



Like many Santa pod fans back in 1968 I was totally enamoured with good looking American muscle cars and the rumble and roar of their V8 power plants that were mesmerising just burbling through the pits. All the while I yearned for the funny cars we were learning about as our new US servicemen pals showed us regular magazines and even National Dragster with news of the stunning performances from outrageous machines. Unlike jelly mould floppers of today, they looked like real cars – apart from the big slicks, often shortened wheelbase and stretched bodies like this Ford Mustang, and it's a true classic.



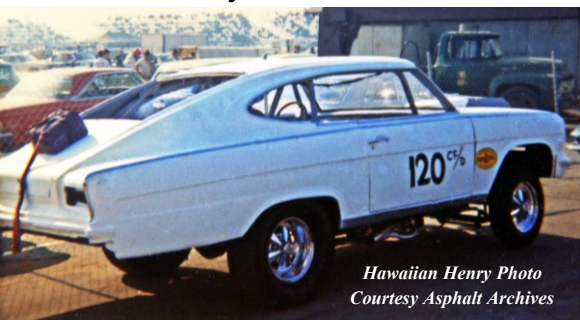
jbPix DragRod

Holman-Moody built six for Ford - unlike the flip-top flops from Mercury it had a driver's door and fans loved it, so did Ford!



Photo courtesy Mecum Auctions

The cars were **"rejected by NHRA for carburetted FX usage,"** so Gas Ronda (what a name for a racer!), switched to injected nitro for the 427 SOHC and won more than a few races on the NHRA and AHRA circuits. With no funny car class it took C/Fuel Dragster at the NHRA Winternats and the legendary Smokers Fuel & Gas March meet at Bakersfield with the first eight second pass from an unblown Funny Car in beating the famed Sox & Martin car with an 8.96, 155.97 blast. This car was on sale earlier this year at Mecums but failed to hit the reserve! At the other end of the scale, Preston Honea's '65



Hawaiian Henry Photo Courtesy Asphalt Archives

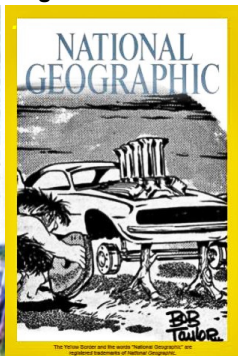
Marlin was made from a real car! The dude worked at Bill Kraft Rambler, a shipment of new Marlins arrived and boss man Bill gave him one. According to legend he drove it to Blair's Speed Shop for a "quickie" altered wheelbase makeover! Check [Hot Rod Network for the full tale](#). Once back home it got an injected 392 hemi, glass fenders and a hood were created, with Hot Rod suggesting they dug a pit, did some acid dipping to lighten the doors, the body was welded back onto a tube frame and it went racing! Sadly the wild machine didn't give Mr Kraft the required results and, like my Caveman Mopar, it vanished into legend!

Marlin '66. Classiest, sassiest sports fastback ever built-

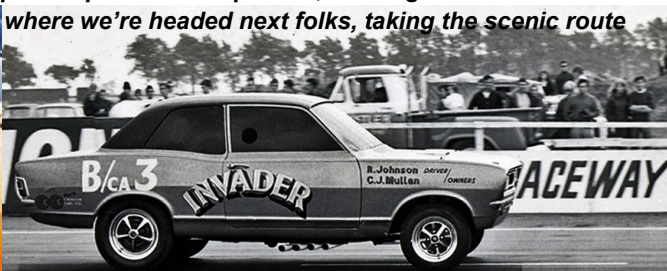


for a party of six!

The closest we got to a funny car was **Johnson and Mullen's Invader**, hemi powered with our first a flip top body, legend has it being all-steel with panels courtesy Vauxhall! Either way, we also didn't have funny cars so it joined the Comp Altered ranks, but none of 'em would ever match its pristine looks and oh-so gorgeous Candy Tangerine paint. The car was a firm fan favourite from its maiden voyage and they were as gutted as the team when its 392 hemi lunched. The southern boys weren't alone that weekend as Northerner Ian Garbutt's 352 Ford powered High Fever II Fiat lunched its gearbox and West countryman George Gillett's blown Jagwhar let loose in his hi-riding Austin Ruby! Yep the 1968 Drag Racing Championships was an explosive, exciting time – and that's where we're headed next folks, taking the scenic route

