



Can't recall whether Sci-fi or Zen came into my life first, but while preparing for the launch of Street Machine we visited our printers where computer screens carried "cut and paste" options alongside hyperlinks that'd first come my way through reading Sci-fi books at my library in Thornton Heath w-a-y back, and it was oh-so-c-o-o-l that, for once, my mind was ahead of technology – sort of! Didn't get my own PC (an Amstrad), until after my time at Mercury House, but long before then, with data gleaned from Sci-fi and help from Zen, my mind began working with hyperlink-style thinking. Not exactly fine tuned though, which could explain why Street Machine's original head honcho Ian Wearing and the team might've had problems understanding me as my thoughts became words with instant course changes! Happily it's much the same today, computer-quick but never "about 72,000,000 results in 0.40 seconds" – no thanks! Slam'n Sam's chuckle came to my ears on reading "GTO's an' a bunch of animals" in last month's Hot Gossip, the caged tiger leaping through my mind's eye instantly! Can imagine many young minds in turmoil, "What's it got to do with cars?" For instant Twitter type gratification scan down, or j'st hang on and enjoy the ride...

words & photos
mike collins



CAR and DRIVER

MARCH 1964 • 50 CENTS

Tempest GTO: 0-to-100 in 11.8 sec
Who Killed Studebaker? – Page 75
Rover 2000 Road Research Report



The tiger was sat on his rock, so it was easy to walk up and start talking to him quietly, my words suggesting he might enjoy some action as much as my lady friends. Lo and behold, he took heed, unleashing his awesome power on this a full stretch leap as I shot from the hip! This awesome memory entered my mind ahead of "Farmer" Arnie Beswick's FX car at Pomona 1966, but the Car & Driver cover from '64 was what lit a light bulb bright in my mind!

Once again, I dug out the transcript of my chat with Sam and realised how the GTO was able to blow the doors off a Ferrari back in 1964 – it was a ringer! The song's old as the GTO, but no doubt many readers have heard Ronnie and the Daytona's Little GTO or a cover version and are familiar with "three deuces an' a 4-speed, and a 389..."

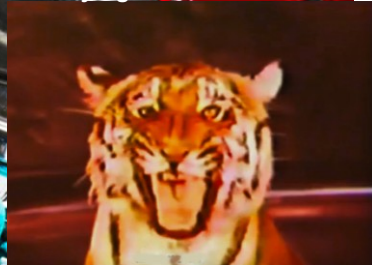


Hawaiian Henry photo

Mix an 'match, a '64 GTO 389 and our friendly tiger from the '66 TV ad.



Photo courtesy HotRod.com



When it was launched Pontiac also turned loose an outlaw GTO with a 421 HO engine fitted from the factory to a few dealers who'd promote their new "hot rod" car at the local drags - Sam got one, "Naturally it ran really strong for a 389!" Adding with a chuckle, "They supplied the vehicle, but they also wanted it back!" This wasn't common knowledge in 1984, but it seems that in his 1998 memoirs Jim Wangers admitted engineering the power swap and devious ways to add to the delusion and it worked to such an extent that the editors of Car and Driver and their readers believed "3-deuces an' a 4-speed on a 389" had run 13.1 ETs at 115mph! Regardless, those original GTO's are still amongst the most desirable of machines – imagine finding a genuine 421HO GTO, wow! To this day, these words are still tempting, "You don't know what a real tiger is until you hear this GeeTO Tiger growl" from the 1965 GTO ad where the Tiger climbed into the engine bay before the babe drove off. "It's all nimble, all tiger, all wide-track," was the line for 1966 and the Tiger climbed out of the engine bay after it was parked. But methinks the best lines came from the original 1964 GTO "For the man who wouldn't mind riding a tiger if someone'd only put wheels on it, Pontiac GTO" And I've always dreamt of riding a tiger...



GTO stars in a genuine 1964 factory clip and here's 82 year old Arnie Beswick having fun in the Tameless Tiger II FX car on a 4.83, 147.62 eighth mile at Cordova in 2013. This gem of a quarter mile race has Arnie backing up at speed like a teenager, gettin' a hole shot and kinda outta shape!
mcSnip courtesy victoryredcolorado @ youtube





