



This original art work from caveman Bob Taylor (unearthed by Petersen Publishing and purchased by yours truly back in 1968) proves man's need for speed using boats, trains, planes, and eventually blasting out into space at thousands of miles an hour in the name of science, has existed since the dawn of time. Better yet, the dude was a fuel coupe freak just like me!



words & photos
mike collins

Santa Pod sunset
2014 11 23

Note historically significant California background



Hawaiian Henry photo

CARTOONS

BROTHER OF INVENTION

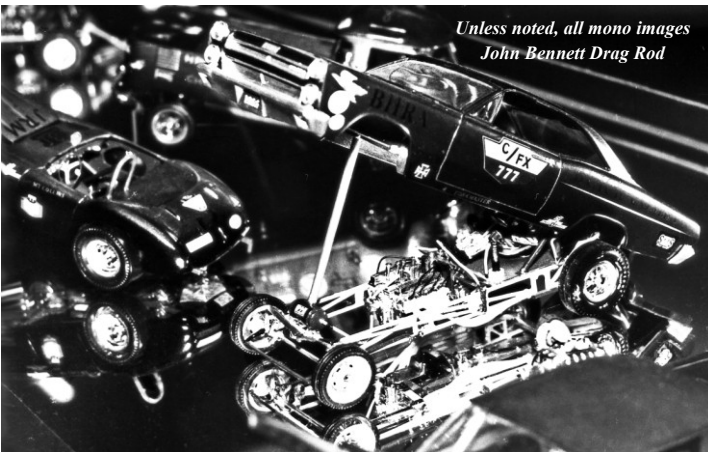
August 1968
Number Forty-Two

Bob Taylor art courtesy
Petersen Publishing CARTOONS

Thank you for 50 years of pure pleasure!

Thank you for 50 years of pure pleasure!

One of the first wild altered wheelbase FX funny cars I saw was this Chevy II out of Blair's Speed Shop, lookin' like it came from CARTOONS! But then I saw Gene Snow's Rambunctious and others in action in US magazines and I was hooked and wanted to build one! No problem, with sponsorship from Revell I was soon doing just that, albeit scaled down a tad.



Unless noted, all mono images
John Bennett Drag Rod

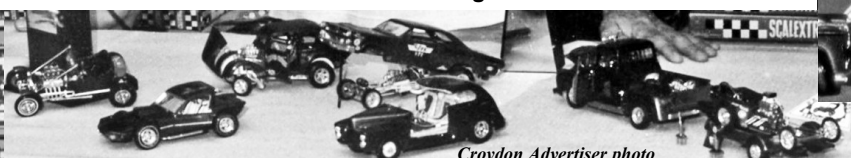


1966 photo courtesy Car Craft Magazine

Just like the real Funny Cars, one of my first was this flip-top Mercury like the one above that beat the Snowman, who mighta just red-lit! But mine had a Buick, not a 427 SOHC so it too did not win! Then things got crazy busy for yours truly, with little time to enjoy my NHRA Stock Eliminator race win over in Ramstein before I was ensconced behind a counter at Grants, a large department store in Croydon, after someone came up with the idea of a PR exercise for the BHRA while building a show car!

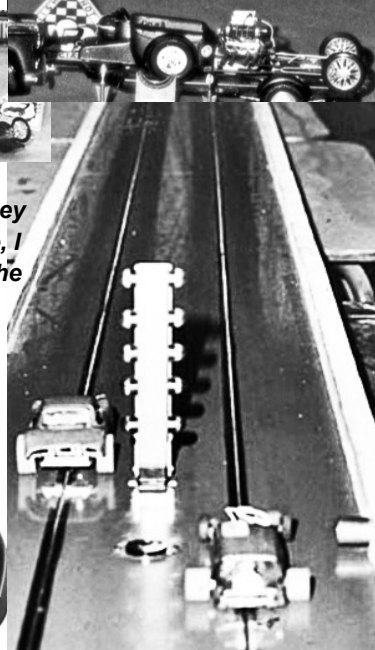
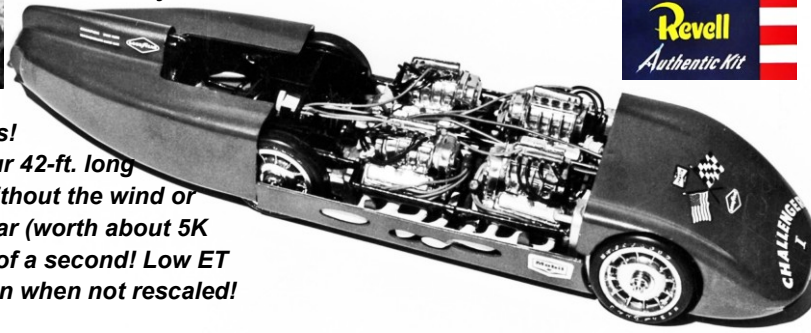


Croydon Advertiser photo



Croydon Advertiser photo

But it worked! With customised cars from show-winning ace Mickey Tong on display to inspire young builders, and Revell's model of Mickey Thompson's 400mph Challenger 1 LSR car keeping 'em gaping in awe, I got on with it. With plenty of visitors we had a lot of fun, and happily the car was ready in time for the first race of the season.