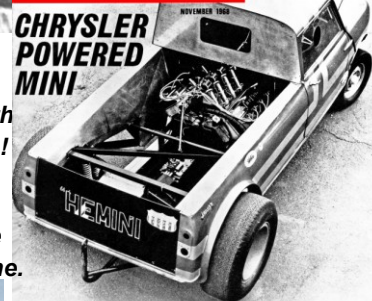


BBLF Photographer Unknown



jbPix DragRod

Spotlight on 1968 Champions



1968 DRAG RACING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Born in a Chrysler New Yorker, the hemi came to Invader out of the short lived **Hemini** complete with push button transmission!

CHRYSLER POWERED MINI

A Crower injected hemi and Fire Power valve covers made Hemini the most outrageous Mini ever seen! Ultimately it had more success on the show circuit, but builder Colin Kettley got full marks for trying.

An attractive idea that looked powerful tough, sadly it never quite worked, but fans loved it just the same.



jbPix DragRod

Another fan-favourite, this wild Austin Ruby often bounced down track!



Ken Robbins photos courtesy timetraveltdvs



jbPix DragRod

Congratulations to the Cookson tribe on being inducted into the British Drag Racing Hall of Fame. Time now for some AA/FD action at the 1968 Championship race...



Following the huge success of our Battle of the Giants we upped the ante for the next race with a Best of Five Match race between our pair of AA/FD's, but FGR's wheel standing Stingray was given headline billing after driver Roy Phelps kept its wheels up "for nearly 130 yards..." and "...pulled them a good 10 feet off the ground!"

1968
DRAG RACING CHAMPIONSHIP

Cool



SANTA POD RACEWAY
Podington Airfield, Nr. Wollaston, 5 miles south of Wellingborough, Northants

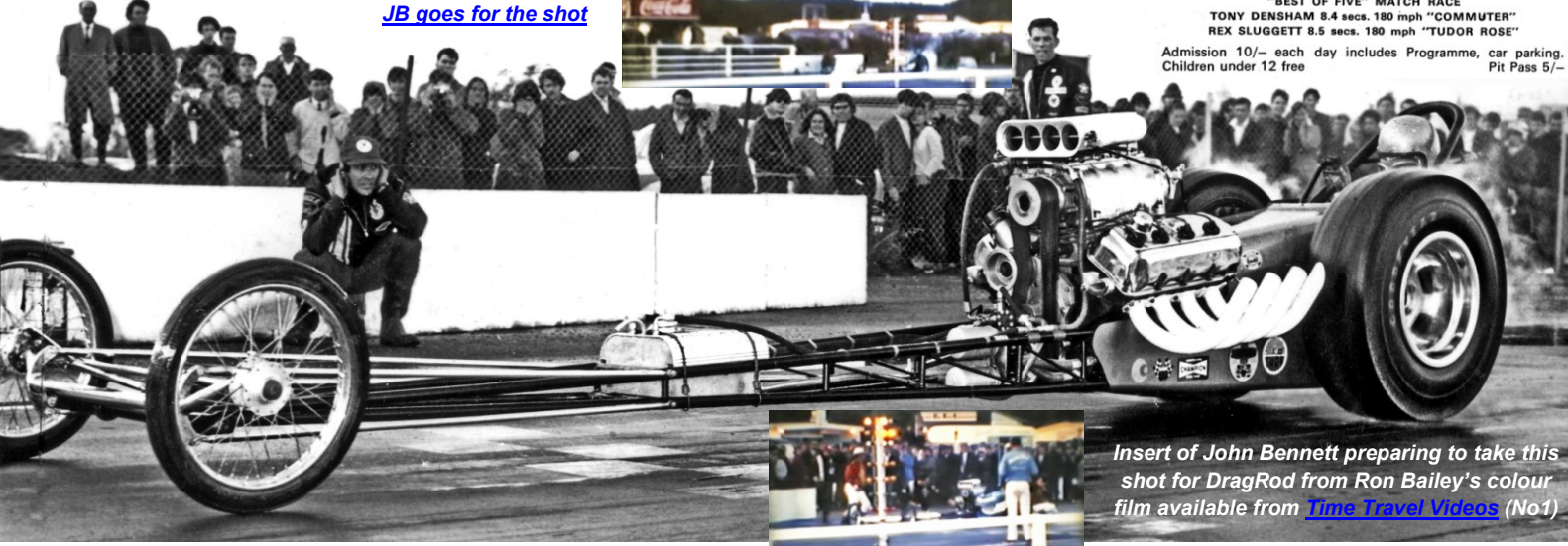
SUNDAY & MONDAY 1st & 2nd SEPT.
RACING 12 NOON TO 6 P.M. BOTH DAYS

