four additional sports utility vehicles to its North American range during the next four years. The Bronco model name of the company's original off-roader is strongly-rumoured to come back as a new design.

The VLF 1 – it was a Viper once!



Start off with a Dodge Viper, skin it and tear it apart, hog-out the original V10 to make some 745 horses and you have the VLF 1, America's latest supercar, seen at the Detroit Auto Show and due for launch in the spring.

For a mere £186,000 you get race-tuned suspension and a carbon fibre bodyshell produced one Henrik Fisker, a former Aston Martin and BMW designer. The guys at Aston Martin are not very happy, saying the new machine is too much of a lookalike of their own offerings.

JANUARY CAR WARS: BUICK, DODGE AND JEEP COME OUT ON TOP

Fiat Chrysler Automotive celebrated its 70th consecutive month of year-over-year North American vehicle sales increases in January, despite East Coast dealers being snowed-in for a week. The Dodge brand enjoyed a very healthy 19 per cent rise and Jeep sales rose 15 per cent, while Ram trucks were up 5 per cent, though the Chrysler brand dropped sharply.

General Motors dealer sales overall were generally flat – just half a per cent up – though Buick saw a dramatic increase of 45 per cent. Chevrolet numbers dropped by 3.5 per cent and Cadillac was down eight per cent.

On the Ford front, where the blue oval suffered a three per cent decline, SUVs and crossovers were up 3.3 per cent, but F-series pickups slipped 5.2 per cent. Lincoln achieved an 8 per cent gain, but car sales overall outweighed that result by being an unlucky 13 per cent down on January 2015.

BITZA NEWS

The first Federal trial over GM's ignition switch recall came to an early end on January 22 with the case being dismissed after the company submitted evidence that the plaintiff engaged in fraud and perjury

One-time Allard Motor Co chief engineer John Hume, died on December 23 last year. Along with designer David Hooper, John was heavily involved in developing, Europe's first dragster, the 1961 Allard Chrysler driven by Sidney Allard and now residing in the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu

Ford Motor Company is rolling all of its existing high-performance 'divisions' – Special Vehicle Team (SVT), Ford Racing and Team RS – into one operation to be known as Ford Performance

COMING EVENTS

March 20

National Street Rod Association Southern Swap Meet, Arena Essex Raceway, A1306 Arterial Road, Purfleet, Essex RM19 1AE (www.nsra.org.uk)

March 25-27



Includes Top Fuel dragsters, European Nitro Funny Car Series and a jet car shootout, Podington, near Wellingborough, Northants NN29 7XA – Exit M1 Junction 15 (01234 782828)

April 25-27

American Auto Club International Spring Open Nationals, Billing Aquadrome, Crow Lane, Northampton NN3 9DA (www.aac-int.com)

April 30 – May 1

Atomic Vintage Festival, classic and custom car show, drag racing, air display, music and many other entertainments, Sywell Aerodrome, Northants NN6 0BN (www.atomicfestival.co.uk or 01435 812508)

May 27-30



FIA/FIM European Drag Racing Championships round, Podington, near Wellingborough, Northants NN29 7XA – Exit M1 Junction 15 (01234 782828)

May 28-29

National Hot Rod & Custom Car Show, with live rock and roll bands, East of England Showground, Peterborough PE2 6XE (www.hotrodandcustomshow.co.uk or 08444 151413 for tickets)



Ramblin' on

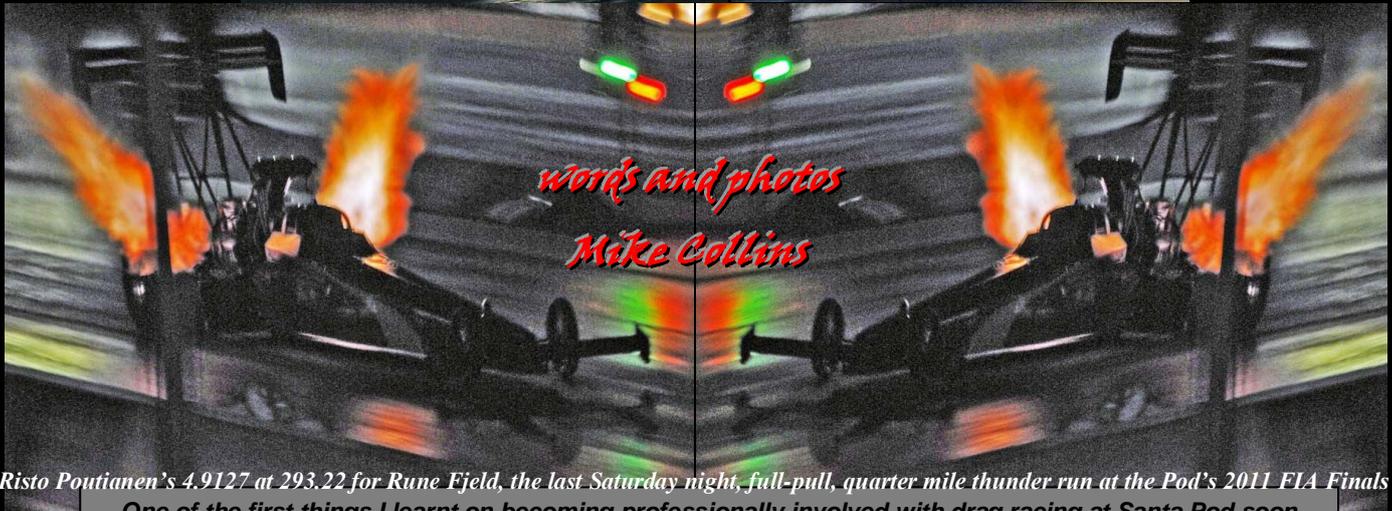
What y'see is what you get...



Ace McCulloch



Back in the saddle again!



words and photos
Mike Collins

Risto Poutianen's 4.9127 at 293.22 for Rune Fjeld, the last Saturday night, full-pull, quarter mile thunder run at the Pod's 2011 FIA Finals

One of the first things I learnt on becoming professionally involved with drag racing at Santa Pod soon after my first visit to the track in 1966 was that what you see is what you get - it's still the same to this day



1965

A future view of Santa Pod, but first they "probably had to repair the surface" and erect "stout crash barriers..." And, "As time passes erect grandstands, timing tower, changing rooms, workshop etc." It still took 25 years to get "permanent toilets" advertised in '66! Yep, it was a dream then and it still is today, but over the years folks did try to improve. Now we've good food, showers and a track social life second to none, or some such BS!

It's well known fact that consistency is the main path to success in drag racing, and it's difficult to achieve in the NitroFueled world we yearn for. However, little thinking's required to find things that've remained consistent during the past 50 years at Santa Pod. But it seems I'm not allowed to say that bullsh*t springs to mind when talking about consistency at the Pod. So I won't, even though we've been laughing about it and enjoying it since the beginning of time! Instead, let's call it the BS factor!

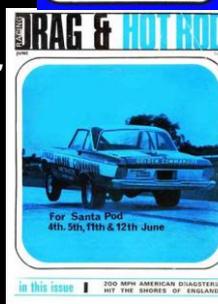
On the DragRod cover at right, we're told that "200 mph American dragsters (in the plural!), had hit the shores of England" - yeah right! We got Bud Barnes' Ultra Sonic which ran 8.57 (no speed clocks), and nitro neophytes loved the ground poundin' car. Not close to 200mph at all, but when the AA/FD raced the "Runt," a good lookin' blown' an injected, nitro burnin' modified roadster - wow! Fans loved it even more...



DragRod photo



Ron Fisher photo courtesy timetravelvids



...and today, if you visit [Santa Pod's website](#) you learn that "In professional racing two competitors race for the fastest time over a straight quarter of a mile run often reaching breathtaking speeds of nearly 300 mph in 5 seconds!!" Things is Pod People, your very own DC Bradford spent the past few seasons promising us "3.80's and 300mph" after the Kaiser reneged on his word, switching to 1,000ft short track racing in 2012! Unless they're going back to the good ol' 1320 this year! No chance, but what a faux pas. Quarter mile marks of 4.57 (2010) and 317.06mph (2011) an' short track at 315.51 and 3.91 (2014) were seen yonks ago!

We waited a long time for the Pod's first AA/FD "green light" drag race between Tudor Rose and Commuter in 1968 at the "new look" Pod with the "seven-second surface!!" Both cars ran 8.4's that year, Commuter hit an 8.22 in 1969. Our first "home grown" seven was "Snabba" Clive Skilton's 7.84, at an NDRC event in August 1970. (Clive had also won our first AA/FD Match Race back in '68 when Commuter failed to make it to the line!)

Later in the month he set a 7.56 ET record at the Pod in his Revolution dragster. But at the Pod's Easter meet in 1971, Clive Skilton ran his new Second Revolution fueler "off the trailer" to the quickest and fastest quarter mile the UK had ever seen - a 7.39 at 203! When he came thundering past the feeling was awesome - it plain took my knees away, wow! Since then my body's taken a beating from mucho NitroThunder around the world, an' I've loved every ground pounding, eye watering second - especially after meeting my first fuel coupe!



Battle of the Giants

John Bennett photo DragRod



Brian Sutton photo courtesy timetravelvids

25years at Santa Pod

Next time, some time, we'll talk about my 50 years at the Pod that began in '66 with my daughter Sarah sat on my shoulders, her screams of delight ever louder with quicker and faster racing. Before that, back in '65, a pal hit the DragFest finale with its 200mph, seven-second NitroFire at night and spoke in awe of the NitroThunder he'd felt. Having dreamt of such power since our chat, I decided to celebrate 50 years on the nitro trail by going to Famoso last year. Sarah grew up at the Pod (Uncle Bob, JB, Bootsie, Roy, Clive were all her friends), she drove down the track on my lap in '68, and helped me celebrate 25years at the Pod, so I took her along to experience the real deal...

With 58 blown an' injected fuel burning dragsters, funny cars and alteredds racing at Famoso - and more than 50 AA/FD's cackling - come Sunday it was a case of...

Extreme crops
Nikon 55mm



Nitro!

The fuel coupe semi finals at the 24th annual California Hot Rod Reunion had everything you could wish for – great racing with ground pounding burnouts and side-by-side quarter mile thunder. The first saw a hole-shot and a 5.82 eaten by a 5.73 at 249 mph with fans hooting and hollering in the bleachers while the next drew polite applause despite being quicker, faster and closer! The cars had 0.002 of a second between them off the line and were glued together for more than 1300 feet before the winner moved ahead, his 5.67 at 260mph beating a 5.71 at 255 by .036 of a second. "Bastard good racing," ol' Nitro Nostrils would aver later. Arriving at the Patch (as Famoso is fondly known) about eleven am on Friday I got an instant buzz walking into this "fibreglass forest" (a phrase used by the late Steve Evans) stretching deep into the vast pit area



AUTO CLUB FAMOSO
Bakersfield, Ca



Although today's funny cars are carbon fibre, unlike modern, short track, jelly mould machines, these were true quarter mile warriors, with most of 'em actually bearing a resemblance to real cars like the Nitroholic 1969 Camaro and the Patriot 1966 Mustang below. Except of course they're all blown an' injected nitro burning, ground pounding fuel coupes which can run 250mph in five seconds. And right now, just like me, these drivers and crews were waiting to hear the call to "fire the first pair" and go racing



Amongst them was Englishman Tony Betts had reasons to smile; he'd rented a ride in the Hartman family's latest Running Wild fuel coupe, a stunning '69 Camaro, to celebrate his birthday. While wishing Tony luck I couldn't help noticing two-time NHRA funny car champ Cruz Pedregon stood behind him...



As Cruz went to greet fans I realised Tony'd be racing him and truly livin' the dream!

From any angle, the Hartman Camaro's is a work of art – it was quick too, holding the DRO AAFC Challenge ET record at 5.68

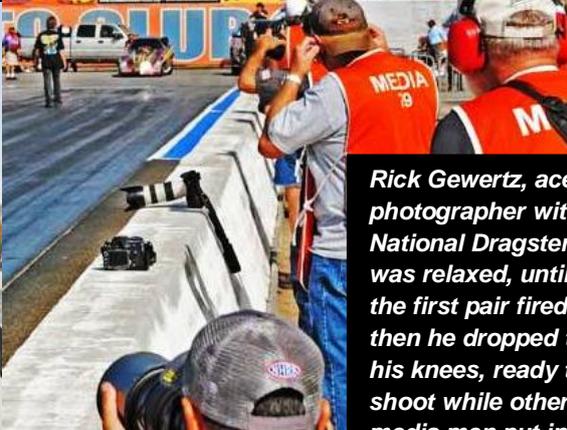


Although NHRA legal, Ryan Hodgson's Camaro (below), was proving controversial before the race had even begun!



Talking of which, with tyre pressures being checked and driver Rian Konno putting on his gloves, the first pair in the staging lanes were set to hit the track! Time I headed that way too, 'cos I was already feeling a touch of NitroFever and excited! But first I needed some water to stay hydrated...

The Auto Club stand seemed a good place to get advice...



Rick Gewertz, ace photographer with National Dragster was relaxed, until the first pair fired then he dropped to his knees, ready to shoot while other media men put in their ear plugs

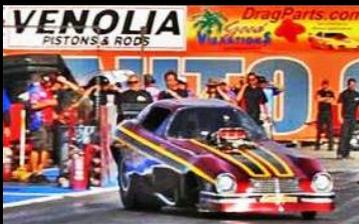
...their greeting was warm and after thanking them for their continued support of our sport (Famoso has been running as the Auto Club Raceway for some years now), I was happy to be gifted a bottle of water, fresh from the cool box - a good way to start my day! Happily I made it to the track in time to enjoy the quiet being ripped asunder by a pair of strong burnouts, Steve Nichols' '78 Camaro Code Red pounding the ground before Rian Konno lit 'em up in the Kazanjian-Lemon-Konno '73 Mustang



And then the ground shook as they launched strong and hard, the air heavy with NitroThunder before the Camaro made a left turn, Nicholls fighting for control as Konno stormed away only to go up in smoke just past the tree, the Camaro kissing getting close to the wall...



