



Maja Udian's smile was on my first pages for Street Machine century 21 in 2017, but this one lit up when she saw Eurodragster's June preview in the Main Event staging lanes and laughed at my story about RT's being the first part of a drag race - as she hole shot Liam by a couple hun while on a short pass she'd won - "Spanked him on the line," as Shirley Muldowney had said! But **Liam blasted to a 3.90 at 309 mph** and thrilled fans with another pair next day.



words & photos
mike collins



On her first Main Event pass Maja did it again, leaving just 0.144 seconds before Jndia Erbacher, then drove hard to 249.39mph at the 1/8th, problems slowing her to 4.27 at only 213.93, the 3rd best numbers of Q1! Great start for her team too... **santapod.com**



Sadly a dude raised his arm to put ear defenders on, nudged mine and I lost the back of Liam Jones car (the top crop's mine), but you can see his 0.062 hole shot, then they thundered, Liam to a bitchin' 3.88, 311.18 and Anita Mäkelä ran a strong 4.09 - cliked early to only 224.04! Wow! Q2's opener was also cool, Stig Neergaard back in the saddle again to put his Lucas Oil car 0.099 ahead of Susanne Callin's Slick Tricks car, then it too thundered her stout 4.019 at 299.00 just 0.1023 behind Stig's 3.917 at 301.78!



Tethys returned to Top Fuel too, his Mustardbet car's fireball showing fans the other side of NitroPower, happily spectacular, not expensive

A truly great race for NitroFans closed Q2 with Liam's 0.0298 hole shot visibly ahead of Anita Mäkelä 0.1132 soon leaving her way behind, but not for long...



Still charging hard, until it was over with a bright flash from an oh-so close Anita!

Moments later they blasted by close to side-by-side, shaking the stands, the sweet scent of real NitroThunder filling the air

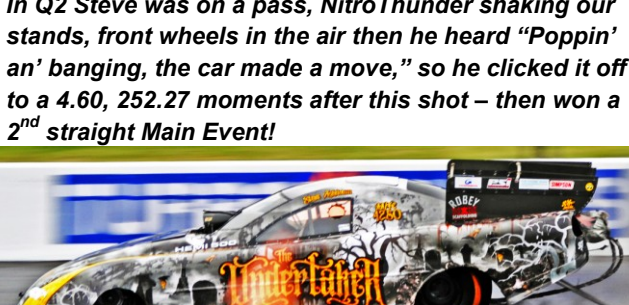
And then the PA told us it was **the fastest side-by-side Top Fuel race in Europe**, Liam's 312.16 over Anita's 311.38 and a pair of 3.80s too boot - WOW!



Anita's 3.84 new FIA record **won the Main Event** over Maia's red light!



A couple hours later the fuel coupes pounded the ground in passing, albeit only briefly. Steve Ashdown's 4.47, 256.45 (left) were the Main Event's best numbers in Q1 - not up there with Kevin K's record bustin' 4.23, 286.49 in the FartFest's EFCS final, but being Steve's first pass since his Easter k'boom it was kinda cool.



Kevin K had mega problems! FartFest winner Kevin Chapman's 4.73 was P2 and his 4.72, 198.14 the best numbers on race day.

You can almost taste the NitroFire!

Slam'n with Sam

Santa Pod sunset

**Dedicated to lost drag racing heroes,
gone but never forgotten**

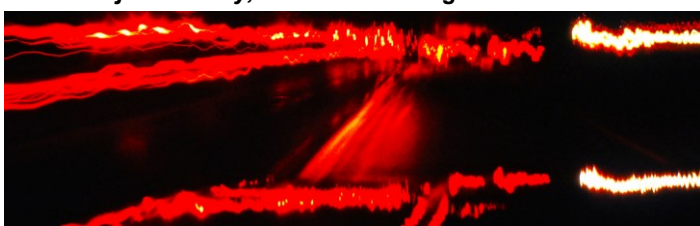
I know Simon was there on that sunny Sunday

this sunset just before Sam blasted off in his mighty Vanishing Point Trans Am a few years later, but forget bye runs, we're celebrating the most amazing side-by-side races we ever saw – and that's a fact! Earlier that day, Sam said "Today you'll see the fastest side-by-side drag race that anyone's ever seen anywhere in the world," bringing a huge cheer from the vast crowd, most of 'em fans since he first blazed the Pod's quarter mile, the tiny Vanishing Point Vega car exploding off the line in 1978, flying down track to the very edge of time, sounds of thrills running through the crowd in his wake, any chatter full of nervous energy as they tried to assimilate what they'd seen,