Special Attractions
ROY PHELPS WHEELSTANDING STINGRAY
BEST OF FIVE MATCH RACE
TONY DENSHAM 8.4 secs. 180 mph "COMMUTER"
REX SLUGGETT 8.5 secs. 180 mph "TUDOR ROSE"

Admission 10/- each day includes Programme, car parking.
Children under 12 free Pit Pass 5/-

Despite threats of a wet weekend and much competition from the circuits, 8000 fans turned out for the BDR&HRA's two-day Drag Racing Championship at Santa Pod Raceway, however although our AA fuelers were ready for racing, the strip was far too wet on the Sunday for them to be able to do more than a gentle warm up run each. But car owner Rex Sluggett's foot had fully recovered from being run over by the Allard Skilton rail in Sweden and he was itching for some thunder, coming out first with the Tudor Rose looking tough, its Keith Black hemi sounding real strong and as you can see Rex really nailed it, the car launching so hard it caught JB out and he missed the front wheel! Then Tudor Rose went outta shape with Rex backing off, coasting down track, cruising through the traps in 12.95seconds at 73.42mph, the fans, especially "first timers" roaring approval at this oh-so short, but still awesome but display of power. Tony Densham's pass was much the same, the Commuter's 427 Ford clicked early to an 11.96 at 83.54 - It was obviously far too risky for them to be let loose for any side-by-side action...

[JB goes for the shot](#)



Insert of John Bennett preparing to take this shot for DragRod from Ron Bailey's colour film available from [Time Travel Videos](#) (No1)

Come Monday the track was dry, the sun shone and Tudor Rose was first out again, its Keith Black hemi sounding meaner than ever as Rex told a TV newsman to "Catch the first 200 yards," obliterating the start area with smoke before lifting early and cruising to a 10.39 at 93.72mph. Happily the next time I called for the fuel cars over the PA they came out together and as I began pumping up the volume, the atmosphere became electric with thousands of fans thronging the banking eager for our two fueler's race again. Commuter took the first match, Tudor Rose took the fantastic Battle of the Giants under the lights, and now they were preparing to do battle for the third time. Tudor Rose moved into stage, and from the mighty sound coming from her headers we knew she was full of witches brew, 30 per cent nitro with Rex Sluggett rarin' to go in the driver's seat as the big red Ford moved alongside. Suddenly we had the two most powerful machines in Europe staged and ready, the lights ran and [Rex nailed it too soon](#), shaking his fist as he left behind the big red eye as he smoked away with Commuter storming after him both flaming at the headers. At the eighth mile the Ford began to really pull, driving around the Chrysler to give Tony the with an 8.52 and 167.79mph, Tudor Rose close with an 8.69 at 160.77, fans going nuts after our first ever side-by-side 8-second drag race at the Pod, the crowd showing their appreciation as the two rails rolled back down the strip, but even their cheers couldn't overcome Rex's clearly visible disappointment as the fueler was pushed back into the pits.

It wasn't long before they were back out, both cars roaring and barking as they moved into the start area, with Dennis Priddle in the driver's seat of Tudor Rose promising to avenge that first round defeat. Both cars moved slowly into stage, the lights ran with [Tudor Rose blasting off to leave Commuter 2-lengths back](#),