...and definitely more than a little sideways! Click the link to enjoy the action, and see all the photographers run - except Andy on his ladder, Cole Coonce in the foreground, the dude in the cowboy hat - et moi!



Both drivers quickly clicked off the power and cruised through in the teens



Nitroholic, a chunky plain Jane 1969 Camaro then faced off with a '77 Firebird wearing a colourful, swoopy design



Again, both cars left hard, but only Richard Townsend's Nitroholic made it down track under power for a 5.79 at 247.75 while Cory Lee clicked his Firebird off early and coasted

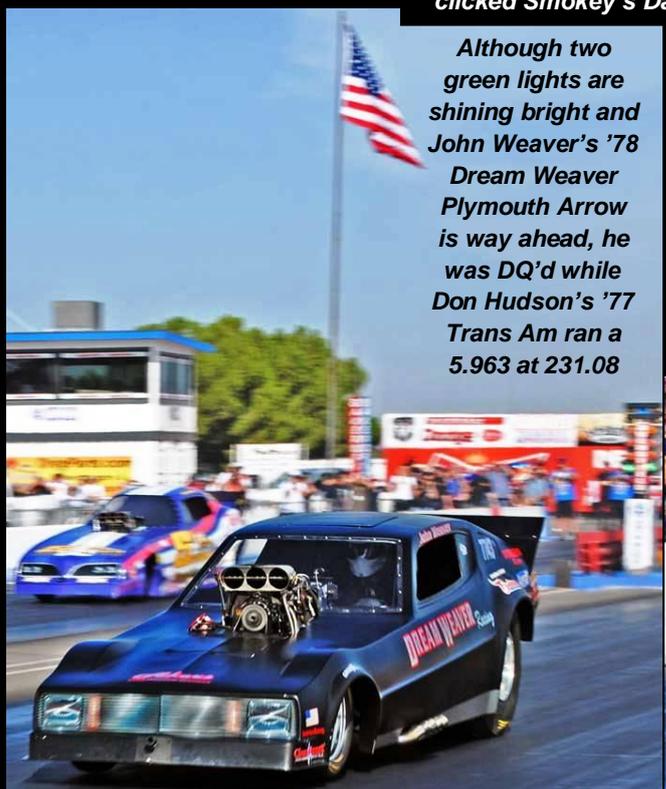


2014 NHRA Heritage series champion and defending CHHR champ Dan Horan's Patriot '66 Mustang hit a 5.778 at 249.58, Mendy Fry clicked Smokey's Darkside Challenger early

Although two green lights are shining bright and John Weaver's '78 Dream Weaver Plymouth Arrow is way ahead, he was DQ'd while Don Hudson's '77 Trans Am ran a 5.963 at 231.08

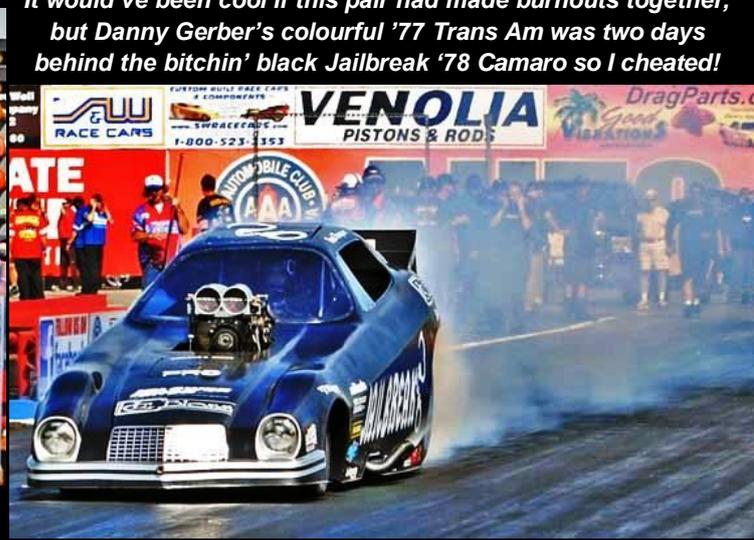


A pair of '77 Monza's got it on next, and Marc White's 5.79 at 246 in "The Crop Duster" led all the way

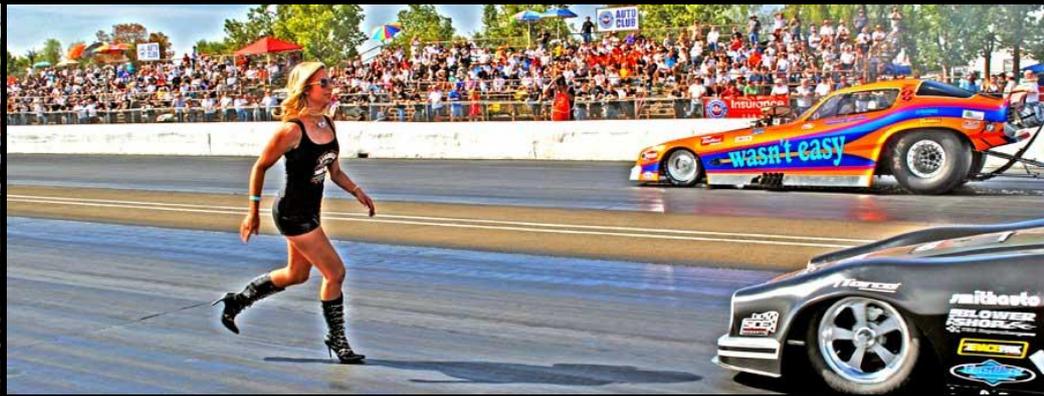


Pete Peterson's "Quarter Pounder" trailed with a 6.07 at 238.43

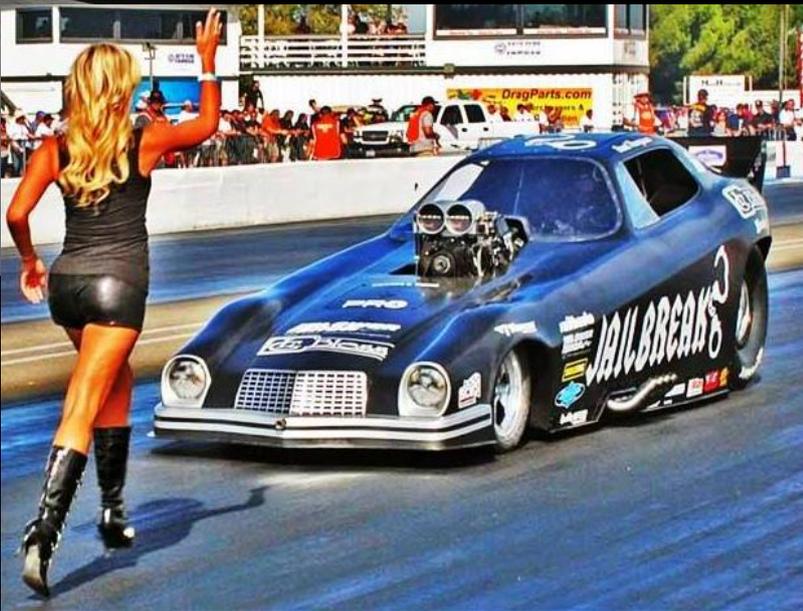
It would've been cool if this pair had made burnouts together, but Danny Gerber's colourful '77 Trans Am was two days behind the bitchin' black Jailbreak '78 Camaro so I cheated!



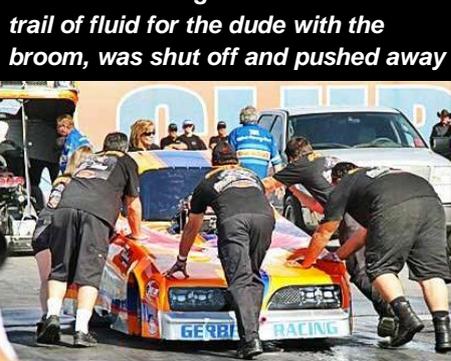
No dumb blonde jokes here 'cos she's definitely not from Essex!



All red-blooded males, and no doubt some gals, would've loved side-by-side action here, but sadly it was a solo run, with a three quarter track display from the Jailbreak Camaro's gorgeous back-up babe enjoyed by all, but especially those of us this side of the track!



Eventually Danny Gerber's aptly named "Wasn't easy" Trans Am made it back to the start line leaving a trail of fluid for the dude with the broom, was shut off and pushed away



Sadly all her hard work was to no avail as, despite this strong green light launch, Brad Thompson did something wrong and was DQ'd

(Bob Brown photo courtesy [We Did it for Love](#))



Similar paint jobs on a '73 Mustang and a '78 Challenger. Both looked good and launched hard, but the Ford quit early, giving rookie Justin Taylor a 6.85 at 146 as the Mopar hit 5.785 at 244.60 despite losing a couple of pistons...



...so photographers hung in there hoping for a k'boom!



The excellent [WDIFL](#) site made me smile, suggesting Tony Betts was "all the way from North Bendfleet, Yukon..." Essex is further!



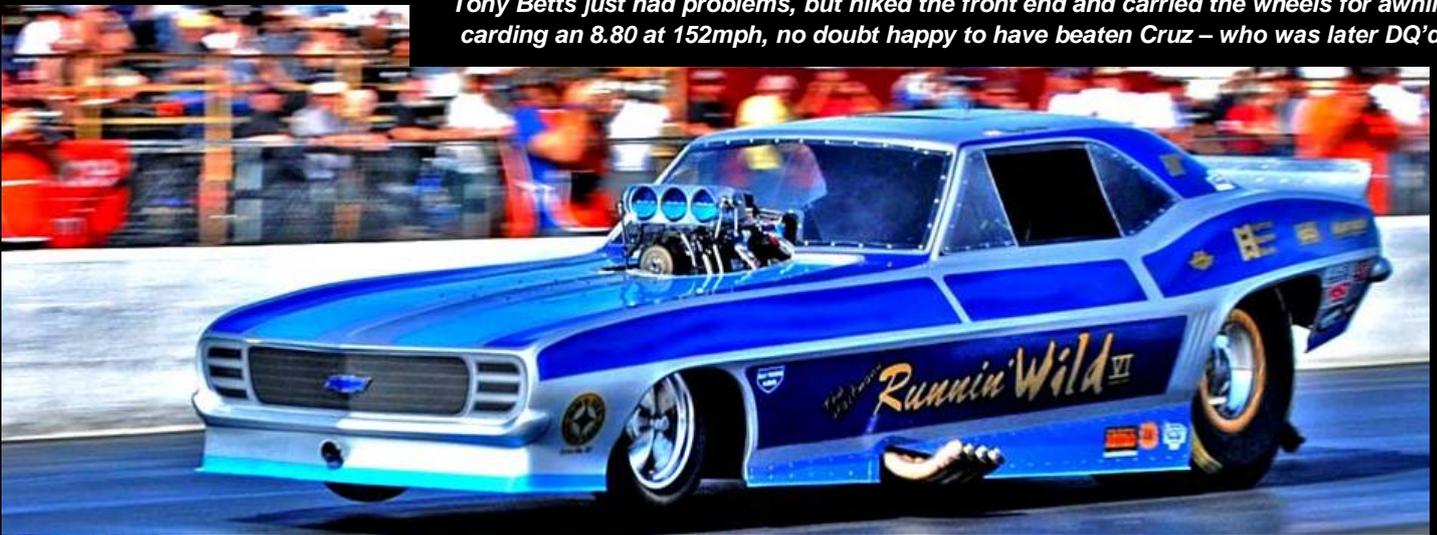
Richard Hartman's '69 Camaro and Cruz Pedregon's '77 Trans Am Keeling & Clayton California Charger tribute car epitomise the nostalgia nitro funny car movement, lookin' powerful whether burnin' out or backin' up



We all hoped for great things, and so did the drivers and their teams. But both cars had problems as you can see from the closed butterflies!

Cruz smoked 'em at the hit, so he clicked it off - an' Cruzed!

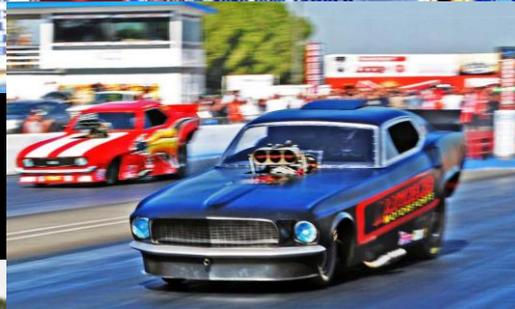
Tony Betts just had problems, but hiked the front end and carried the wheels for awhile, carding an 8.80 at 152mph, no doubt happy to have beaten Cruz – who was later DQ'd!



The burnouts below were side-by-side, but I cheated to close 'em up and lose the mess in the middle



Ex-pat Bazz Young struggled in his "Thunder Down Under" Camaro, but his 6.21 at 231.56 easily made the field – for now...



