



words & photos mike collins
1979 plate, office, street race & CC
show photos by Steve Saunders



Working with Street Machine at Mercury House was a blast from day one and kept on getting better, not just being paid to eat burgers, but having plenty of cool toys to play with - and even a red phone! What truly hooked me was having a pair of models laid on to take care of me at the Custom Car show! Wow! How lucky can you get? A brunette whose sultry eyes lit up when told their brief was to "Have fun" and a blonde who said "Let's take my car, it's more comfortable." No problem, and talk about cool, she drove her full-size Cherokee like



Think pink!

a sports car, and with skill and finesse! Wow, what a day and a great way start to my time on the magazine - but sadly it was never duplicated! However, I did get to drive fast cars the length and breadth of the country, on road and track - even outside our office! Driving a late Cobra Mustang alongside the G Force Mustang, a 429CJ (with staff watching on!), the first was close, and then the 13second beast was long gone as my pony went up in smoke! Things were different then, wouldn't dream of doing it today, but we'll re-visit some other fast tales soon. But it was five years of fun, fun, fun until late 1983 when



mere babes!



they decided to move Street Machine way across town. Not j'st a tad too far, but beyond Hangar Lane's gyratory system. I'd seen it from Capital Radio's Flying Eye, and bozos on the road made the thought sheer madness! So after five wonderful years, I said thanks for the party, smoking into the Waterloo sunset in my Hugger, footloose, fancy free, spending a wild, laid-back winter doing things purely for pleasure. But things did get kinda crazy, like being

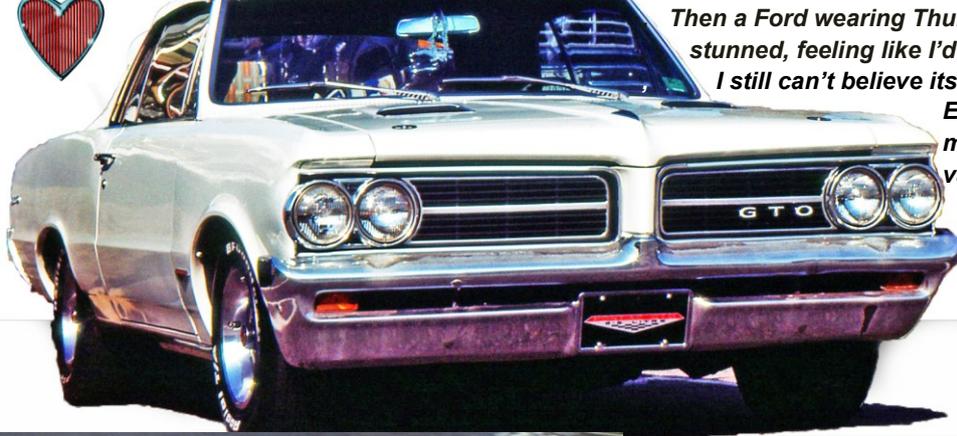


Photo by Dick Lawrence

caught off-roading a Bronco on roller skates with leather jeans, a BF Goodrich Stetson and a six shooter! Thing is, I can't recall how I got on the rocks at Sennen Cove, not that it mattered as my pal Slam'n Sam rescued me with an invitation to visit, and shortly later I climbed into America the way you climb into an old pair of Levi's, nice an' easy. In fact it was smooth as silk, with a gleaming silver Fila Thunderbird sliding to a halt as I stepped outside, Sam all smiles as he welcomed me to Amer'cuh and we were soon feeding our faces on fresh Pizza with me happily sippin' cold Coors, cruising out to Sam's place while he spoke about the wild hot rods driving around all day - turned out Lead East was in town! Born the year before, the brainchild of hot rodder/ writer Terry Cooke, it's an homage to fifties car culture that still runs to this day. Yet amongst all the heavy metal my heart was captured by this pristine 1964 GTO rag top, the original muscle car...



Photo by Sarah N



Then a Ford wearing Thunderbird insignia appeared, its passing leaving me stunned, feeling like I'd walked into a dream as it rumbled by and was gone! I still can't believe its short wheelbase, it makes the '56 T'bird's look huge! Even the blonde didn't believe what she'd seen as, moments later, this incredible machine just literally vanished! I was mystified - problems, what problems!



Cool wheels in motion, and what a powerful pair.