Brian Sparrow
DragRod photo

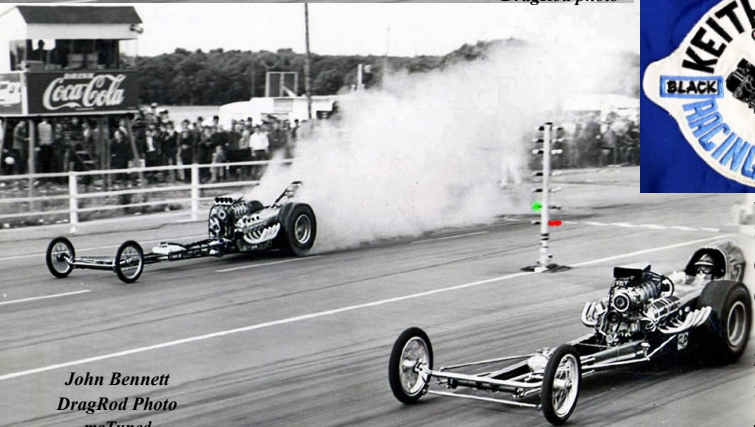
Prid smokin' to an 8.88 hole shot win clicked off to 148.8 to TD's 8.83. Tony couldn't catch Prid but really tried but and was side-ways through the traps at 166.78mph!! Wow, what a great race!



Brian Sutton photo
courtesy timetraveldvds



An hour later Tudor Rose had a 38% nitro load and this time [Tony Densham red lit](#). Prid nailed it, smokin' past the Ford 50 feet out and thundered down track. At the 1000 ft mark its rear end twitched and Prid had to lift off, and that split second without power coulda cost him a seven! But the smoke screen covering the whole quarter mile told us he was capable of it. Prid's winning time was 8.46 at 171.23, Tony D coasting through at 149.93 in 9.05s. With both cars ready for another ground-shaking run the rains came — a great pity as both teams had loaded to the gills with hard stuff for an all out attack on the seven second barrier—October 6th maybe? See you then folks...



John Bennett
DragRod Photo
mcTuned

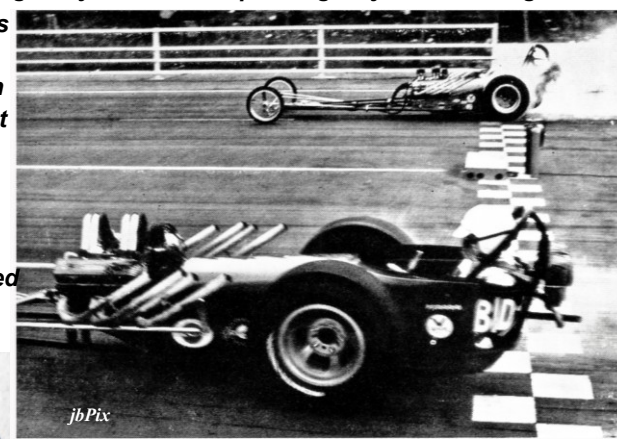
But it wasn't all blown and injected NitroThunder, the BDR&HRA Championship was fought between two injected machines, Geronimo, with driver Tik Tickner (a new kid on the block this year), having already driven the Olds powered rail to the first single digit quarter mile pass for an unblown car outside the USA, and Motovation, the Herridge and Beadle Brothers Chevy power junior fueler. When they rolled the cars out on Sunday morning we were over the moon, the Chevy-powered Motovation coming down the fire up road to let the fans see how well it was running. Earlier Tik Tickner had fired up the injected Olds and Geronimo had cranked off a 10.78 at 142.25mph. Not wanting to be left out Allan came off the line real strong, nailing down a quicker but slower 10.677 at 138.7 - first blood to the Chevy. Some of the rails in B/dragster failed to make the call for the class run offs giving both the Chevy and the Olds a bye run into the first round — Geronimo came out a winner after an 11.653 and 126.9 over the Ringsell/ Reynolds Chrysler-powered Taxi. But Motovation was beaten in the second round by gremlins! While trying to get some power to the ground Allan had really wound the Chevy out on the line and blown the timing gears, but happily the newly imported Moon front cover survived. The team spent the afternoon spectating as "Geronimo" overcame the elements and took Sunday's Top Eliminator win. That evening, whilst all were making merry the Motovation team visited Mark Stratton's garage cum "save a racer" shop and got lucky. On the wall hung a rusty timing chain, a quick check revealed it was in one piece but would fit "like a pair of Wellingtons," so they took it, heading back to the Pod for a good kip before the making repairs in the morning.