unless they blinked and missed it! His time and speed received polite applause, the crowd stunned, a punter gawping, "Whoohoo, coo bloody hell, d'y' see that," scratching his head above a beer belly'd tee shirt. Stood at the top of the track, promoter Roy Phelps was also caught napping, "Did not see it," he shook his head, "I did not see it at all," and he knew what he was buying, so what chance had the poor public? Roy still mumbling, "Couldn't see it, I could not see it," shaking his head, bemused perhaps, by someone who actually did what he was supposed to do? But as Sam once said, "You ain't seen nothin' yet..." The last rocket car at the Pod was slower than my ol' Stovebolt, hardly a fitting intro to straight line superno, Slam'n Sam... However, as this was all before Street Machine was born; I thought a little back-story for today's readers and race fans is cool so hang on as we blast back in time! And yes, Sam's driving the car below, at speed, in a tale told in our very first 21st century Hot Gossip, so laissez les bons temps rouler! In case you've never done Cajun country, it means let the good times roll...

W-a-y back, Sam built a Buick powered English Escort wagon, went to Island Dragway aged 15 using his brother's licence, but failed tech inspection, its wheelbase an inch shy of NHRA's 90inch minimum. Once home he jacked it up, sat it on milk crates, took the spring perches out, moved the axle back an inch and a half and returned to the track, but it didn't perform too well. "One of the valves broke," Sam chuckled, "I'd driven GTO's an' a bunch of animals on the street before, but it was the first one I took down the track."



Then came Super Grape, a flying son of a bitch that used to carry the front wheels, j'st bang, never had a car leave like that, a '31 Ford and a Hilborn fuel injected 302 Chevy," Sam laughed before adding, "On the street! I used to cruise the hot rod hot dog and burger places in that son of a bitch an' that's a fact, my haul arse street gasser. It ran C Gas an' we used to take it to the track just to f*ck around, and race for \$100 or \$200, something like that." Sam's eyes came alive as he talked, "the son of a bitch, it'd j'st sit there screaming, then bam it'd take off an' plain haul arse down the track. It was j'st like," Sam hit the dashboard three times in rapid succession, "instant traction every gear. You know, it never lit the tyres, just boom, boom, boom," he chuckled, "It was f*cking wild, but it was a street car though, street legal." "Yeah right," I laughed, "there's a big difference between UK Street legal and the States, especially in the sixties!" "Oh, naw, it had a stereo, air conditioning," adding with chuckle, "when you wanted to put the belts back on!" A big grin appearing as he said, "D'you ever drive a 10second street car into a racetrack, take a couple of wins, then go home? It was magic." But not enough, so an A Fuel dragster soon followed and Sam found out speed is expensive – and not easy to come by, eventually running into the eights, a couple hun off the NHRA record, taking 27 Super Eliminator wins with top speed an' low ET every race he ran! Then he met "Big Daddy" Don Garlits when he began driving Van Eiderstein's top fuel car. "Y'know I used to idolise Garlits as a kid, it made me want to drive a dragster, not 'cos of them or their names, but their cars fascinated me." It wasn't long before Sam got his own car, the first late model hemi powered fueler on the East Coast, but didn't have much success with his rail, mainly because, "I was always getting up to mischief, always been considered a bad boy," said with a grin, "We did alright though, and ran consistently in the sixes with a best of 6.53 and 219 in 1971." Shortly later "Ken Poffenberg needed a mechanic and somebody that knew nitro, so I took a vacation, went to work with him in Florida." One night Poff couldn't qualify his Corvair funny car, said the engine wasn't working right, asking Sam to drive it, see what was wrong and set it up right. Sam only had a Top Fuel license, but grinned, "Sure, just tell me how you drive the thing." "No problems Sammy, it's just like your dragster," Ken told him, "except it's got an automatic transmission. You fire it, stick it in neutral and keep the engine clear. When you've staged you put it back in gear and hold it on the brake. When the lights come down, you stomp on it an' shift it. When you get in the lights, put it back in neutral and stop." Sammy calm, full of confidence and, as ever, smiling, pulled on a fire suit and climbed into the car.

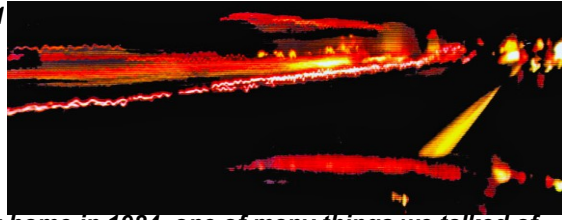


This stunning image is not the race with Jake J. Love Sam's hole shot, but the wild lookin' Stingray took my eye from the start - j'st love that nose! Talk about funny cars personified...