Meanwhile Matt Bynum was long gone, driving the Matthews Motorsports Mustang to a 5.85 at 249.57mph to guarantee a spot on race day. His Q3 numbers were a tad better - 5.823 at 249.76 taking the number 13 spot



Wally Giavia's "G-MEN" Challenger, left lane, was DQ'd while Dennis Swearingen struggled to a 6.40 at 228 to put his Omni on the board

Fell in love with the Densham's good lookin' Teachers Pet '69 Camaro when I first saw it race back in 2010



It's been campaigning on the NHRA Heritage nostalgia nitro trail for some time - more than just another spot-on period fuel coupe replicar, its quick too, with Gary's son Stephen having won the **Famoso March Meet** earlier in the year. Here he was set to race alongside Clint Thompson in Shack Attack, a swoopy looking '74 Camaro



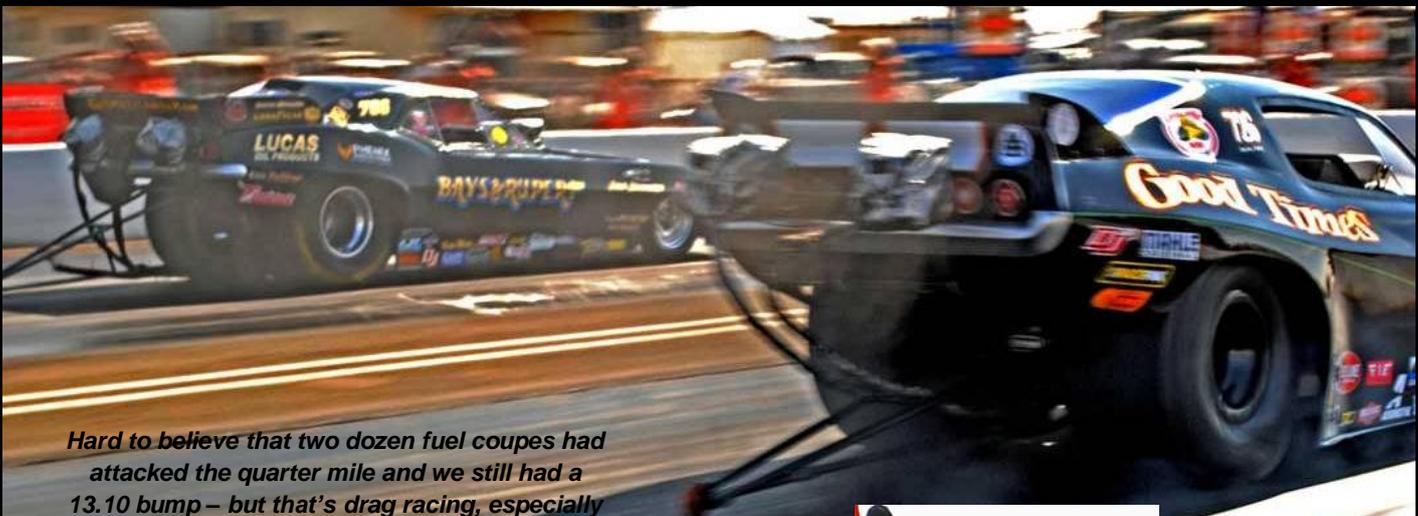
Teachers Pet was soon up in smoke and ran a new slow ET of 21.69 - Shack Attack had problems and ran a 6.45 at 183.32



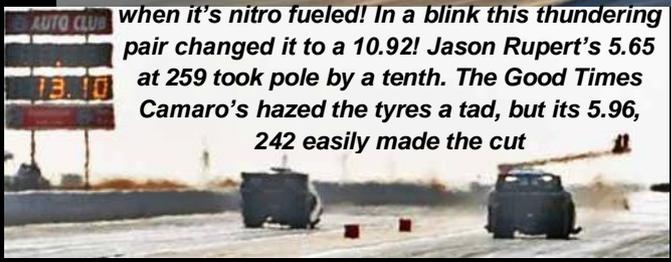
Three-time NHRA Heritage series champion Jason Rupert's '69 Camaro launched in a blur of power ahead of Marc Meadors' split-bumper 1970 model "Good Times" – a fine lookin' fuel coupe



Rupert's "Black Plague" gained max traction and continued to move ahead



Hard to believe that two dozen fuel coupes had attacked the quarter mile and we still had a 13.10 bump – but that's drag racing, especially when it's nitro fueled! In a blink this thundering pair changed it to a 10.92! Jason Rupert's 5.65 at 259 took pole by a tenth. The Good Times Camaro's hazed the tyres a tad, but its 5.96, 242 easily made the cut



Maybe she fancies a photographer for lunch!





Alex Miladinovich's
"Hot 4 Teacher"
'69 Mustang



Mark Sanders'
"Mr Explosive"
'70 Mustang



Back-up
babes might
not make cars
go faster, but
they gotta
make you feel
good in the
driver's seat



Both cars launched hard and ran strong, Sanders hitting a
5.784 at 246.08 and Miladinovich scoring a 6.050 at 233.80

Rick Rogers' Fighting Irish '78 Camaro made a strong burnout



But my eyes were locked on two-time CHRR champion John Hale's '68 with its absolutely stunning Rainbow wrap of Big Jim Dunn and his wife Diane's Fireman's Quickie fuel coupe – wow!



Meanwhile, ol' Nitro Nostrils was bewitched by Rick Rogers' back-up babe!



We all were!



As CHRR Grand Marshall, you know Big Jim was thrilled at this awesome tribute to the Dunn's famed fuel coupe



Lookin' good maybe, but both had problems, Hale cruising to a 7.04 at 152.81 as Rogers's 6.60 at 232.95 bumped rookie Justin Taylor



Marcus Lawson's '77 Trans Am had a solo run, made a strong burnout then started mixing cylinders while backing up



Things got worse with the engine spitting raw fuel at the hit, but it ran a 7.22 chasing a 6.72 bump, and then was DQ'd!



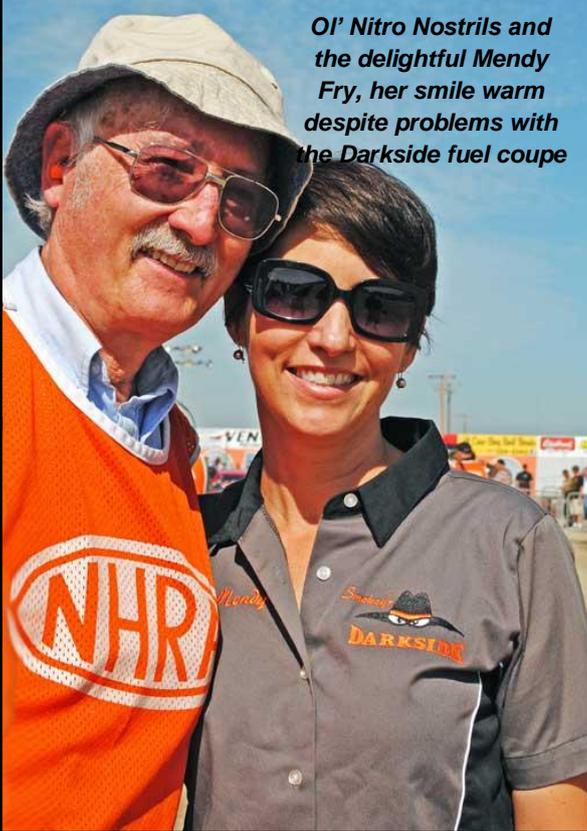
The artwork on Canadian Ryan Hodgson's controversial Camaro is far out!

Also on a solo pass, the car was staged like it was a final round and blasted off the line in a power blur, thundering down track to a 5.75 at 256.50 – not all the photographers were impressed by its passing!



Another bye run came from Kris Krabill with the Austin & O'Brien '78 Firebird - it too launched hard, but troubles slowed it to a coasting 9.15

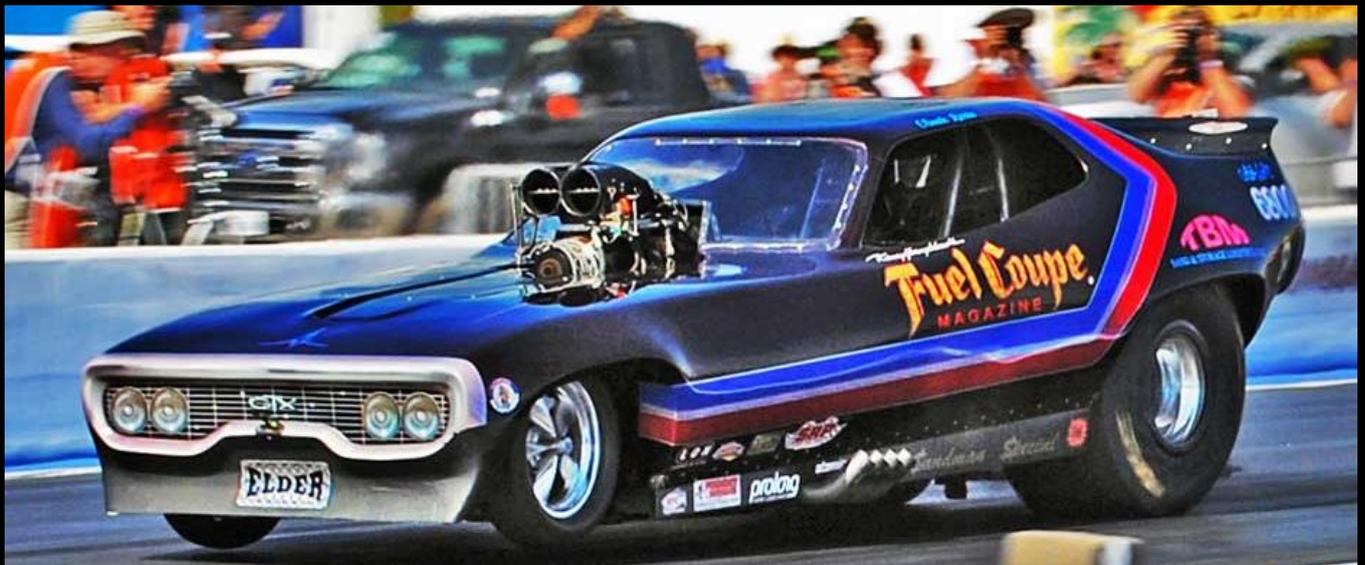




Ol' Nitro Nostrils and the delightful Mendy Fry, her smile warm despite problems with the Darkside fuel coupe



Then it was time for the final pair of fuel coupes with more thundering launches from side-by-side Canadians - split for fun! Nathan Sitko's 1977 Plymouth Arrow slowed to a 10.92...



...Claude Lavoie's debut of his '72 Satellite bannered for Kenny Youngblood's Fuel Coupe Magazine thrilled fans as it carried the wheels beyond the tree before it was clicked off early to a 6.25, good for 14th until it was DQ'd to 33rd position – the sixth DQ of the session!



Ground pounding side-by-side burnouts opened the Top Fuel session as I headed for the parking lot

"Wow," I thought, "What a morning..." We'd seen, felt and smelt the ground-shaking power of 33 fuel coupes attacking the track to leave a 6.45 bump spot; 16 of 'em had thundered to beyond 228mph, with seven in the 240 range and a pair over 250. Eleven cars ran in the five second bracket, half a dozen in the 5.70's - and that's cool for an off-the-trailer session any day! And Jason Rupert's thundering 259 mph pole with a 5.65 had been spectacular. Then I recalled that this year's CHRR had three nitro Q sessions for the first time - "Wow," indeed, things could only get better - for the racers and fans, a thought that set me to laughing out loud at just how good things were. Yesterday at this time my pal Wojtek, American Autoparts' manager, had been driving us in his Golf en route to Heathrow - and most things are better than being in London's M25 mobile traffic jam, even with Wojtek's company!



**Sunny California
seemed a lifetime
away...**



...it's not really, but even on Air New Zealand's super smooth 777 luxu sky-cruisers it's a long way to Famoso from Fornton 'eaff - especially when you land at 3.16am UK time!

Time to Los Angeles	0:01
Local Time at London	3:18 am
Local Time at Los Angeles	7:18 pm

Generally the thought of any time-difference never enters my head; sometimes I've been a tad tired, but just waited for bedtime! However, after clearing Customs & immigration, picked up our hire-car and driven up to our Motel 6, Bakersfield's famed Six on Olive it was close to 24hours since my daughter Sarah been woken by a business call and she was tired! It'd been easy to suggest she slept in, then took time to enjoy the pool, and now I was set to make the first of my daily commutes to pick her up for breakfast, aiming to be back at the track for the second fuel coupe Q session...

It's not the best lookin' truck in the world, but once inside it's a true luxu-ride that's not only oh-so comfortable, but quick and fast, making my journey pure pleasure!

Talking of which, Sarah was still chillaxin' by the pool at the Six on Olive and I was floating on a wave of NitroPower! But we were both hungry and soon hit the road to Denny's, seeking sustenance for the long day ahead an' j'st lovin' those blue skies, and that the Sheriff was already in pursuit!

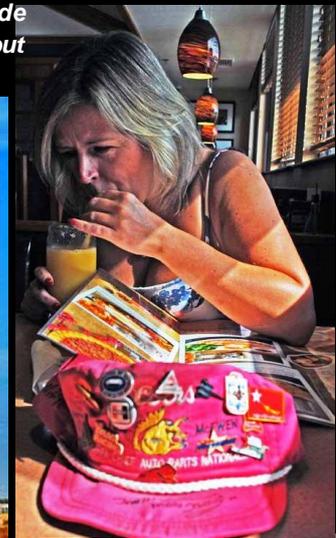
All set to peel out of the motel, but here comes the Sheriff, and he was comin' at speed!



The first car we saw at the track!



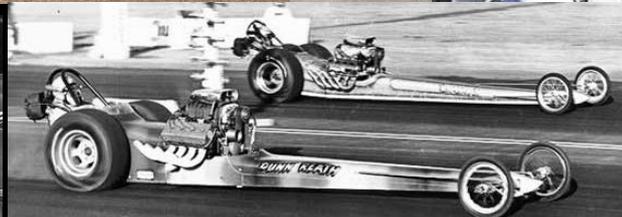
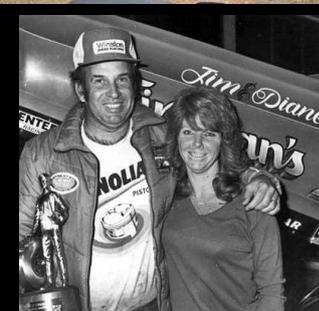
Crazy California, where the sun and road warriors rule - if we're lucky!