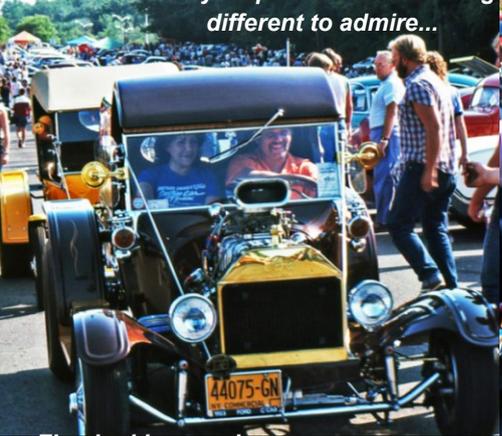


Without this image I'd have been lost - to this day I can't believe how short it is!

Making such Kustoms takes hard work an' headaches...



Every step showed something different to admire...



Fine looking c-cab runs a truckin' commercial plate!



Wow!



The wildest Pontiac Star Chief I've ever seen...



Cool nerf bars!

Walking amongst wild machines, with so many being driven and live real rock an' roll playing was almost like being in any hot rod movie. But Lead East was beyond Hollywood, it was a dream reality for car freaks, machine overload with wilder than wild creations, supercharged hot rods, fat an' low lead sleds, outrageous Kustoms, and all of such amazing quality! Methinks it'd be kinda cool to visit this show again...



Hot stuff and truckin' tough

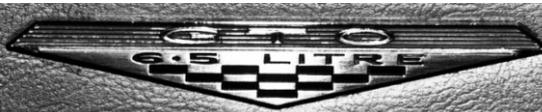


Cool



Then, I went racing at E'town and the first thing I tripped over was this 1965 GTO! No nitro, but a fun day with show an' go Pontiac muscle cars...





Many folks prefer the 1965 GTO's supercar styling and stacked lights over the '64. I'd be happy with either!



Soon after the '65 had finished its photo shoot, it was making a high speed pass down the track and then I made it to the start line and caught this 1964 GTO launching hard - but I shot him too soon 'cos its front wheel really lifted off a millisecond later - bummer!



For me, it was a real buzz seeing these 20 year old muscle cars driven balls out along with late model street machines. It's been my pleasure to drive many a Trans Am, and they all lit 'em up like this bitchin 14second beauty



"Aw-reet!" It was oh-so-cool seeing the '49 Pontiac coupe in amongst GTO's and the like, and they still talk about Scaloping Ghost II's timeless beauty to this day - well 2017 on the HAMB, click the link and scroll down...



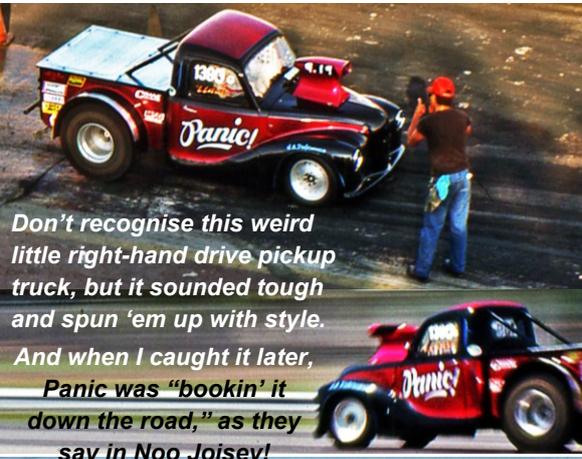
All stateside photos shot on a 50mm Olympus

NitroAlert!