"We evolved to survive on a planet with nothing faster than tigers..." words from Wendy Northcutt's *The Darwin Awards*, a very funny book that serendipity found me re-reading during a beverage break couple days ago, it's filled with facts and urban legends, all of 'em way out there with Captain Kirk and the Starship Enterprise, so be warned, if you read it and die laughing you may well be a potential winner of said award! Either way, I always thought the Cheetah was king of the jungle in speed! Regardless, back at CHRR 2010 skinny tyres and altered wheel base on that AFX GTO looked wild sat still, but when it pounced, just like the tiger it was truly awesome and what a buzz they both gave! However, despite the GTO's killer looks and visual histrionics, a young lady named Lynn Martinez drove a plane Jane wedge motored '69 Dart to a 8.891, 151.51 pole, while Jess Tyree's '63 Pontiac Tempest ran a 9.00 flat at 154.05 for top speed! Wonder what happened to that wild King Kong Hemi with its awesome max-rise fuel injectors? Seems that the fastest cars don't always win the drag race - survival of the fittest in any jungle takes more than brute strength; but before changing the subject, we've time for a couple more tiger tales...



mcSnip courtesy SantaPodTV - perhaps!

This GTO blew me away on first sight, but when fully unleashed in 2014 the tiger won our first 200mph street race! Mark Todd's hole shot 7.24, 200.66 took out Steve Neimantas' 7.32, 209.10 in his Bentley, a pair of totally awesome Street Machines!



Tiger Mustang images MercHouse BBLF



mcSnip courtesy the santapoder@youtube



Match race magic



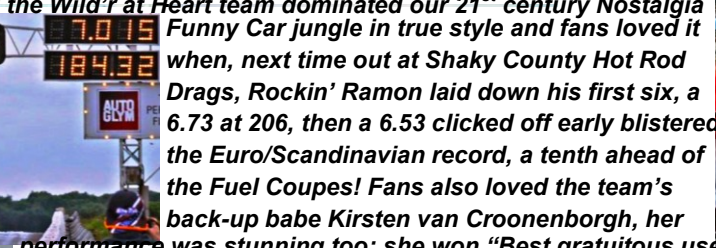
Courtesy Nitro Nostrils (aka Wide Angle Willsheer)

"Electric Colour Company go Velvetex on a '66 Yank" headlined Hot Car's story about Trevor Miles wild looking beast causing quite a stir on King's Road in 1971, its owner picking up a few tickets outside the Paradise Garage clothing he ran that did a "brisk business in second hand US boiler suits and dungarees." (Design71) But other than stripes it had no more tiger attributes, unlike the blown, injected Wild'r at Heart team who

gave fans the best show in town the first time I saw them in action at the 2012 Mopar Nats (a 3rd outing I believe), with a best ever 8.22. When I spoke with rookie BBFC driver Ramon van der Weurf he told me he wanted to "run a seven..." It came the following day with a bitchin' 7.01 ahead of a fuel coupe! Since then Ramon and the Wild'r at Heart team dominated our 21st century Nostalgia Funny Car jungle in true style and fans loved it



Rare top end shots courtesy Nitro Nostrils (aka Long Lens Willsheer)



when, next time out at Shaky County Hot Rod Drags, Rockin' Ramon laid down his first six, a 6.73 at 206, then a 6.53 clicked off early blistered the Euro/Scandinavian record, a tenth ahead of the Fuel Coupes! Fans also loved the team's back-up babe Kirsten van Croonenborgh, her performance was stunning too; she won "Best gratuitous use of hi-heel boots" award from me that year! Without a doubt Ramon was one of the quickest guns ever, a true hole-shot king who beat most all of his opponents at least once. Happy trails, your posse will be sorely missed. Yep Ramon's hangin' up his guns, the Wild'r at Heart BBFC up for sale if you fancy a piece of history, to maybe carry on his legacy, proving that even NitroPower doesn't always rule the roost, or the jungle!





Photo by Nitro Nostrils
Thanks for everything Andy

Talking of which, while writing about GeeTO tigers my mind told me that when they were getting fast a young lady named Janet asked "What would you like for your birthday Michael?" "An alligator please," came out after a few moments thought. She laughed, not with any derision, just smiling around, "Okay, but you'll have to organise it, take care of it too!" So I did with a couple of phone calls, then NitroPower came to the fore again and naturally the Gatornats came to mind, but I held the thoughts back for a tad 'cos the fact is on NHRA's Mello Yello trail, it's not just nitro that rules, lately it's Fuel Coupes that are often the kings of speed despite rules to slow 'em down and at this year's Gators the king of the jungle was Robert Hight. He's still the fastest driver down any dragstrip on the planet with his AA awesome 339.87 a couple years back! Although his JFR AAA Camaro never ran that fast, he made half-a-dozen passes