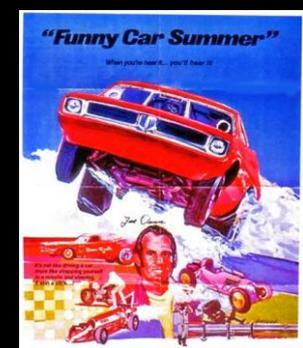


And today we were lucky - in spades...
 The first American dragster Sarah saw was a stunning introduction to the magic of the California Hot Rod Reunion – Jim Dunn’s famed “Rainbow Car” (a beautiful restoration by Pete Eastwood and Derek Bower of the Dunn & Reath AA/FD), his last rail before switching to nitro funny cars in 1970.

A head turner back in the day, even more so now, and we were not alone in stopping to admire and shoot it



2015 CHRR Grand Marshall Jim Dunn won the March Meet beat over 125 fuelers (WOW!) with it in 1969. At left Big Jim and his wife Diane celebrate their 1981 NHRA Winternationals victory in their Fireman’s Quickie nitro funny car (photo & data courtesy nhra.com)



Big Jim and his back-motored AA/FC starred in Funny Car Summer back in 1972



Imagine drowning in psychedelic sea of Rat Fink tee shirts! For now though, it was as if we were strolling back in time



Big Jim k’boom’d it at the legendary Lion’s Dragstrip (photo courtesy [Dragster Insider at nhra.com](http://dragsterinsider.com)) Varmit, a 1967 AA/Gas dragster, was restored a couple of years ago as an AA/FD. Walking round the back of a trailer as it fired into life was an awesome treat – especially when he cracked it wide open and Sarah’s jaw dropped!



It was good to see this pooch wearing some really cool ear defenders - and fashionable too!



“I’ll be alright,” she’d said when asked if she wanted ear plugs, but changed her mind at the hit of the throttle, “I’d forgotten how loud they were,” Sarah told me with a happy chuckle



Beautiful recreated, the Waterman-Hampshire AA/FD set the 1320 record at Fontana Ca in 1965 with a 7.51

This replica Freight Train was a huge hit with Cacklefest fans, spitting fire despite being a gasser!



Hot work despite the shade!

In 1967 the twin Chevy powered Freight Train was the first AA/ GD over 200mp, ran Top Time (speed) and low ET of 7.30 and 200 at the U.S. Nationals driven by Floyd Lippencotte Jr (aka Bob Muravez)



There were a bunch of wild wheelie cars at Famoso. Never got to see them in action, but they sure looked good with such a fine star spangled backcloth



Sizzler, Cacklin'



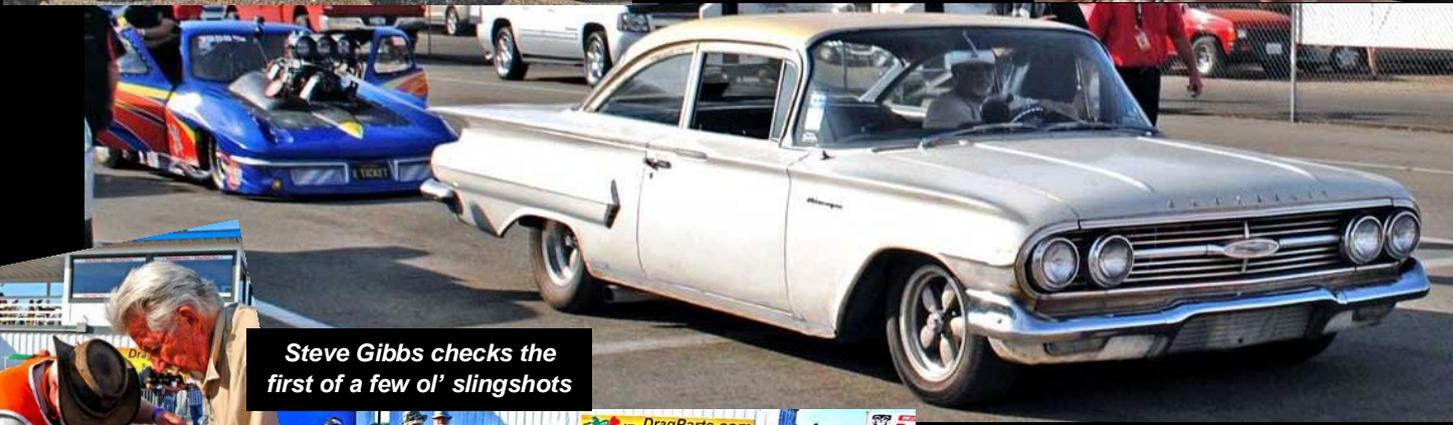
The legendary Speed Sport Special, a nitro burning A/Modified Roadster from 1957 is fully restored and resides at the NHRA's Motorsports Museum and is a long-time fan favourite at the Cacklefest. A stark contrast to the smooth back-motored beauty is Tony Nancy's AA/FD Sizzler, owned by John Neas. [Click here to see Sizzler Cacklin' at the DoubleTree](#); it's a delight to behold





From 1954, the full-bodied Silhouette slingshot turned heads whether parked up or moving – much like this smile from Steve Gibbs' delightful, and very hard working daughter Cindy who runs the Annual CHRR Charity Auction each year amongst other things. Suddenly our stroll amongst these giants from the past came to a rapid end as the sound and the fury of two blown Pro Mod cars thundering off the start line caused Sarah to hastily adjust her ear plugs, walking into my frame as I tried to shoot this tri-tone Chevy coupe towing a colourful and very much blown Pro Mod Corvette towards the track. After walking her to the bleachers I returned to prepare for the next onslaught of NitroThunder

In 2010 Cindy and her pal Gwen had a real **Cackle in the Ewald's AA/FD's**



Steve Gibbs checks the first of a few ol' slingshots



Pam Conrad gets down for the shot



Seconds after the Rice & Williams AA/FD passed, the sound of nitro power filled the air as the first pair of fuel coupes fired for Q2

Sarah's first race in 25 years got off to a brilliant start with side-by-side burnouts from pole sitter Ryan Hodgson and Kris Krabill



Then we enjoyed a good ol' drag race. Krabill led from the start but Hodgson was catching up fast, the air filled with NitroThunder and the ground shaking as they blasted pass



Ryan Hodgson took pole by a hundredth, with a new NHRA nostalgia speed mark for fuel coupes at 262.28 mph, becoming the fourth member of the Legends of Nitro 260 MPH Club. Krabill made the show with a solid 5.81 at 242.95 mph



Sarah was alone when the session began, but was lucky that her first NHRA race had such a stunning display of power

Nathan Sitko made a solo pass next and lopped five seconds of his previous shot, moving into the field with a 5.90 at 247mph. Cory Lee was part of a pair, but his opponent had problems and was pushed off, leaving Lee to improve even more, moving from a lowly 13 to a strong 5.84 at 250 in the California Hustler



And she was soon having fun in the bleachers across the track



Mendy Fry made a power burnout in the Darkside Challenger while the Hot 4 Teacher Mustang didn't even get up on the tyre! But fans got a close side-by-side start making for an exciting race as the Mustang tried to improve its position and the Challenger chased the 6.27 bump spot



They stayed together most of the way, then we heard a k'boom and Darkside made a move, slowing to a 7.25 while the Mustang's 6.07, 228 failed to improve. And as you can see from these Snips below from Les Mayhew's video (shot for [Competition Plus TV](#)), Mendy Fry's Chevy power plant let loose violently and her race was done



Click the link and enjoy [153seconds of non-stop nostalgia nitro funny car action](#) from Friday's qualifying by CPTV on YouTube



With the track being cleaned it seemed time to switch lanes, and Sarah came to visit wearing a smile, happy with the action and enjoying the company of Seattle based fans. The nitro, stronger than expected, made her eyes water – but she was lovin' it, grinning wide when I said there were 20 more fuel coupes to come!



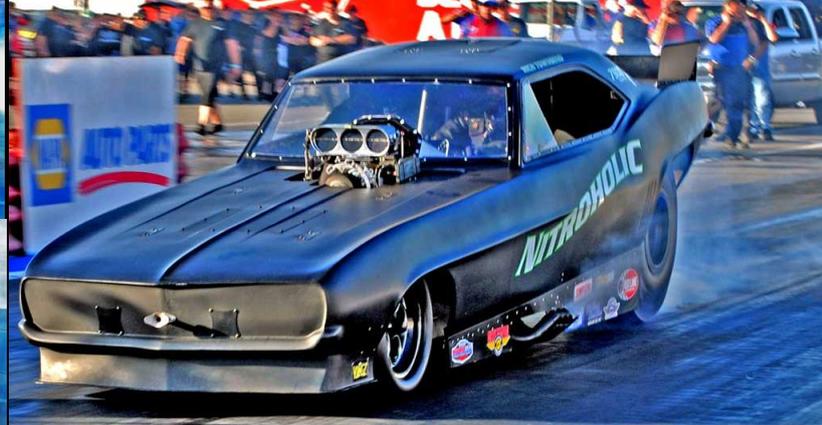
Shortly later the aroma of nitro power was strong as the next pair launched, but both failed to improve



Spooky lookin' side-by-side burnouts! The Mustang got good traction and rocketed down track. Cruz had problems at the hit, just cruising to 12.61!



Meanwhile, Konno was up on the tyre and haulin' the mail, making the field with a 5.89, but top end troubles slowed him to only 209mph



Richard Townsend would probably love sponsor names on his flanks...

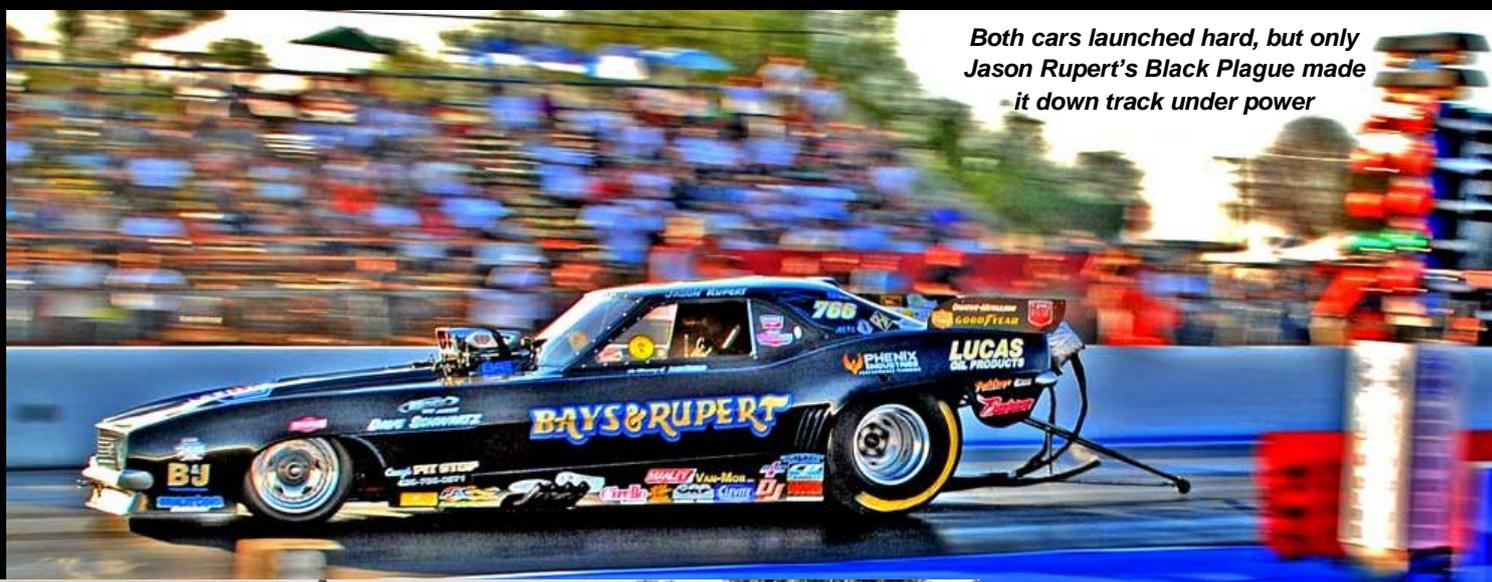


Nitro overload, lucky lass!

...but the bare black looks bitchin' as Nitroholic burns out side-by-side with Jason Rupert, and even while backing up



Both cars launched hard, but only Jason Rupert's Black Plague made it down track under power



He carded another 5.65, a tad faster at 259.76 while Townsend's Nitroholic limped to an 11.39



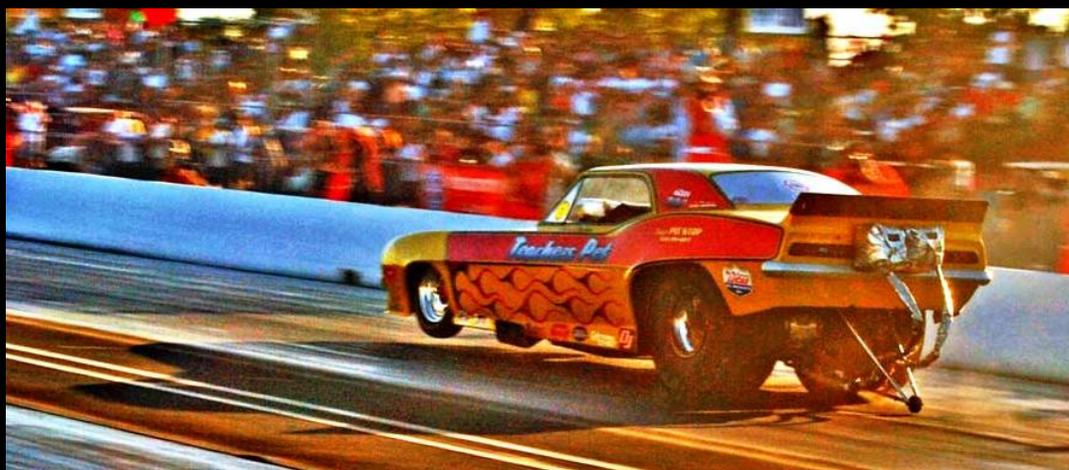
Tony Betts appeared to have things sorted on his burnout...