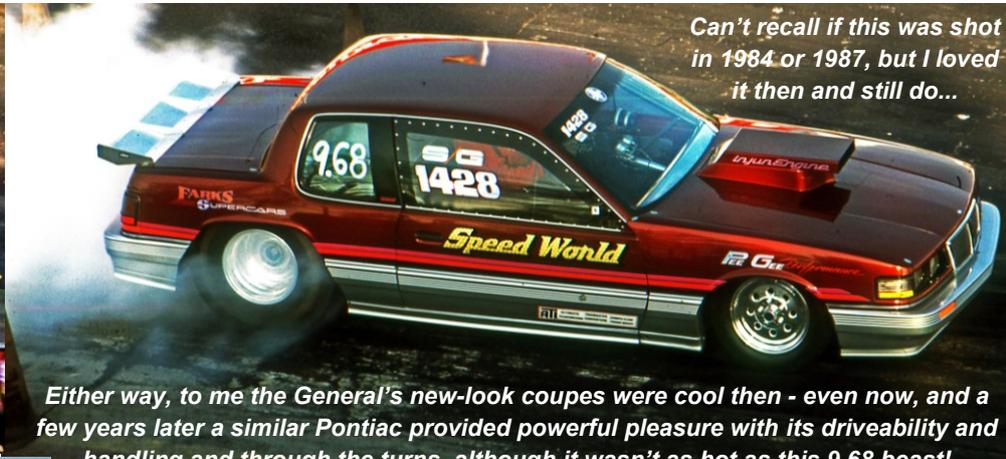


Apart from the dude above chasing me (maybe I was chatting up his babe - they love the accent!), my time at E'town was made more than fun as track owner Vince Napp invited me to visit when the fuel coupes came out to play. I agreed and said thanks. Then a few years later did just that, driving out for their 20th Annual Fall Funny Car Finale where I was totally blown away by the field of alcohol funny cars, fuel coupes and some incredible side-by-side jet funny cars. Here are a few action images from that visit to close out our stateside mini trip...



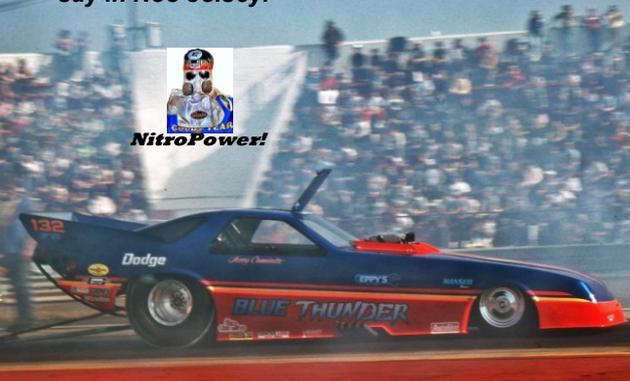


Don't recognise this weird little right-hand drive pickup truck, but it sounded tough and spun 'em up with style. And when I caught it later, Panic was "bookin' it down the road," as they say in Noo Joisey!



Can't recall if this was shot in 1984 or 1987, but I loved it then and still do...

Either way, to me the General's new-look coupes were cool then - even now, and a few years later a similar Pontiac provided powerful pleasure with its driveability and handling and through the turns, although it wasn't as hot as this 9.68 beast!



Legendary east coast match racer Jerry Caminito's Blue Thunder shook the ground, blasting through my 50mm lens en route to a fine 5.51.



In y'face NitroThunder!

Ordinarily these monsters leave me cold, but the fantastic fire and thunder display of the jet funny cars was positively awesome, and they were racing!



Each time they raced, the red car won!

Photo by Old Bridge Raceway Park



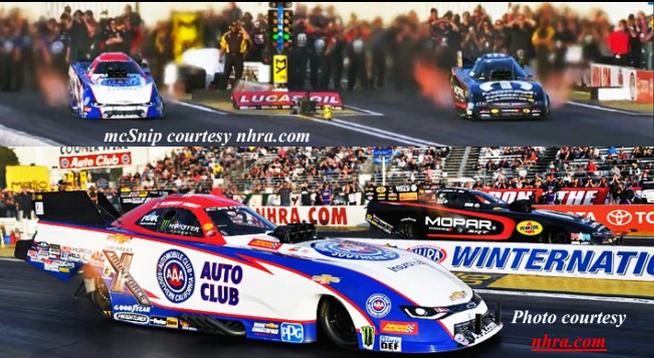
The original Street Machine used the best slide of these jet fc's side-by-side as a two page spread - never saw it again...



More than shake the ground - the kissing close JFC's blasted me with supersonic mock diamonds!

Without warning, on January 17th a [press release](#) said "Raceway Park will no longer conduct quarter mile or eighth mile drag racing events effective immediately." They thanked folks and apologised! Everything else still fires on all cylinders, yet for drag racers that's it, 50years of thunder gone, done and dusted; now E'town sells [Fast Family Fun!](#)

Next-time 50 years of side-by-side NitroThunder - perhaps!



Last month I told you of NHRA's rule change to a maximum 40degree sweep on fuel coupes headers. In the [Winternats final](#) Robert Hight's JFR/Auto Club Camaro got a hole shot (.034 to .055), ran a thundering track record top speed of the meet at 336.99 in 3.866seconds, losing to Matt Hagan's quicker 3.823, 335.90mph in his DSR Mopar. Thank God for Albert Einstein!