Croydon Advertiser photo

Amongst the fans that turned up, some expected full sized dragsters! More than 100 cars raced down our 42-ft. long Formica race track – Santa Pod without the wind or rain! We used the Pod's timing gear (worth about 5K back then!), with times to 1,000th of a second! Low ET low was 1.38 at 35mph - quick even when not rescaled!

Model dragster fans set pace at Croydon

The Croydon Advertiser gave us plenty of ink the weekend after our Junior Drag Race & Model show season opener where Mickey Tong once again won Best of Show with his dazzling Dream-Rod. Trophies were presented by hot rodding



Croydon Advertiser photo



Ken Robbins photo courtesy timetravelvds.com

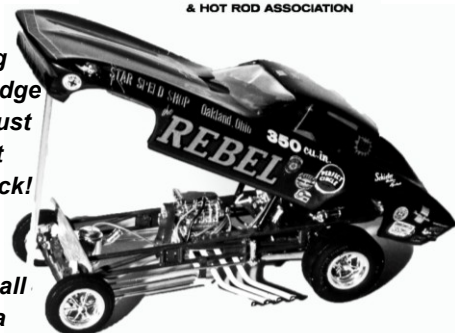
legend Geoff Jago who, the paper said "arrived from his home in Hampshire in a replica of a Model "T" Ford car, which he built himself." Seen here at the Pod early in 1967 complete with "historically significant spectators" for my pal Nick Pettitt whose TimeTravel website is a strong supporter of such things! Meanwhile, back in Croydon, the Advertiser also reported that my "Revell-equipped Pontiac match-racing car" also won. Their words kept my sponsors happy, and Grant's too when we presented the car and Revell's trophy to them with media coverage – hence the suit! Our 24Volt Eliminator saw most cars expire from twice the power, and if lighter fluid was sprayed the explosion was kinda awesome, leading to this "Fiery climax" banner. Can you imagine what they'd have said later in the season when we upped to power to 36Volts, talk about flying fireballs! Sadly no pix survive, but these John Bennett images of funny cars I scratch-built to be featured in DragRod are still here for your entertainment in Street Machine 50 years on!

This all happened when the BHRA changed their name and I was appointed as the BDR&HRA's new Activity Director for Junior Drag Racing! Overnight a part-time hobby became a time-consuming, award-winning passion – or some such bullsh*t, but it was more than a lot of fun. Even more so when, shortly later, I was asked to handle the PR for Santa Pod - oh, boy that got me busy, busy, busy – and some hot babes too! However, back to the cars - we hoped our readers gained some ideas or encouragement from our scratch built trio. Back then, American car kit prices kept going up so it was cool when Airfix bought the American MPC mouldings and sold a Stingray, GTO, Dodge Charger and a Mustang to us at 16/6 (82p) each, the perfect basis for funny cars. "The Rebel" is just that – my Revell parts box was raided for a Logghe tube chassis, working IRS and the drag front end. The body and wheelbase alterations were so mild that DragRod editor JB thought it was stock! He had no excuse with the Dodge Charger built from two Airfix Dodge Charger bodies, with a scratch built interior featuring twin supercharged Pontiacs!