...the Isky Cams apparel looked cool on his back-up babe and Betts moved up to an 8.19. Matt Bynum failed to improve, but fans loved his wild wheel stand!



Another Brit, Steve Neimantas (left), over here with his crew of good guys from oop North, qualified 12th (7.63 on a 7.60 index) in the 32 car Nostalgia Eliminator field only to be DQ'd in the first round for a fluid leak on the start line. A bummer, but they had fun in the sun at Famoso

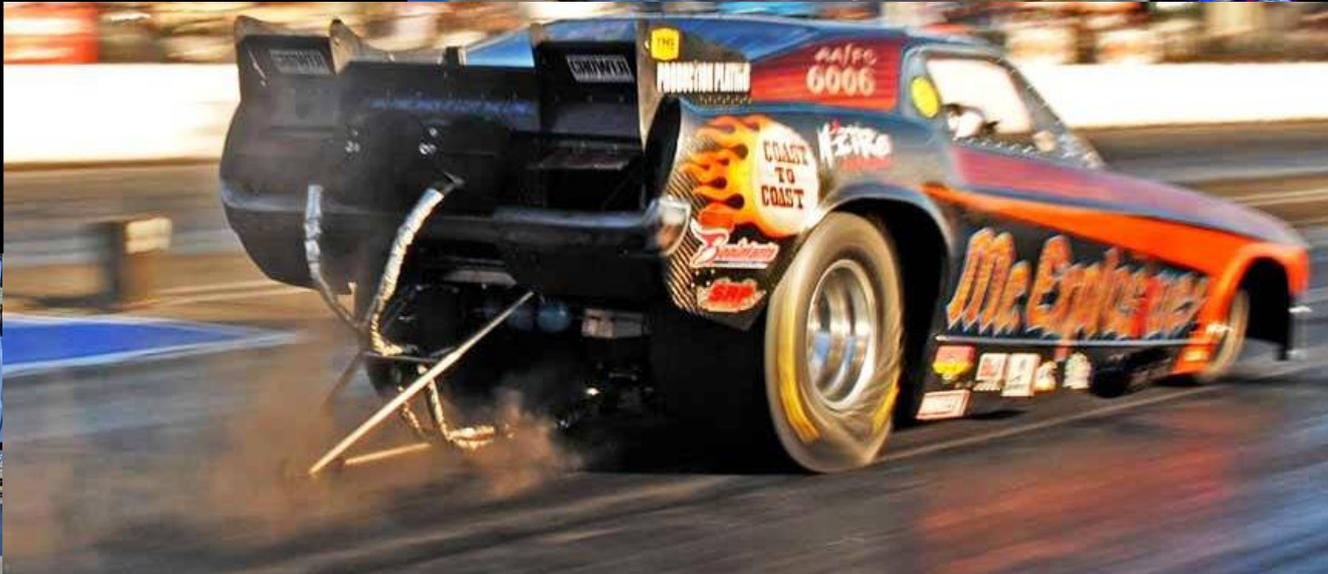


Teachers Pet was meant to race the Wasn't Easy Firebird, but driver Danny Gerber left before the lights ran and was DQ'd. Meanwhile Densham gave fans and pit-side photographers another wild wheelie, moving into the field with a stout 5.777 at 245.23. On our side of the track, I was fightin' the sun, but felt this image had enough fuel coupe action to warrant its use

With the sun getting lower, and a tad stronger, after enjoying the deep track burnouts with the back lit smoke from Shack Attack, it was time to hit the other side of the track



Mr Explosive thunders down track to stop the clocks with a 5.77, a tenth slower than before but faster at 253.61. Shack Attack had a troubled 6.41 194.72



"The Crop Duster" didn't improve with a 5.90, 230.25 - "The Quarter Pounder" did, but 6.003, 240.98 wasn't enough



And here come the back-up babes...



Sadly, their efforts didn't help the cars. Thompson's Jailbreak (6.16) and ex-pat Bazz Young (5.99) both fell short with Fighting Irish's 10.69 and the Patriot Mustang's 11.00 well shy of the mark. But they all tried - and didn't give the mop man any work!





A wild launch from Wally Giavia's G-Men, but he clicked it an' cruised - Justin Taylor's 6.21 227 was not even close



Already mixing cylinders, James Day clicked the Pedaler off with problems, but John Hale was on it all the way, the beautiful (even in a blur!) Fireman's Quickie thundering to a 5.681 at 246.26



Chasing a 5.963 bump spot, Marcus Lawson's Trans Am was spittin' fire an' fuel at the hit clicked it to 6.55 while Mark Meadors Good Times Camaro was a blur of power as he made the field with a 5.88 at 245.09. Claude Lavoie also thundered into field to take 11th with 5.841 at 241.32 in the Fuel Coupe Mopar, leaving the bump spot at 5.904. We now had 18 cars under 5.99, nine in the sixes - with one session left for Saturday; you knew it was goin' to be a doozy...



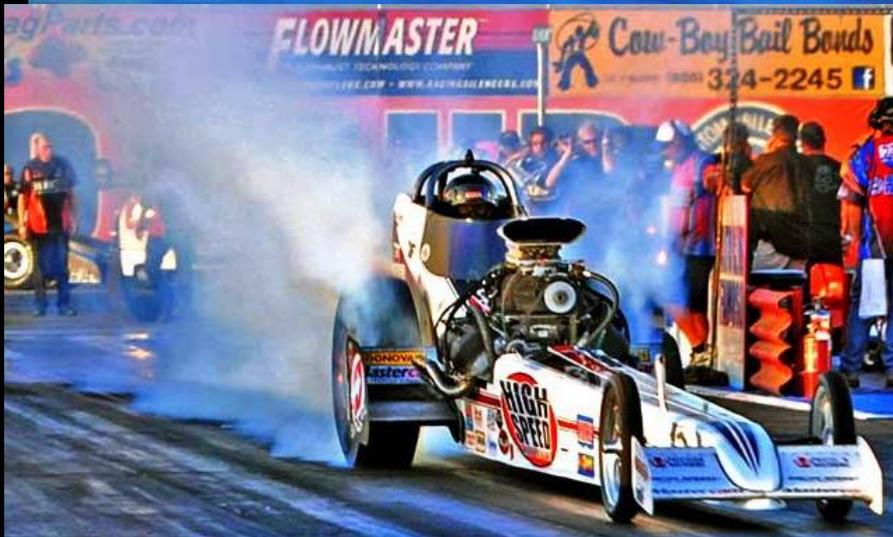
Is it real, resto or replica? Don't know - but I love it! The subtle, almost invisible nose art is cool, and I was wrapt while the AA/FD was pushed past by that hard working Jeep, a great way to enjoy the calm before the storm of Top Fuel's second Q session...



Sadly these modern nostalgia fuelers, to my eyes, are lacking in the beauty of the early slingshots. But when they fire up all is forgiven - the ground shakes and when they launch side-by-side the air fills with NitroThunder- and it is the real deal!



Rick White not only launched hard, he thundered down track to take pole with a 5.669 at 259.96. Rick Williamson's 6.778 at 144.29 made the field - for now!



Bill Dunlap, left, set pole in Q1 with a 5.69 at 241, and made a storming burnout before slowing to a 5.77 at 232.87 alongside Jim Murphy who moved up



Terry Cox, above, moved out strong on the hit, ran a fine 5.75 at 251.53 to move ahead of Ron August in the field, but not on track!

The Forever Young's ground pounding burnout was given added strength by the setting sun and it took the win light with a slower 5.87 at 235.37 - you know the team wished it'd been an elimination round!



Dusty Miller smoked 'em early in the Nitro Hemi at left...

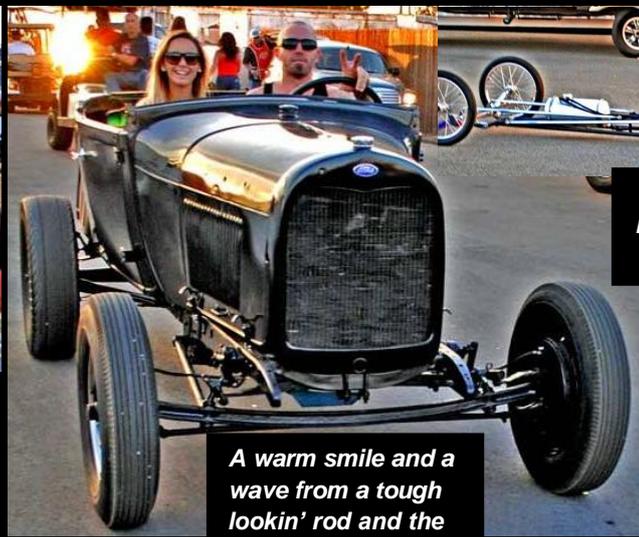


...but Tony Bartone's 5.585 at 242 was a tenth ahead of the field. At last an AA/FD quicker than the fuel coupes!

Two time NHRA Heritage series winner Adam Sorokin closed the day with a full power launch in his swoopy Champion Speed Shop liner, the mighty mouse motor (SB Chevy Ed) already spittin' death fire and clicked early for a 5.96 at only 190mph to make the show



Media Motel check-out time!



A warm smile and a wave from a tough lookin' rod and the passing of this wild truck showed the diversity of the CHRR's visitors



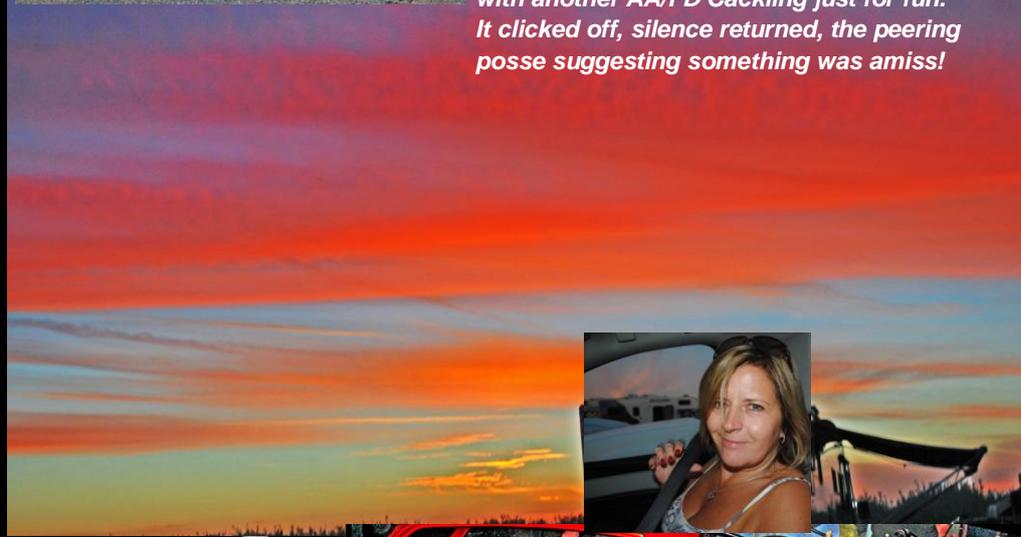
Alan Bockla's AA/FD ran the first 200 in Colorado, a 200.44mph in 1964. See this re-creation [fire-up and cackle](#)



Our day at the CHRR ended as it began, with another AA/FD Cackling just for fun. It clicked off, silence returned, the peering posse suggesting something was amiss!



A favourite NASCAR expression from back in the day was "belly down, chasing a hurrying sunset," used towards the end of a many a race. It came to mind while we strolled across the dusty parking lot as, in an instant, the sky turned to what you see at left – talk about an awesome way to end Sarah's first day in California, and when I asked if she'd had fun, well her smile says it all. Although we were running late, we made it to the Doubletree in time for some Cackle!



Sarah loved the Cacklin' fuel car across the yard



Then they fired the amazing Fuel Cuda under our faces, sadly it ran just methanol, but it blew her away as the ground shook beneath our feet! After that we met my ol' pal Harlan Thompson and his mentor Jerry "The King" Ruth, true racing legends, Jerry put Harlan in his first fuel coupe back in 1970. A few years later, [Harlan changed the face of British drag racing forever](#). Click it to read the story at DRO



Bob Brown photo courtesy [wdif.com](#)





Saturday was different as we went up the top end, lookin for some high-speed thunder, but got to enjoy this good lookin' slingshot burbling by. Then a 50's custom Mercury convertible sedan and the 1954 Silhouette. It'd looked cool in the pits, but in the sun - wow!



And pushed by a genuine 50's custom convertible sedan! WOW!