Photographer unknown
courtesy S.A. Miller

Sam drove through a long smokey burnout thinking, "The steering's all shitty and the car's all over the place, this can't really be right." However the car in the other lane was moving into stage, so Sam forgot these thoughts while he was backed rapidly towards the start line.

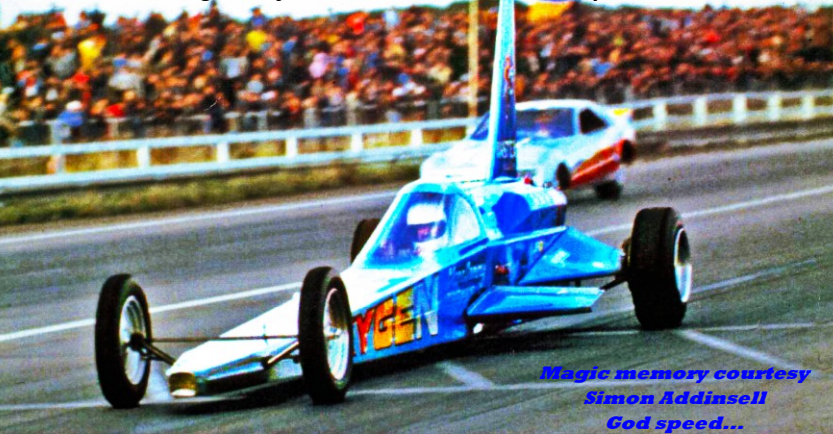
Waiting alongside him was the legendary Gene Snow's (first 200mph funny car racer), Snowman, its driver, Jake Johnson ready to go, so Sam moved quickly into stage, "The lights came down an' I hit it, go! I thought I was great y'know, I had that big block Chevy screaming mecooonmeceeeeeeow," Sammy chuckled, "and I mean screaming, Poff had never opened it up like that. We qualified that run, but," Sam chuckled before adding, "I broadsided through the lights because the trans wasn't locked out right and, when I tried to get neutral, I hit reverse!" Even so Sam went quicker, faster than Poff and became driver of the Poff's Puffer Corvair, his first fuel coupe ride. Okay folks, now you know Sam paid some dues, so let's get back to the future, Hot Gossip from 1981 that began - Slam'n Sammy Miller has been top of the popularity list since his first visit a couple years ago, each and every blast down the SPR track raising his status with fans who loved his warm smile and the magic way he took Vanishing Point deeper into the 4-second zone with his 4.20/317 pass assuring him a long stay in our record books. Each visit was a thrill and 1981's September Showdown the biggest yet...



During a memorable late-night chat in the basement of Slam'n Sam's Wayne, New Jersey home in 1984, one of many things we talked of was those side-by-side rocket races of 1981, a very special, unique experience for Santa Pod fans, epic duels with Al Eierdam, a hired gun of some renown, driving Miller's Vanishing Point Mustang funny car against Oxygen, the fastest quarter miler in the known universe! It was late Saturday night when a few hardy souls saw the world's first ever rocket race with easy 5-second ET's. But word spread and on Sunday the Pod was SRO, Sam smiling, telling fans of their history-making blast the night before, "I think it was the fact I almost got beat that really scared the hell out of me to tell you the truth," he'd chuckled, "Al's gonna be some severe competition. It's world history, what you're seeing now has never happened before." And that's where we came in, Sam telling fans before the first race, "Today you'll see the fastest side-by-side drag races that anyone's ever seen in the world." No bullsh*t either, for this was the Reverend Mr Miller who always spoke the truth and fans were privy to the greatest acceleration display in history. Each race was incredible, and come Sunday Al Eierdam won with a 4.79, 228mph to Miller's late leaving (Al was at the tree!), 4.67, 269mph and fans went nuts, but we'd no idea what was coming next! They often say that the "atmosphere was electric," but when the two rocket cars came back down the fire up road again it truly was, with the fan-packed banking almost pulsing with energy. I've never forgotten the gleam in Sam's eye as he gave me a hydrogen peroxide bleached thumbs up while engine builder George Garboden cinched his safety harness even tighter, and writing these words tonight I can recall thinking, "Hang on 'cos this is going to be out of this world," and it was!