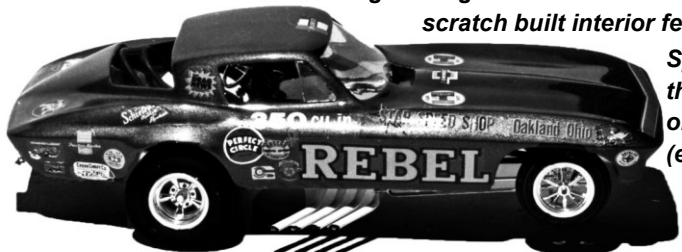
BRITISH DRAG RACING



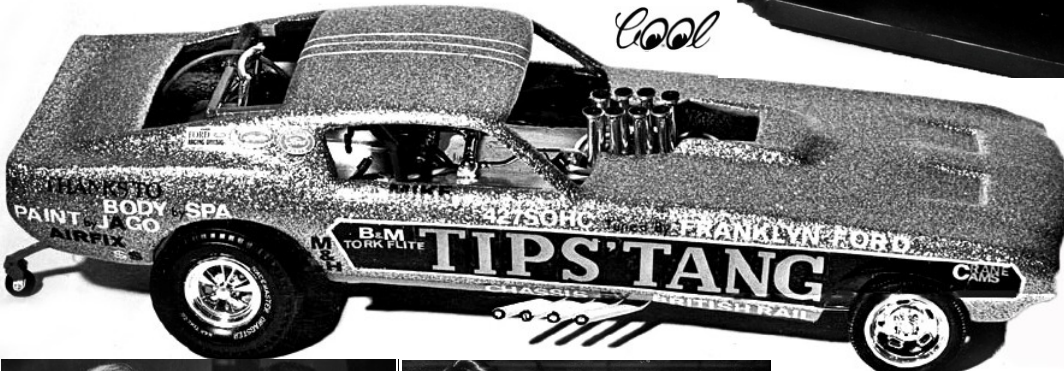
& HOT ROD ASSOCIATION



Spoilers were added front and rear and all the body seams were filled to simulate a one piece 'glass body to make it a real funny car! It was wired throughout (even to rubber blower drive belts), decals and dry print added and she was ready to hunt and won the Competition Class.



My all-time favourite was this Mustang built in memory of that trophy-winning ride in Tip Franklyn's GT500 – how lucky can a guy get! Well, after much work (four evenings drawing, cutting and cursing to transform six British Rail teaspoons into tube chassis rails), Geoff Jago gave it a stunning Metallflake finish!



With gloss black inserts, "long stacks" on its fuel injected Cammer and drilled out tube headers it was ready to rumble. And it did just that at the 1968 Junior Drag Racing Championships with yours truly over the moon when Judges John Bennett, FIA World Record holder Tony Densham (8.91 seconds in Commuter), and rookie top fuel driver Clive Skilton chose "Tips'tang" as Best of Show, talk about icing on the cake!



Actually the best part was upstaging Santa Pod who'd been busy promoting a Special Match race between Tony D in Commuter and Clive in the Allard/Skilton, but they raced for us first! Clive went down two out of three to Tony's experience, and hole shots! Talking of which, if any reader would like "build sheet" details on any of the cars, email me at Street Machine and you'll get a scan of the relevant DragRod pages.

Special Match Race
DENSHAM vs ALLARD/SKILTON
COMMUTER vs DRAGSTER

All smiles! Tony D et moi, and Clive gives Mike Pannett his Race Car trophy



Photographer unknown BBLF Courtesy Asphalt Archives

When Sox & Martin raced in the sunshine at Blackbushe during DragFest '64 their NHRA A/FX record-holding Mercury ran tens with ease, and so did this repro racer at Famoso for the 2016 CHRR, making it to the final where it lost with this gi-normous wheel stand! Always loved that custom-built FGR tow truck, especially when R** P****s kicked it down at the touch of a button (with his Stingray on the trailer!), and we just zapped past traffic, our speedo needle flying into the three digit zone with ease – awesome way to get home!



Meanwhile, back on the track, just like our caveman, folks wanted to go faster and began by altering the wheelbase for better traction, gutting the interior (like this classic A/FX from 1966 Popular Hot Rodding), with some even acid - dipping the bodies and drilling the chassis to lose weight! Although Gene Snow didn't build the first Funny Car (check out the flip top Mercury's to win that war!), he was the Godfather, racing his nitro injected Dodge Dart FX in C/Fuel Dragster class (Comp Eliminator), as Funny Cars were not yet officially recognized by NHRA. The Snowman won the 1966 US Nationals with a 9.04 and again in 1967 with an 8.67 in the new Super Eliminator class. In those days some folks even put a car body over a dragster chassis, but not Don Schumacher or Paula Murphy, despite media reports in 2016 that when they raced at the Pod in 1973 they had a "couple of essentially nitro-burning dragsters cloaked by lightweight, saloon-car-replica body shells..." Not true folks, they were balls-to-the-wall Fuel Coupes. However, Big Daddy Don Garlits did build one, a topless Dart which, although it was driven over 200mph, Big did not like it one bit. Legend, and a sighting by long-time pal Mike Lintern, says that it was soon dumped in Big's back yard. On his visit, Don told Mike, "That lets you know what I think about funny cars!"