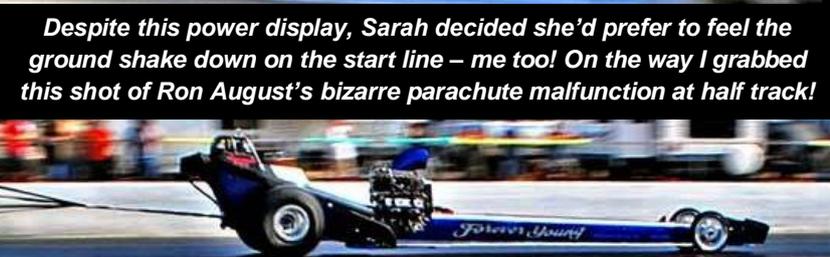
Then we saw a true nitro legend, the awesome Howard Cams Twin Bears. Its plywood "spoiler" above (1960 photo courtesy [Hot Rod Magazine](#)) was replaced for its appearance at the Cacklefest



Alongside, Terry Cox's Cheetah IV ran a 5.88, a tenth behind his earlier 5.794



And then we got some real NitroThunder as Tony Bartone gave us a new low ET of 5.56!



Despite this power display, Sarah decided she'd prefer to feel the ground shake down on the start line - me too! On the way I grabbed this shot of Ron August's bizarre parachute malfunction at half track!

We grabbed some cold Buds in sponsor support! An' then in y'face, ground pounding NitroThunder as fuel coupes go hard or go home!



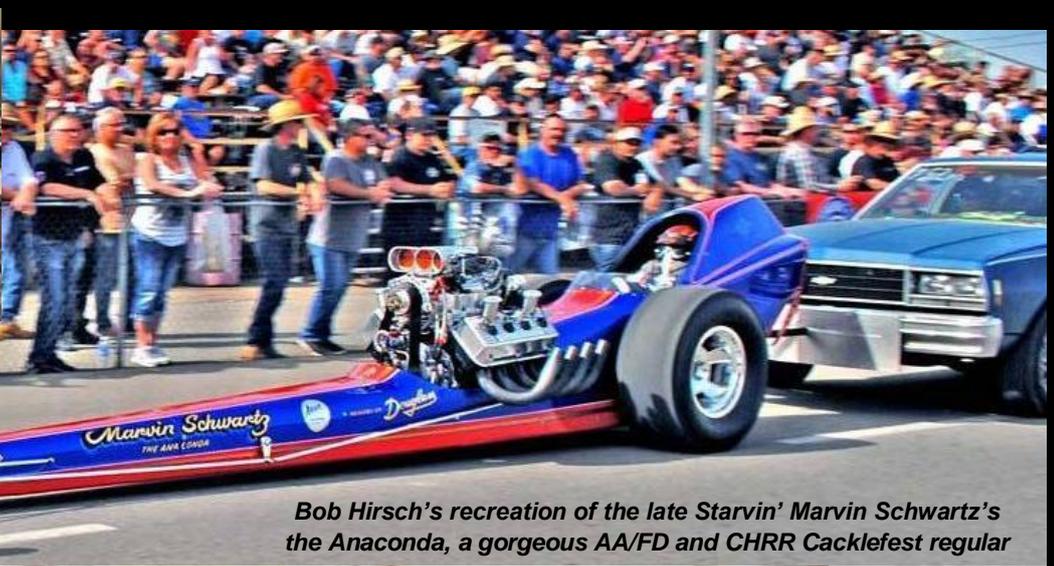
Nathan Sitko put half a car on pole sitter Ryan Hodgson, qualifying with a 5.819 at 251.02. Quarter Pounder and G-MEN missed the cut, but I loved its wild wheel stand! Fighting Irish turned right at the hit and its day was done



A strong 5.683 at 257.24 put a smiling Mark Sanders fourth later in the session



(Anaconda Cackle photo courtesy hotrod.com)



Bob Hirsch's recreation of the late Starvin' Marvin Schwartz's the Anaconda, a gorgeous AA/FD and CHRR Cacklefest regular



Enjoying that sweet slingshot meant being late shootin' the Runnin' Wild Camaro, but I liked what I got! Tony Betts' run was too little, too late but you know he loved it! They'd sorted his "fit in the seat" problems and the throttle blades went wide open to score a 6.11 at 245.85. And it did look good!

Code Red's race ended as it began, sideways and DNQ'd! "Pepe's Pizza Parlor," a 1964 car, owned, restored, and driven by Aaron Von Minden seems to be a work in progress – love to see and hear it when it's done



Cory Lee waited awhile, but a 5.809 at 251.81 took 10th. Fans loved Jailbreak, but Brad Thompson's 6.132 at 229.39 didn't do it, while Rian Konno's 5.898 at 235.31 ended as the bump spot.



Mark White's 5.660 at 239.19 moved The Crop Duster up to third. There was more ground pounding NitroThunder, but other cars failed to improve

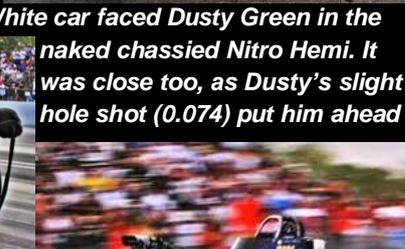
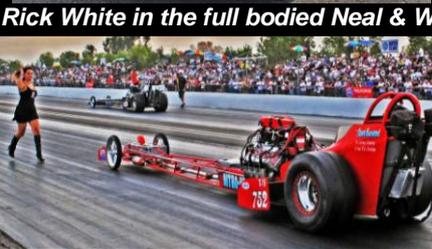




After such a powerful afternoon, it was easy to take a stroll, hoping perhaps for some quite, yeah right! We tripped over the Wild Willie Borsch tribute fuel coupe and the Beaver Hunter fuel altered - Cacklin' just for fun! 5.809



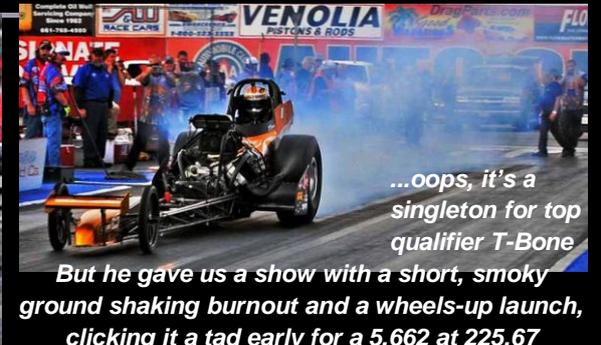
Enjoyed the passing of this two tone Chrysler New Yorker push car, then had a quick chat with Adam Sorokin, being towed to the pairing lanes, ready to race! Shortly later, the sun was getting low; the bleachers were packed and Top Fuel eliminations began with a great drag race



Rick White in the full bodied Neal & White car faced Dusty Green in the naked chassied Nitro Hemi. It was close too, as Dusty's slight hole shot (0.074) put him ahead



By the 1320 foot mark, Rick White had moved by, taking the stripe with a 0.013 MOV, his 5.706, 253.61 beating Dusty Green's best run of the weekend a 5.793 at 248.98. What a race - fire the next pair...



...oops, it's a singleton for top qualifier T-Bone

But he gave us a show with a short, smoky ground shaking burnout and a wheels-up launch, clicking it a tad early for a 5.662 at 225.67

Engine problems took out a pair of cars making for more singles, with Bill Dunlap (at left) driving his full-bodied High Speed car all the way through for a stout 5.698 at 252.10mph before we saw a 5.743 oil bath at 212.86 alongside a clicked off 6.341 at 182.08. Adam Sorokin also got a hole shot (0.076), on Rick Williamson, the Champion Speed Shop 'liner nose-high and thunderin' to victory - then a throttle cable broke and its flames went out and Williamson moved on with 5.963 win at 226.43. Life's a bitch, especially in Top Fuel!



Oh well, only one side-by-side run to run! No problem, we all enjoyed the sound of total tastes of eight trunks trumpeting and, no matter how briefly, felt the noise and smelt the power as the drivers turned 'em loose, and some burnouts were pretty cool too. During a time of quiet earlier I'd visited Cindy Gibbs to give her some Nitro Thunder A4 images as below. Sadly the original vanished and I've only this not very hi-res copy left!



Meant for her auction, they'd obviously been larger, and suggested "Ace" McCulloch, who I'd met the previous evening (yes, he did indeed sign my cap!), might like a copy too, and got a warm hug in appreciation. I'd also met a dude named Joe up in the bleachers, he'd stopped me and said, "I've been watching," adding with a chuckle, "and you've been workin' hard out there." "Yeah, but with all these nitro funny cars, it's a lot of fun too they're j'st blowin' me away!" "Right," Joe replied with a big grin, "If'n you wanna take a break, give me your vest an' I'd love t'spell you awhile." It seemed Joe was a long time fan of fuel coupes, and it was fun chatting for awhile. Then I'd gifted him with a copy which put a big smile in his face.

Shortly later while the Safety Safari cleaned the track, I'd seen the Snake sitting in a buggy just behind me, waiting quietly for the first round of fuel coupe eliminations



It was a no-brainer, so I'd asked one of the fans to get the poster back from Joe, "Just tell him I need it for a minute please." After renewing my acquaintance with Snake I'd told him Joe was a "nice ol' dude who loves funny cars," adding, "I'm sorry the Blue Max is beating you in Texas," chuckle as I added, "but you're doing it to Ace at Pomona." "Cool," Snake had said before I'd added, "he doesn't know I'm doing this, but if you'd sign it to Joe I'd really appreciate it and you'd make his weekend." "No problem," he replied doing just that, adding, "Nice shots," as he'd handed it back wearing a grin

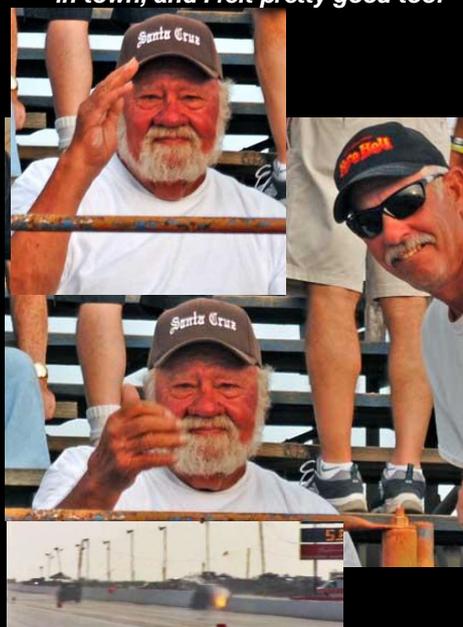


These 1987 shots of Snake's Skoal Bandit with the Blue Max at the Texas Motorplex and Ace's Miller Olds at Pomona are

It was a pleasure saying thanks to the Snake, and when it was given back by one of Sarah's pals from Seattle, Joe was the happiest guy in town, and I felt pretty good too!



a bonus for fuel coupe lovers who'd have liked to see the image larger!



(mcSnip courtesy nitroamerica)

Meanwhile, back at the Patch it's time to fire the next pair...



First alternate Don Hudson stepped up with his Trans Am after Mark Meadors Camaro hit the wall in Q3 and he put a visible hole shot on Jason Rupert, the air filling with NitroThunder as the bitchin' black Camaro rapidly thundered by to a 5.734, 252.61 win over Hudson's 5.996 at 223.39

Canadian Nathan Sitko left on Mark Sanders too, but the Mr Explosive Mustang soon blasted by to take victory with a 5.749 at 249.86 over a 5.962 at 245.54





And then I switched to a mini Canon (these frames taken from movies), as another Canadian, Claude Lavoie got a good launch in his Mopar (at left), but Marc White's big burnout paid off, "The Duster Monza" was long gone, storming to a 5.66



at 258.22 with Lavoie trailing NitroFire to a 5.82



Rian Konno also failed to answer the call so Danny Gerber stepped up in his Wasn't Easy Firebird - and got a hole shot! But pole sitter Ryan Hodgson soon ran him down, taking an easy win with a 5.769 at 256.06 as Gerber clicked early to a 6.86

I recall thinking "WOW! Three out of four side-by-side thunder runs ain't too shabby," as the beautiful Fireman's Quickie made what should've been a burnout but wasn't, while Matt Bynum's plain Jane Mustang shook the ground as he smoked 'em past the tree



We saw the difference as the lights turned green - the Mustang was up and long gone



Their passing was a ground shaking power blur of colour and thunder as they blasted down track, NitroFire blazing from both cars



Fans went nuts as the win light went to the Mustang - Matt Bynum's 0.087 hole shot kept his 5.783 at 251.95 ahead of John Hale's 5.793, 254.52 - great race



We had more NitroThunder when newly crowned 2015 NHRA Heritage Funny Car Champion, Steve Densham met Kris Krabill. The Bardahl Camaro left the line ahead of Teachers Pet by 0.05seconds, blasting away as Densham's front wheels lifted at the hit and carried a long way - an' I got more in y'face NitroFire as they blew by, Krabill's 5.702 at 255.10 taking it over Densham's 5.723 at 248.02 Our next race was even closer, with just 0.01 of a second between Dan Horan's Patriot Mustang and Cory Lee's Firebird off the line, the Patriot's stripes visible through Lee's window as they thundered by seemingly locked together



Horan's 5.891, 248.66 won over Lee's 5.902 at 249.07 by inches!



The final pair was James Day in the Pedaler Challenger alongside Richard Townsend's Nitroholic Camaro, and we enjoyed another side-by-side duel, although the colourful Pedaler led all the way with 0.044 hole shot, taking the stripe with a 5.820 at 249.35 over Nitroholic's 5.837 at 249.21



Suddenly the world went quite - wow! What a day - and it wasn't over yet. To me and thousands of other fans of NitroThunder, the annual California Hot Rod Reunion is the greatest show earth, and not just for the racing, the Cacklefest adds greatly to the entertainment value and more than helps fill the bleachers for this singular Saturday spectacular. Unlike the wimpy Santa Pod noise-0-rama's, it's a non-stop parade of old school, blown an' injected, nitro burning slingshot dragsters push-started to Cackle slowly down in front of the packed bleachers before filling to track with their amazing display of Cacklin' NitroFire. But first they fired up a jet funny car



Taking a deep breath I ran from the bleachers to escape this cloud, shootin' from the hip with my Nikon before being swallowed by the thick wall of smoke and was way happy with this shot!