At the time my camera was a 50mm Olympus and I still love these images, but back then my eyes feasted on the big guns pointing at the two cars as they fired their engines and began exciting them with steam blasting over fans in the barn as they slowly moved into stage. Today's Top Fuel cars produce in excess of 10,000hp and, although some fans cringe at the launch, most are used to their NitroThunder, but try and imagine 38years ago when Oxygen's 20,000hp and the Vanishing Point Mustangs' 24,000hp were unleashed side-by-side for the first time, and shortly later turned loose with even more unworldly power dialed in – it was a total mindf*ck as they both blasted off the line, the wildest stampede ever! In truth, Slam'n Sam led from the green light, Oxygen thundering into history at blinding speed, the unique race caught on a film, happily Simon the Pieman was waiting in the traps to capture an image that's forever! Tyre's up, trying to climb off the rim, the thrust of Oxygen's power pushing Sam's head to one side, blasting through the lights an incredible 4.53 seconds after launching - at 320mph! Winning the world's quickest and fastest side-by-side race ever, ahead of Al's 4.63, 240mph – at the Pod! Paul Donovan [spliced the first two runs together](#) with the intro, Al's "hole shot" and Slam'n Sam's 320mph thunder run through the traps! In 1981 the NHRA speed record was Jerry "the King" Ruth's 255.68mph driving one of Don Garlits' cars in 1977 while the ET record was Big Daddy's 5.63 from 1975! And 320mph wasn't seen until Cory Mac ran 321 in 1997! **WOW!**



Magic memory courtesy
Simon Addinsell
God speed...



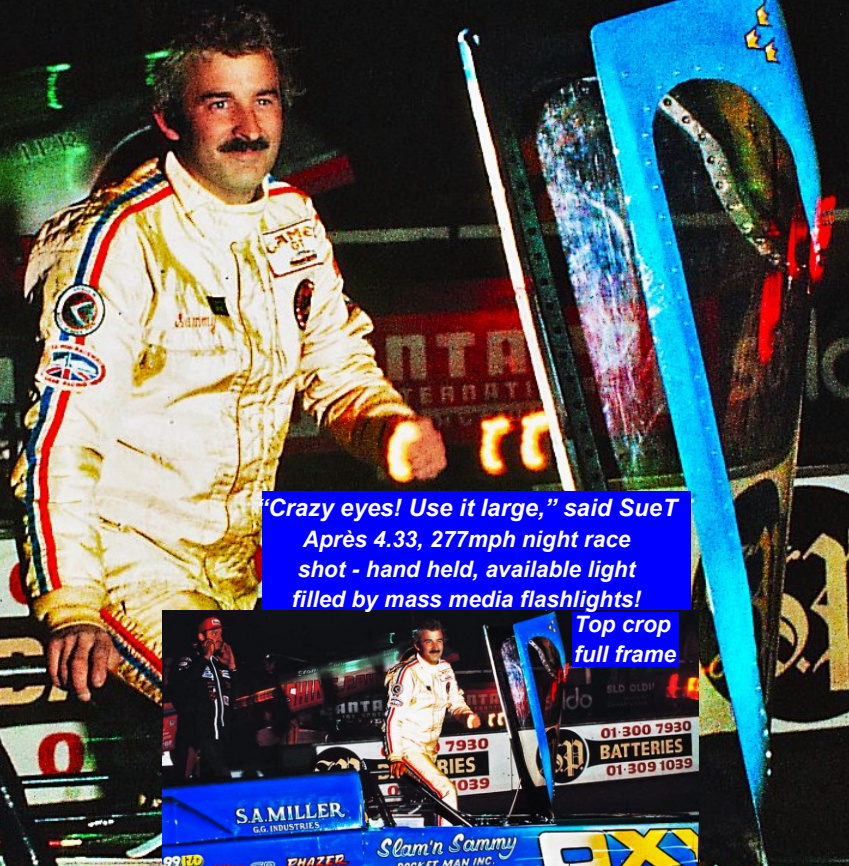
Be kinda cool to see film of the night race! Sometime later Sam drove Oxygen to an unheard of 386 mph and the Vanishing Point Mustang to a 3.58ET you'll read about soon...



...that's really Slam'n with Sam, but this tale's not over yet; my mind, long confused by Simon A's sunlit shot, totally forgot the night race – until now, so hang on folks, it's unf*cking real!