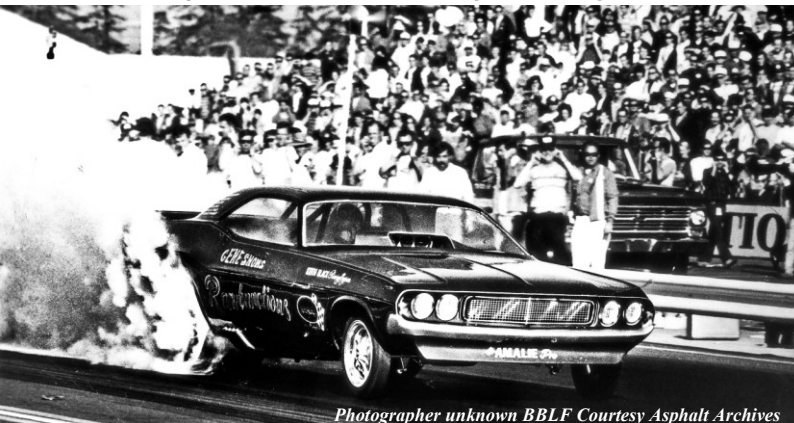


Photographer unknown Courtesy Acme Hi-Performance Laboratories



Courtesy Don Garlits

This Fuel Cuda ran on gas, but was a real dragster chassis wearing a coupe body that saw actual action on the Match race circuit in 1967. With the engine in the middle and its driver sat in the trunk it was cool lookin' but crazy! That said, at CHRR 2015 my daughter loved it. Back at the track in 1968, the Snowman switched to direct drive and ran 200.88mph on his first pass. In September 1969 he broke the 210mph barrier with a 213.78mph clocking.



Photographer unknown BBLF Courtesy Asphalt Archives



Photos courtesy nhra.com

to exceed 250mph. Eleven years later at Topeka, Kansas, [Chuck Etchells](#) (RIP July 6th 2016), seen match racing at Englishtown back in 1987, [drove into the 4-second zone with a 4.98](#) on the same weekend [Jim Epler ran the first 300mph funny car pass!](#) The fastest piston powered speed during the quarter mile era was Tony Schumacher's 337.5mph in his DSR US Army Top Fuel car with [Mike Ashley's 334mph](#) in 2007 the best in Fuel Coupe – that year JFR's Robert Hight ran the quickest AAFC quarter-mile pass at 4.636, stopping the 1,000foot clocks at 3.954. The following year NHRA went short track racing, but no one ran a three until 2011, DSR's Matt Hagan's 3.995, a new NHRA record, backed up by a 4.018, 322.27, the fastest 1,000 foot speed.



But fuelers stayed Kings of speed, until things went funny in May 2016 - less than six months after tuning wizard Jim Prock joined DSR Matt Hagan thundered to a mind-blowing [335.57mph](#) in a fuel coupe. For the first time ever I said out loud, "Thank God for Albert Einstein!" But even that went out the window in 2017 when Professor Prock returned to John Force Racing and put Robert Hight's Auto Club Camaro in the history books forever. Not as good looking as the stunning replication of [Big Jim" Dunn's 1982 Fireman's Quickie](#) paint scheme on John Hale's nostalgia Fuel Coupe at left (see below), Hight went faster than any piston powered pilot ever with an [earth moving 339.87mph in 3.807](#) seconds and later entered the twilight zone with a 3.793 Top Fuel ET at 338mph! But fuelers are meant to be Kings, so NHRA changed the rules...



At left is the awesome [Eye-Candy](#) image from DSR after their [335mph led assault on the record books](#) in Topeka that still blows me away! As do the numbers from that Friday night; along with Hagan's 3.863 at 335.57, there were eight runs under 3.90, 10 over 330 and six of 'em over 332mph! Watching the 335 alongside Alexis DeJoria's 3.87, 332.12 from a high camera at the top end was awesome - being there would've been true NitroNirvana! The swept back headers on Tommy Johnson Jr's Make-a-Wish DSR car below switched some of their mega down-force to forward thrust - once mastered it gave some drivers the quickest, fastest rides of their lives! Defending his 2016 win, TJ drove to victory over newly crowned NHRA Champion Robert Hight's John Force Racing/Auto Club Camaro, saying, "It's been a very emotional year, a tough year with the loss of Terry Chandler, I was determined to get this win for Terry to close out the season." The 2018 season began with another bunch of lonely folks at the NHRA Winternats after Andy Willsheer's best buddy and long-time [photographer Tim Marshall](#)

passed away in January. Sadly it was his final Fuel Coupe image but, happily for his friends and fans, [Tim can be seen shooting it](#) above the NHRA logo in their clip of that thundering 2017 race. The inset of the Ramchargers is one of Tim's from 1970 and I even found a page with a caption for a shot of a young Jungle Jim in 1966. In that half century Tim made folks happy with his laughter, often outrageous humour and they all missed him at Pomona. Especially my ol' mate Nitro Nostrils who met Tim on his first US trip 45 years ago, and they'd been laughing together ever since. Roger G joined their "always havin' fun club" about 10 years ago, and I first met Tim awhile later at Famoso as he was saying "They're the finest!" when they fired the first pair of Fuel Coupes. Godspeed Tim, our happy memories remain...