I'm not a big fan of jets, but TV Tommy Ivo is, and watching him grinning from ear-to-ear atop the newly restored glass-side trailer was pure pleasure... After the jet had run we chatted for awhile and I wished him well, knowing that he'd be leading the parade from this perch, with his Barnstormer AA/FD beautifully lit on display inside, both of them being owned and restored by Ron Johnson



A CHRR tradition sees the honourees introduced and driven in hot rods in front of the spectators, then the historic cars and teams are also announced as they enter the floodlit track, an amazing, unique non-stop stream of classic race cars being pushed slowly down the quarter mile. Once they'd pulled off at the top end, their drivers would suit up, the rails ready to be fired into life for the big Saturday night show

Click this link to see all the [Cackle cars on parade](http://Cacklefest.com) at Cacklefest.com...



Many of the push trucks are really cool, like the gold beauty pushing the Speed sport Roadster, the white on at left pushing the Gingrass &



Dearmore AA/FD and the wild flamed pick-up at right. Often cars are used, with many as classy as the dragsters ahead of them, like this chop top, flathead Ford hot rod, that two tone DeSoto at right and a convertible Studebaker ragtop!



Roger Garten's much loved War Horse AA/FC

Before the Cacklefest, the Tocco-Harper-Garten AA Fuel Altered was fired up on the start line in memory of its driver, Roger Garten who lost his life earlier this year in a racing incident at Famoso



Although I'd moved up into the bleachers with Sarah and her new buddies from Seattle, no matter where it's viewed from, the CHRR Cacklefest is always an AWESOME experience!



Original driver Chip Woodall spittin' NitroFire in Peebles & Williams' 1971 car (at right above) with its genuine gold plating! This gorgeous Cadillac push started Jack Gilett's Mailliard Sidewinder shorty fuel car at right





Cacklefest

With its driver in the trunk, even though it ran gas, the Fuel Cuda is way cool! And, in its own way, the two-tone DeSoto push car is too, especially from here



Fire-breathing fuel cars kept on coming an' Cacklin' The Anaconda's swoopy bodywork is far removed from the open cockpits here

The ultra-powerful AA Gas legend Freight Train had fire-tipped headers, but Cackle fans love the iconic ChiZler's real-deal NitroFire-breathing weed burners



meSnips courtesy CPTV



Dennis Young's Ash Marshall "Scorcher" AA/FD from Australia - my pick for a "wall of fire" award! This image invoked memories of squatting next to Tom Hanna as he lit 'em up large back in 2010 at the DoubleTree. One car making a display like this at Pod would keep us happy!!

First saw the Fighting Irish fueler at Goodwood in 2008 - Dave West (below) was still Cacklin' strong, and the Fuel Altereds were adding to the spectacle!



meSnips courtesy CPTV



Cacklefest



Attention Pod people this is a single car Cacklin'



CompetitionPlus.TV Drag Racing's World Magazine



Click the link to enjoy hundreds of high-quality images from the 2015 CHRR Cacklefest

Dunn & Reath's magnificent Rainbow AA/FD, finished just in time for the CHRR, the last car to Cackle onto the track



CompetitionPlus.TV Drag Racing's World Magazine

And then last hemi Cackled out, the track now filled with legends and wearing a cloud covering of spent nitro as the fans showed their appreciation for a great show

The crew from Competition Plus TV (Les Mayhew, Tera Wendland and Bobby Bennett made the best Cacklefest movie ever - pour a beverage and click the link for 36 minutes and 14 seconds of the CHRR Cacklefest seen as never before. It's superbly mixed, with multiple cameras providing unique views of a truly amazing event. Being there was awesome, but this film added much magic to our memories. Crank it up and enjoy...

After thanking the Seattle crew for entertaining my daughter, and accepting an invitation to join them Sunday, we said farewell and made our way down to the start line. Sarah didn't say much as we crossed the track, just lay down with a happy, nitro fueled smile



Roger G was also beaming, as was Eurodragster's Simon when he joined us for some après race banter. In fact we all wore a well sated afterglow, not just from a long day of NitroThunder, but two days of NitroNirvana an' California sunshine - with more to come on Sunday!

The second round of fuel coupe racing was scheduled to begin straight after the National Anthem, pre-race ceremonies and mini-static Cackle. Always a great way to start the day, but somehow my plans went out the window... No problem, we were heading off on a four day road trip later, so it was easy to chill out, not caring that Denny's was busy at lunchtime (it was Sunday after all!), when we arrived for breakfast! A family of four climbed out from the big ol' Buick, the dad popping the hood to remove a battery cable, a simple anti-theft precaution of quite a desirable set of wheels with its gleaming trim and subtle flames. Once inside and finding the Talladega 500 "live" on TV, I just sat back and enjoyed. Breakfast was good, and so was the racing on the box, Dale Jr was leading, and the high banked circuit always provides action aplenty.



With a need of some NitroThunder, once we'd had our fill, it was a case of hit 'em up and move 'em out, the rapid drive to the track an affirmation that our Cadillac SRX was no slouch on the highway - or through the wild sweeping curves leading onto Famoso Road!



As Sarah had expressed a desire to show the Seattle guys some appreciation for their hospitality, I'd snuck a six-pack in under my jacket! It was easy to enjoy the cool bikes and this trio of tough lookin' rides as we drove in behind the bleachers. After a brief chat, I'd set off to park the Cadillac in the pits and grab a few shots needed for Classic American on the walk back



With plenty of space, the pits at Famoso are always an entertaining stroll, ex-pat Brian Gibbons burbling by in a "sixty too ugly," a 1962 Dodge Dart A/FX, en route to the pairing lanes for some race-track action

The roar of a Tiger is always a head turner, for me and the kid, as Brian Gibbons wild '64 Le Mans "Pouncin' Poncho" rumbled by, also heading for the start line...



With thoughts of some heavy metal racing, it was easy to just grab shots of the parked up AA/FD's in passing, but I did stop to chat with Mooneyes' Shige Sukanuma. We renewed our friendship with much laughter. As ever, it was thrill to see Mooneyes still gleaming more than 50 years on from making the UK's first single digit quarter mile and also that Shige was still enjoying caring for it

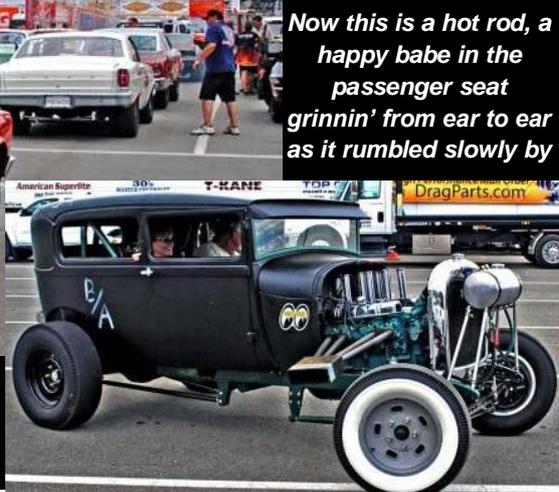


(mcSmokin'Snips from Silverstone 1963 courtesy timetravelDVDs)



Love the reflected power-plant on the needle nose body, and **Mooneyes**, wow!

aa/fc courtesy nhra.com



Now this is a hot rod, a happy babe in the passenger seat grinnin' from ear to ear as it rumbled slowly by

And this is heavy metal, wall-to-wall A/FX machines ready to race - so I guess we weren't too late! David Franklyn's 429, 1961 Ford Galaxie and Justyn Ruby's 1965 Plymouth with a 426 hemi lined up together above



Rob Patton's 1969 Road Runner paired up with Doug Hampton's 427 '66 Ford Fairlane, with the Pouncin' Poncho moving out to take on the "Sixty too ugly" Plymouth, but it's a long walk to the bleachers, especially when you stop to chat with a babe, so missed 'em!



Hampton ran a 10.05 in qualifying, but the 427 Ford slowed to 10.35, not enough to hold off Patton's top end charge and the Mopar's 10.07



A great race here as Ruby's red hemi got the hole shot, but Franklyn's 429 Galaxie took it by with a 9.37 at 130 to the hemi's oh-so-close 9.43 at a charging 143.59. Old Yeller later made it to the A/FX final, but went down to Steve Whitmore's '67 427 Mustang



More side-by-side action came in the A/Gas eliminator quarter finals – a 7.60 index, heads up an' anything goes, and the racing was bitching! A pair of nitrous cars got things rolling, and Tom Fowler's 1970 Camaro was spot on here with a 7.600 at 164 as Keith Morovich's '67 Nova went too quick at 7.55, 175mph, and ol' Nitro Nostrils was filling his lens with start line action as you'd expect



...and no doubt the buxom babes with the two-tone shoebox too! Guess they helped as Peter Cogswell's '56 Chevy got a huge hole shot...



The blower cars sounded strong, Steve Faller's '63 Corvette ahead as they passed the tree, his 7.64 just beating a kissing close 7.66!



More laughing gas, and Steve Galileo's red '63 Corvette also had a half a car at the green, but Eric Bush's '67 Camaro was alongside by the tree, storming ahead, but then ran too quick with a 7.58 to the Corvette's spot on 7.600!



The final pair was a perfect match – one of each, with John Saliani's '63 'vette taking a slight lead, but Brendan Frye's blown '57 used a 7.642 to ace a close 7.660. Later, after five rounds of side-by-side A/Gas action, Frye's 7.569 took the event win when Faller's Corvette pulled a 0.007 red light! Although covered in Famoso's famous dust, that Challenger looks tough in the afternoon sun



Talk about feeling good, six balls out side-by-side races with each win coming in the last few feet – wow!

Then we got some wild AA/Charged hot rods!



The flamed Willys took half a car lead, but it was gone by the tree as Howard Anderson's '38 Chevy Coupe just powered away, it's 6.84 at 206 taking the stripe days ahead of the Willys



The next race was just about the same, with Mike Molea's '33 Willys taking a wheels up hole shot before it was taken away, this time by a Dorset Horn look-a-like!



Gary Reiner drove the '48 Austin to a strong win, his 6.89 at 208mph coming with more than just daylight between the two cars!



Howard Anderson's '38 Chevy Coupe later ran 6.552, 208.88 to beat Reiner's Austin in the class final. After 10 minutes of quiet small talk with Sarah's Seattle pals, the first pair of nostalgia funny car semi-finalists fired up to fill the air with the sweet, oh-so-powerful scent of NitroThunder. Jason Rupert's slow rolling burnout seemed almost gentle, but Kris Krabill's was a real ground pounder



They went a long way down track, backing up to a start area alive with colour, their subdued NitroThunder ready to be unleashed, the next pair lined up, waiting for their shot at glory

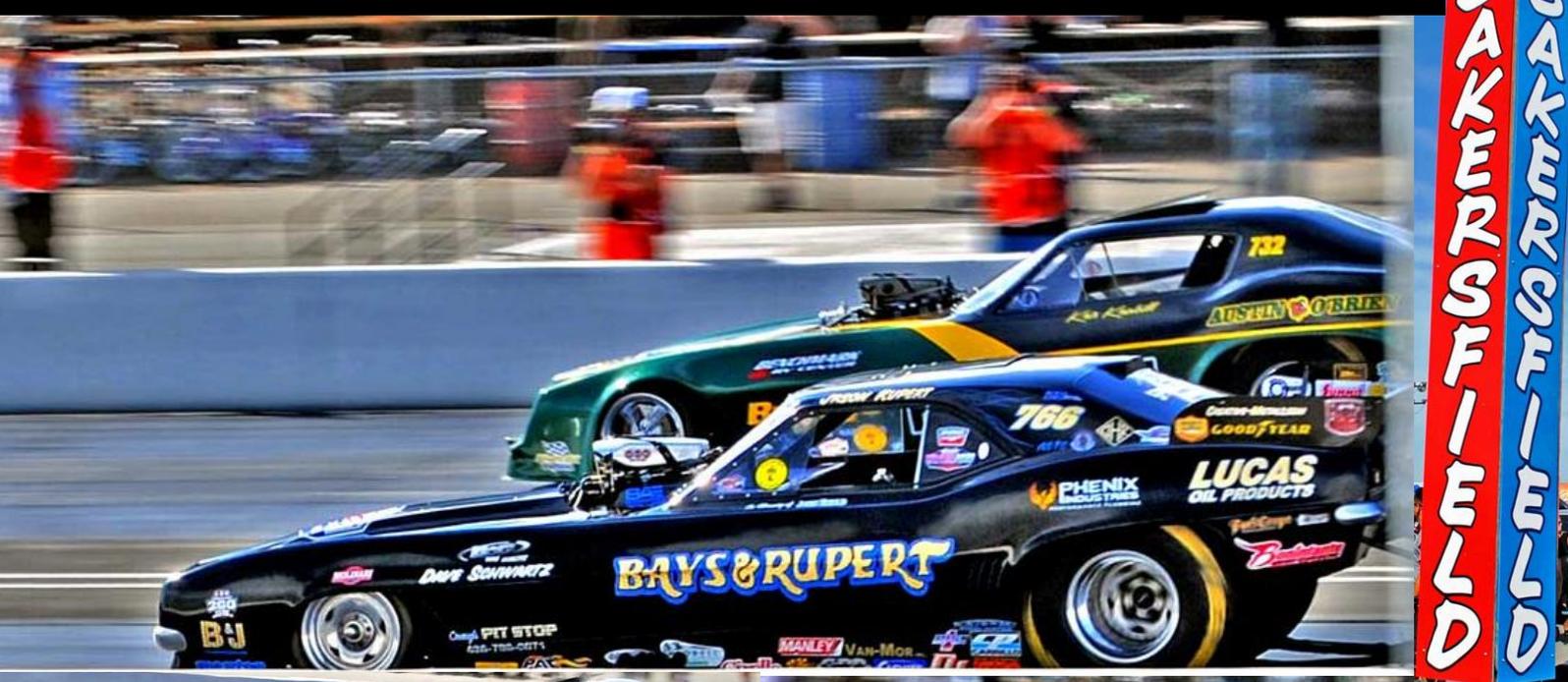


The Trans Am's 0.021 hole shot locked huge





Wow, what a race, fans cheering and the ground shaking as the fuel coupes thundered past the tree, Kris Krabill still, but as they blasted by the first light pole Rupert's Camaro seemed to be inching ahead, Nitro Nostrils taking a shot from his ladder



Racing side-by-side all the way, the two cars made the air move for top-end fans as the Black Plague Camaro took Jason Rupert to the CHRR finals, his 5.73 at 249.95mph taking Krabill's 5.82, 235



With their driver having overcome a hole shot, the winning crew went nuts at the start line...