While waiting for a copy of the 1981 Hot Gossip covering the race from ol' pal Nick Pettitt, my lil' green friend did a mind probe, pulled out a couple words, dove deep into my archives, found this original transcript, a light exploding as I read "Al Eierdam tried to pull a shitty on me, on that last run, and that son of a bitch, I knew when he left that he'd cracked it, so I j'st took off an' kicked the mother wide open, I had to actually reach down at quarter track," grinning at the memory, "took my hands off the steering wheel and clicked the regulator up for more power," chuckling, "and that's doing it all in a millisecond, an' I tell you what, when that thing came blazin' through, flew by him in the lights, I don't think Eierdam was ready for it, cos it was just like one of them, frwrrrk! Can you imagine running 4-seconds and having something coming thundering past? It had to take his breath away," Sam, as ever the master of understatement, but pow - a light bulb lit between my eyes and it'd all came clear on the words "last run" - until that moment, Simon's top end daylight shot was linked in my mind with that tale! Then came a Kabooooom, and in my mind's eye the cars exploded off the line, Oxygen late and Miller running angry, cranking up the power, the blue car positively exploding again as it all kicked in, thundering into the dark night ahead in pursuit of Al Eierdam, almost instantly lost from sight as Sam punched a super low 4.33 at 277 over Al's 4.64 at 234mph, showing Mr E just what thunder racing was all about. "A picture's worth thousand words" came to mind, and another magic memory of Street Machine Art Editor Sue Topping smiling around "Look at those crazy eyes, and use it large Mike..." the note added to the bottom of the file! So here we have it folks, In memory of Slam'n Sam and a truly magic moment in our drag racing history, an Xtreme crop, so hopefully you too can see the excitement almost exploding in his eyes after winning the quickest side-by-side drag race on the planet, 4.33 to 4.64 - in the dark of night!



"Crazy eyes! Use it large," said Sue T
 Après 4.33, 277mph night race shot - hand held, available light filled by mass media flashlights!
 Top crop full frame

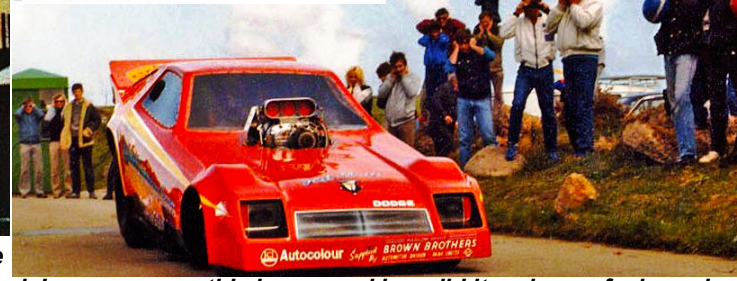
Après Hot Gossip's 1981 tale I suggested a pair of fuel coupes running angry for money - 38years later a recently discovered shot of Tony Boden's Hit Man wide-open as he has some fun for "gas money" (on a public highway, with police approval), at Land's End in 1983 is seen here for the first time - after a couple shots to fill this gap 'cos that one's going large too, in memory of a guy whose chuckle I can hear along with seeing the big grin on his face just thinking about the good times we always had. Each time the Hit Man joined us in Cornwall Tony wanted to burn-out; at the Foster's Surf Championship they let him fire the beast up, scared the sh*t out of folks who would not stand back! Next time he fired up for in-land show fans, dry hopping across this sloping hillside and they loved it!



Third time lucky, Tony thrills fans at Land's End with the in y'face NitroThunder of power filled dry hops on the road. Although the injectors are closed, you know the fans felt it!

- FIA Top Fuel Tierp**
- Anita Mäkelä 4.03 v Micke Kägered 5.95
 - P1 Liam Jones 3.89
 - P2 Anita Mäkelä 3.91 @ 300
 - E1 3.92 @ 265.42
 - E2 3.85 @ 315.65
 - P3 Maja Udtian 3.96 @ 305.32 + 3.98
 - E1 3.84 @ 315.35
 - E2 Micke Kägered 4.00 @ 301
- Courtesy Eurodragster.com & JWR

Always thought there'd been a wide open shot, then a couple months back I came across this image and boy did it make me feel good, so this one's for Tracey 'cos she knows how much fun her dad Tony and I had - and his fans too...



It seems that Simon the Pieman passed away shortly after driving his pal John's scratch built 'Brescia' Bugatti into the sunset up in Oxfordshire in May last year, living life to the full as always! His smile will be sadly missed along the Kings Road



Actually, folks down the road in Sennen reported bombs going off when Tony first let loose the NitroPower...



Understandable too, the quite Penwith peninsula's a far cry from any drag strip!