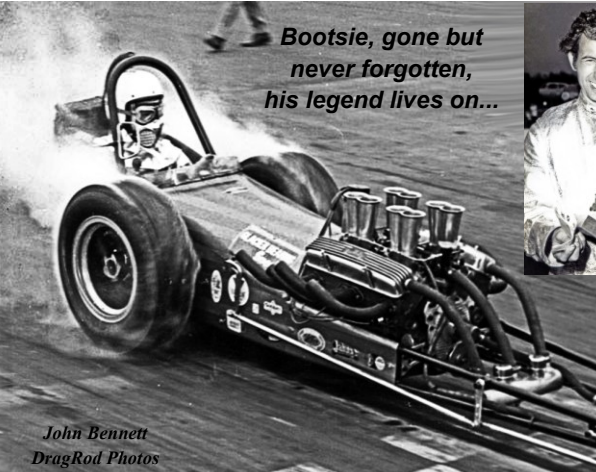
Showtime for Motovation

Early Monday with the strip nice and dry the finals of Sunday's eliminations were run off, Geronimo won with a tight 10.09 at 139.28mph and work quickened in the Chevy's camp. It turned out that the timing chain really did fit like a pair of boots, more than horsepower would be needed to win this meet! There was no time for a checkout run prior to the first round, but happily for them Mike Hutcherson's Hounddog failed to make the line, making for an easy run through in 12.37 seconds at 130.72. On the other side of the fence the Geronimo crew were rejoicing at Tik's smokey blasts, he'd run 10.2 and 10.1 - it looked like they had it made 'cos even if Tik missed the green he should still be able to drive around the ailing Chevy. The sky was getting darker every minute, Allan's wife Rose sat in the tow car, her face lined with tension - for so long Allan had been trying for this title and always lost out, as things were it looked as if he'd have to settle for the bridesmaid's role of being second down the asphalt aisle again! With nearly 10 hard runs on the bent motor on a 50 per cent nitro load something had to give, and to make matters worse they hadn't changed the oil all weekend - and even Valvoline can only take so much nitro before it goes pop! Still Chevies always seem to have that something extra on their side, and it's for sure that Motovation needed it. The strip was clear, call up lights flashed and Geronimo coughed into life sounding much stronger than the 30 per cent load being claimed by the team. Motovation swung round into the fire up road, but there was no push car - the crowd was so thick in the pits they couldn't get out! An arm came out of the rails "office" and beckoned frantically, willing helpers leapt the fence and rushed to Allan's aid, but when you're running a 50 per cent load you need more than a hand start! On the line the Geronimo team was looking worried, the Olds was getting hot, the starter taking a last look to see if the Chevy was on the move, it wasn't so he signaled a bye run and Tik Tickner stroked it through... But already he was offering a re-run and the Beadle Brothers' dejected look turned to joy, they'd got a second crack at the title. Tik said he'd need five minutes to cool off and refuel, and this time the Motovation crew took no chances as they rolled down the fire up road to wait a hundred feet out from the start area. Minutes later Geronimo appeared and the candy-striped Chevy rolled out, coughed once then roared into life and Allan eased slowly out on to the spectator lane and staged. In the fire up road Geronimo could be heard, Tik cleaned the slicks on the way down with a jab on the loud pedal, sounding strong, then swung round toward the pit side lane and suddenly the Olds lost fire! The crew leapt out of the push car as the starter signaled a bye, but this time it was the Beadle Brothers running across the start area, Tony Beadle telling Bootsie to cut it and the screaming Chevy died - one good turn deserves another! Despondent looks came from the Geronimo team; they'd forgotten to switch the fuel on! A few spots of rain fell and we knew it couldn't be long before the skies opened, but with OK signs from both drivers the dragsters moved out together and were pushed up the strip, swung round and were ready to go. Motovation fired first and Allan Herridge moved into the spectator lane, the Beadles looking worried as by now the motor would be real hot and there was a lot of nitro inside! Finally Geronimo coughed into life and Tik swung hard over to take his place alongside the Chevy and they staged. Tik Tickner in Geronimo, the only unblown rail in the nines outside the U.S. and Allan Herridge in Motovation, the quickest junior fueler in the country. The lights run, it's a greeny and Tickner puts a gate job on Herridge...