...bleachers throbbing with excitement too - wow what a race!

What a good looking Mustang, but it burnout was not that strong...



...but the Camaro pounded the ground, trailing smoke, burning rubber for longer



The Camaro's stronger burnout went deep into the track, returning to a start line filled with electric expectations

Everyone is so stoked to be that close to the fuel coupe action - apart from the glum lookin' dude, his hands stuck deep in his pockets - just like the Kaiser on centre stage at the Pod!

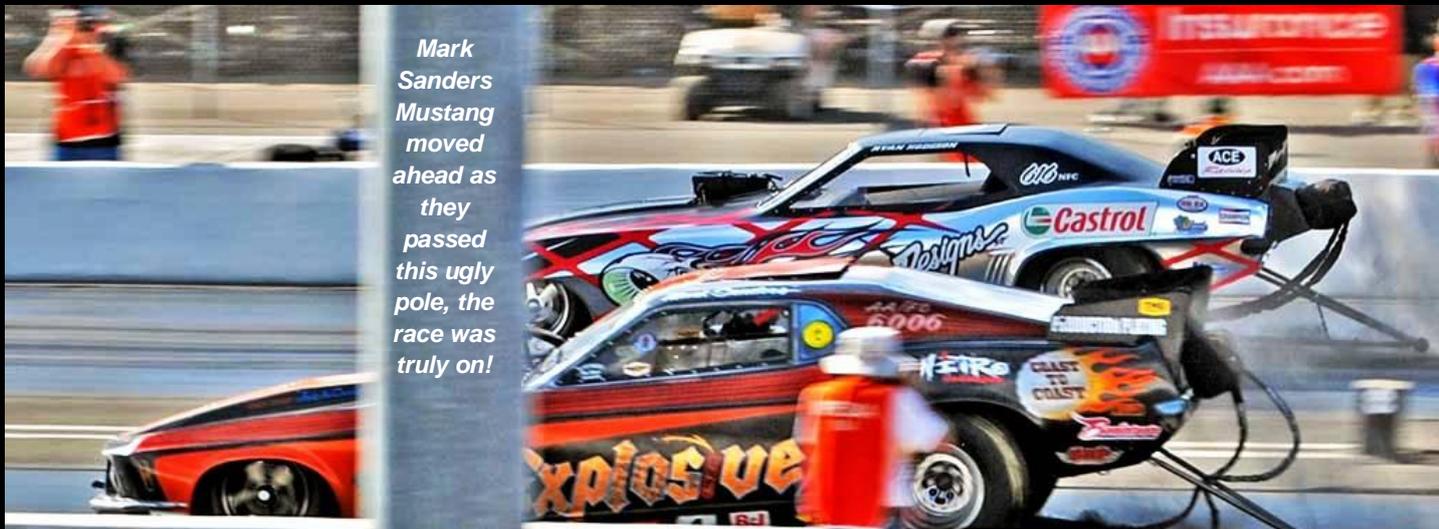


To be that close, with a pair of fuel coupes staged and ready to rumble is an Awesome, Awesome feeling, and when the drivers stand on it, wow! In an instant their power waves attack your whole body, NitroThunder fills the air, the ground shakes beneath your feet as your eyes weep and your heart pounds - you're hooked or scared sh*tless! Either way there is nothing on earth to equal the experience

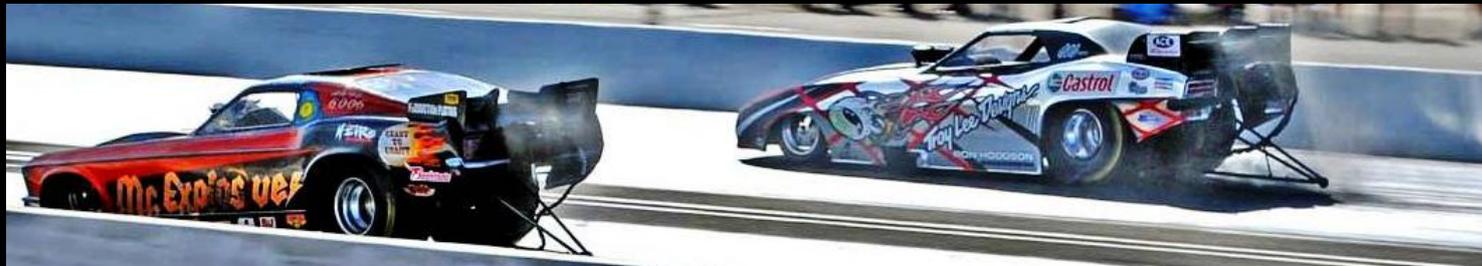
The Camaro left 0.002 seconds before the wild Mustang; the race was on, the Chevy's controversial nose way ahead at the tree



Mark Sanders Mustang moved ahead as they passed this ugly pole, the race was truly on!



No matter where you were on the track, this side-by-side nitro fueled funny car duel was one heck of a drag race...

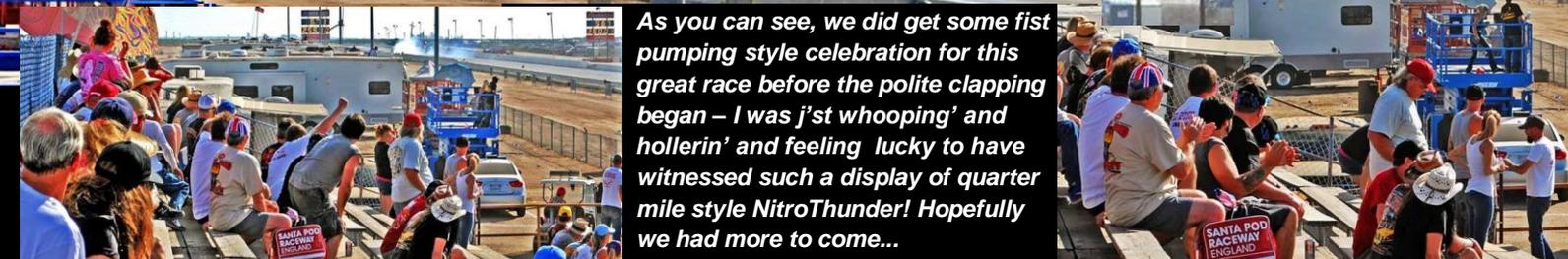


...the Mustang's lead seemed to stay strong, until the Camaro moved ahead at the top end



Mr Explosive's 5.71, 255 was cool, but the Camaro's 5.67 at 260 was psychedelic!

As you can see, we did get some fist pumping style celebration for this great race before the polite clapping began – I was j'st whooping' and hollerin' and feeling lucky to have witnessed such a display of quarter mile style NitroThunder! Hopefully we had more to come...



Sadly Bill Dunlap had to make a solo pass when Rick White didn't answer call "after experiencing massive engine damage in the previous round. Although they (High Speed) were willing to wait, the starter told them to run. White's car was only 5 minutes late..."

Quote courtesy [We Did It For Love](#)



Dunlap stood on it, cutting a 0.024 light as practice for the final, giving start line fans some NitroThunder, clicking off a 5.72 at a "parts saving" 227 – something he couldn't've done if Rick White had answered the call!



Some folks call it start line shenanigans, others call it ol' school smarts – either way, Denver Schutz "deep staged" hitting a 0.078 light and was long gone when T-bone woke up and hit the loud pedal with a with 0.216 late light!



Wow! T-bone had caught and passed Denver Schutz...





Bartone's car dropped some cylinders, allowing Schutz to regain the lead, winning with a 5.908. 244.92 ahead of Bartone's quicker 5.826 at only 202.82. Back at the start line the Bartone crew wore stunned expressions, dazed and confused, and not good time Led Zep rock an' roll either! No wonder, it was only the second time the team had been beaten in two years! And two years, to paraphrase my ol' Pal Joey, is a long time between drinks, especially laced with the bitter tastes of defeat...

Well Sarah and I may well have been a tad dazed from the awesome races we'd just experienced, and were pretty much maxed out in the NitroFever department! But there was no confusion, for us the 2015 CHRR was done and dusted – it was time for our drive over the mountains and into Death Valley so we thanked the Seattle dudes

and hit the road, almost! Our final taste of power came from Dwayne Sanders, who was en route to the 7.0 PRO title later with a 7.360 when his opponent fouled. "Thanks again dudes," I said with a chuckle and we left



Never seen Revelation in action, so there was a slight temptation to stay awhile longer upon sighting it, especially it always looks so tough in

all the action photos I'd seen, like Bob Brown's image from We Did It For Love – but I carried on moving. Dave West's Fighting Irish AA/FD was set to make a burnout and cackle pass, while Rob Patton's Road Runner was set to join the A/FX racers in more eliminations. And the beat goes on...



These two A/FX heavyweights met in the final, Steve Whitmore's Mustang running a 10.30 on a 10.25 index to take out Doug Hampton's 9.22 on a 9.25 index! Guess the Mustang had a hole shot, with Old Yeller thundering to a 145mph speed over 129mp! Tough, but then running the numbers always had been – especially at this level

It was easy to get the fuel coupe drivers to add their signature to my 32 Funny Cars tee shirt, joining the Mongoo\$e and Floyd Lippencotte Jr – aka Bob Muravez, and then walk on by as it was obvious from the attitude of the well chilled out Shack Attack team they wouldn't be racing for sometime...



...even so, at three thirty on a Sunday afternoon in oh-so sunny California it was kinda crazy for an ol' nitrohollic like me to be strolling past a row of four fuel coupes, heading away from the track - outta here in fact!

But after 50 years of chasing the dream, Famoso had been a wonderful celebration for Sarah and I, and thoughts of some starry skied solitude in Death Valley later this evening were reason enough to hit 'em up and move 'em out! The really impressive thing was that they were all waiting to hit the track for fun, and no doubt get in a decent pass for the team's egos and hard work! But I think the two injected dragsters below were still racking and chasing a title...



And then I fell in love, grabbing a quick shot of Sarah alongside that drop dead gorgeous coupe before opening the Caddy and swapping my race cap for a California cruiser...



She swore the colours around me were weird, until I made the switch! Don't know about that, but California here we come, after grabbing a few more shots that is!



Kin Bates didn't win the CHRR, but his U.S. Air Force dragster won the 2015 A/Fuel Hot Rod Heritage title. The coupe was mind blowing, but all I could see were those fuel coupes, so turned away...





...and saw Revelation had returned from its pass down the track, to be met by the ever-smiling Miss Stars an' Stripes who'd been lookin' good all weekend



These ladies with Colin Millar's "Livin' the Dream" tour wore big grins whenever I saw them, and why not, Famoso was a long way from racing at the Pod!

Often admired the Flying' Fyfer's wild paint job at the Pod, but seeing this happy crewman was a buzz



Even with the air-con on it didn't take long for Sarah to get sorted, but like any no-mo phobic, I don't think she even thought about letting go of her iPhone! Here comes the Sherriff - we pulled out at the right time to change the subject! The wagon bore the decal "Pray for Surf," reminding me we were set to visit Santa Monica Beach so Sarah, having paddled in the western Pacific in Australia could do the same here in California - but that was four days and 2,000miles away! As we'd over 200 miles of winding two lane roads through the mountains and into Death Valley first, I put the thoughts away for awhile and dialled up OnStar for our route



After waiting for this good lookin' Ford to pass by, I pulled out and engaged warp drive! Shortly later we turned east into this stunning vista! With 300plus horsepower, a "fly-by-wire" 4 wheel drive system and suspension, I was lookin' forward to some outlaw thunder in the mountains and beyond. That Nat Geo ad from my youth came to mind, a road that "made me want to grow up fast so I could drive it!" And it was empty - Yee hah!



My right leg went straight, the Cadillac responding instantly, a distant roar of power taking us into three figures faster than I'd imagined, my outlaw thunder run had begun...



June 3-5

National Street Rod Association Fun Run, Billing Aquadrome, Crow Lane, Great Billing, Northampton NN3 9DA (www.billingaquadrome.co.uk)

June 17-19

American Auto Club International, Summer Open Nationals, Billing Aquadrome, Crow Lane, Great Billing, Northampton NN3 9DA (www.aac-int.com)

June 24-26



National Street Rod Association Nostalgia Nationals, Shakespeare County Raceway, Long Marston Airfield, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 8LL (www.shakespearecountyraceway.com or www.nsra.com)

July 7-10

Americana International, automotive and music event, Wymeswold Airfield, near Loughborough LE12 5SH (www.americana-international.co.uk or 0844 870 0000)

July 15-17



Dragstalgia – nostalgia drag racing, Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, near Wellingborough, Northants NN29 7XA (www.Dragstalgia.com or 01234 782828)

August 19-21

American Auto Club International August Open Nationals, Billing Aquadrome, Crow Lane, Northampton NN3 9DA (www.aac-int.com)