Tim Marshall photo
courtesy dragracingonline.com

Department of Corrections

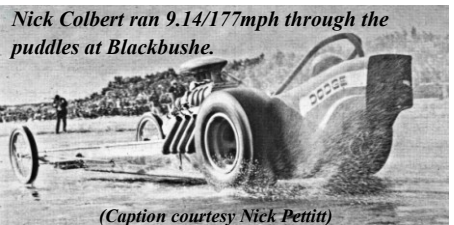
Okay folks, before I go dishing out hefty fines it's time to "fess up to a couple of faux pas in the last issue, but even Spiderman gets caught sometimes! Famoso is spelt correctly in this issue - guess I was driving too fast! I also spelt Lippencotte wrong, but as my spell check's been updated things should be cool in future. However there've been a couple of other errors that should be brought to your attention in the interest of historical accuracy, especially for our younger readers... Like f'r instance, "Garlits, Ivo and Stickler" did not have to dodge any puddles when racing at Blackbushe in 1964 'cos it was sunny and dry! However, as you can see below, at the following year's DragFest it rained at Blackbushe, yet Buddy Cortines (at left below), preparing to set low ET and Top Speed with an 8.78 at 179mph! Could you even imagine "driving" a blown, injected fuel car to 179mph - in the wet, with spray-filled vision and the seat of your pants telling you the car's straight - and you have to guess where to pull the chute! Happily, Woodvale was dry the next weekend, Danny Ongais ran a 7.99, the UK's first such pass, and a 7.91 on our first 200 mph run. Then Buddy Cortines ran a 7.83 at 200 and a 7.86, winning with a thundering 7.74 at 201 mph - [at night with NitroFire](#) it would've been awesome stuff indeed, but I bet he remembered the wet ride more!



Speed with an 8.78 at 179mph! Could you even imagine "driving" a blown, injected fuel car to 179mph - in the wet, with spray-filled vision and the seat of your pants telling you the car's straight - and you have to guess where to pull the chute! Happily, Woodvale was dry the next weekend, Danny Ongais ran a 7.99, the UK's first such pass, and a 7.91 on our first 200 mph run. Then Buddy Cortines ran a 7.83 at 200 and a 7.86, winning with a thundering 7.74 at 201 mph - [at night with NitroFire](#) it would've been awesome stuff indeed, but I bet he remembered the wet ride more!



In y'face action from
Andy Willsheer



Nick Colbert ran 9.14/177mph through the puddles at Blackbushe.
(Caption courtesy Nick Pettitt)

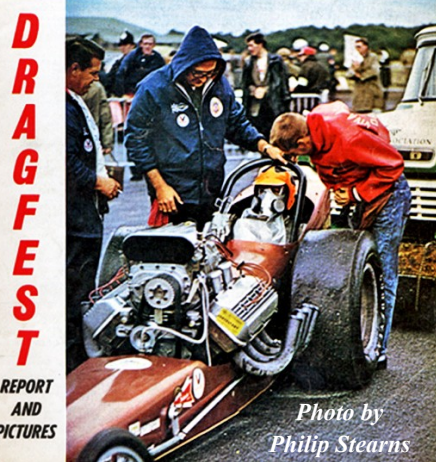


Photo by
Philip Stearns



Like NitroThunder? You'll love ["Fire Breathing Monsters,"](#) an awesome mini-movie with a great final frame (at right), or one of the [MOST Amazing Fuel Car runs in history!](#) Click and enjoy, and click the link at right for more action...



Cool

It was also suggested [these amazing shots](#) were of a Fuel Coupe - not true folks it was a TAFC! Had it been NitroFueled, Andy would've stepped away quite lively before it hit the wall - still shooting of course! Click the link to see ol' Nitro Nostrils in action as the car goes kinda berserk after an oil line broke at the hit! Like James Bond's favourite drink, driver Steve Gasparelli was shaken, but okay after his wild ride - unlike his car!



Matt Hansink
flying pix



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