Motovation" roared and leapt forward, the slicks billowing smoke as Herridge put his boot to the bellhousing chasing after the Olds. At the 1/8th mile he was alongside, and then he was through, with the win light shining in Motovation's lane giving Allan Herridge the 1968 Drag Racing Championship. And the time - Allan Herridge had just become the first junior fueler driver in the nines outside of the States at 9.907 and 141.64mph! Tik trailed at 10.074 and 144.09mph as word got back to the start area, the Valvoline had finally given out, there'd been an oil pan explosion as the Chevy went through the traps, but there was no other damage, just a hole in the pan to be welded up. The cars were brought back down the strip and as Allan Herridge received his trophy as Drag Racing Champion from Miss BDR&HRA the rains came, washing away the tears of joy streaming down Allan's and Rose's faces.



jbPix



Bootsie, gone but never forgotten, his legend lives on...

John Bennett DragRod Photos



Courtesy Tim Pemberton



Chillin' in Vegas Photo for Tim Congratulations to Roger & Andy on their well deserved BDRHoF Media Awards



The 50th anniversary of the Pod's first season of AA/FD racing and our first Nitro Champion showed fans how tough it's become trying to tame 21st century Top Fuel cars.



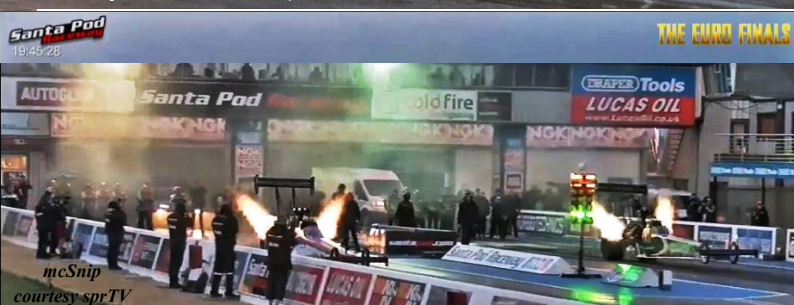
2017 FIA Champion Duncan Micallef and Stig Neergaard unleash 20,000 horsepower side-by-side, but Duncan clicked off moments later while Stig Neergaard shook and sparked to the 2nd quick time of Q2, 4.49 at 241.48...

Andy Willsheer photo



Sunday photo by Wojtek

RFM's Antti Horto took pole Friday afternoon, his 3.93, 298.96 ahead of Urs Erbacher's 4.18, the only other run above 200! Anita Mäkelä won the 2016 FIA Top Fuel Championship sitting down (her car blew up - below), awaiting the next round's result. Although she won this year by qualifying Anita thundered down Santa Pod's glory road giving fans the best show in town from Friday nights 3.89 at a clicked off 263.98 after hitting 280.21 at the eighth! Stig Neergaard's 2nd quick 4.49, the only other pass under 5-seconds and over 200 at 241.48. Wow, that packed banking is j'st what a promoter wants to see on a Saturday afternoon. Anita Mäkelä's blower belt tossing 3.870 at 297.02, Low ET and a new European record was just what we wanted to see!



THE EURO FINALS

mcSnip courtesy sprTV



mcPix

Top Fuel race day fans got lucky in E1, Anita Mäkelä hit 312.44mph for Top Speed of the race on a blistering bye run that stopped the clocks with a 3.872.



Q4 saw four cars on track, India Erbacher's 9.12, 89.97mph was quickest, apart from Anita Mäkelä - on a full pull until she clicked it off at the eighth for a 4.004 at only 266.24

Photo by Wojtek



Photo by Wojtek

India Erbacher raced her dad in eliminations for the first time, blasting to her first sub 4-pass, a 3.99 at a pb speed of 293.86 as Urs Erbacher hit tyre shake, clicking off to an 8.24, 78.96. In E2 Anita Mäkelä's 3.89, 305.82 took out a flaming Stig and India Erbacher's best speed of 297.81 at 4.001 ate Antti Horto's clicked off 4.34, 189.63. Great to see the delightful Birgitte Bremnes win a round in Gladiator. Seems she might be moving to Nostalgia fuel coupe. So let's wish her the best of luck and a fast future...



mcSnip courtesy sprTV

Finals time and both ladies lit up the night; India shook and backed off, while Anita Mäkelä ran another stout 3.96, clicked early to only 276.00 – a great way to end her Championship weekend for the fans. Thanks Anita



Photo by Wojtek



awPix