above 330 while DSR's Antron Brown ran a 330.23, the big number in Top Fuel ahead of winner Steve Torrence's 328.62 top speed of eliminations on a 3.72. In Q2 Hight's JFR car got kinda sideways yet his 3.92 at 305.15, took the pole and never looked back. Q3 saw a 3.89 at 330.88 and in Q4 Robert Hight secured his third straight #1 with a 3.86 at 331.12. Owner/driver Tim Wilkerson's LSR Mustang was just a tick behind at 3.87, 327.27 and JFR boss man John Force's 3.89 was 4th with the top Q speed of 331.94. On race day it was Robert Hight all the way again 3.86 at 331.94, 3.87 at 330.88 and a 3.85 at 331.20. For the first time in 50 years at the Gatornats the two top Fuel Coupes met in the final, but sadly it was a one horse race, Tim Wilkerson smoked 'em at the hit, leaving Hight to take a 4th Gatornats title, his 47th National event with another big blast, a 3.86 at 331.61. In Top Fuel DSR's Antron Brown ran top of the speed of meet with 330.23 on a 3.72 pass while Brittany Force's blistering 3.680 (her 11th pole), made her the first female #1 since the legendary Shirley Muldowney in 1979, just before Street Machine number one hit the streets!



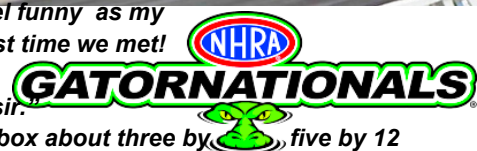
mcSnip courtesy NHRA.TV

And it was also Robert Hight's 3rd #1 at the Gators, some feat as he was the first driver since Kenny Bernstein in 1987, the same year I completed my drive from the Jersey Shore to the west coast of Florida and when they



mcSnip courtesy NHRA.TV

offered 'gator tail for the first time it made me feel funny as my Gator and I had a bunch of fun, right from the first time we met! Like I said, couple of phone calls and Harrods (when it was still a real store!), said "Next week sir."



A few days later I walked into my club holding a box about three by five by 12 inches to be greeted with "Happy Birthday Michael, is that a present?" as she set a tall cool drink in front of me. It was easy to smile, "Yes ma'am, thank you very much," taking a refreshing sip of Jack and crushed ice when she look startled, "Your box just moved, what's in it," and it did indeed move, so I gently went to lift the lid, it opened suddenly, the head of my new pet thrusting out, like the one at left, maybe a tad smaller at that time, but his jaws opened wide when she screamed! On realising how small he was, she laughed and said, That's Kinky," and the name stuck and boy did we have fun, travelling the length and breadth of the country, usually inside my jacket, by car, train and even onboard ship

with permission from my Captain and he was never any bother, except when he'd jump out in the car followed by panic braking so he didn't get under the pedal and cause a crash! A young waitress was passing with a loaded tray and saw him climb out between my lapels, he opened 'em wide and made a growl - she also screamed, as did my new friend shortly after we met when she suggested we drove out to Myakka, a wild nature reserve. After parking her Trans Am she asked, "Where are the fences," as we rounded a corner to see the vision



Nancy saw ripples changing shape, asked why, "It tastes fresh meat in the air, maybe it's hungry!" Joking obviously, then came her scream, luckily in my time with Kinky I'd learned just what to do, and even seen a Pro wrestle one down in the 'Glades but his was smaller and he had a stun gun - I had a British accent! That too is the real deal, like the first international fire breathing contest held on my 1987 birthday at Mantorp, my photographer was sacked for shooting before my fire exploded! Only joking!



mcSnip courtesy FHRA

But as you'll see on the next page our winner was a local hero, like Timo Lehtimäki who won back-to-back FHRA NitroNationals in Top Fuel! The last winner at Alastaro and first to go all the way at Kauhava - great stuff Timo!



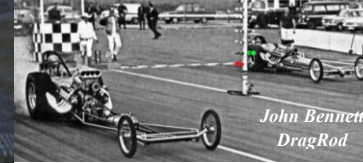
Nancy Lou photo



Photographer unknown



Sweden was cool, Harlan and Rune ran our fastest side-by-side AAFC race while at the Pod in '68 we had our first home grown AAFC race...



John Bennett DragRod

Great races, great celebrations! Hope you enjoy my birthdayMix!



Wow, what a winner!



The beast moved rapidly, not snake quick or fuel car thunder, but they're fast! Suddenly it moved, no burnout like John Force at DeSoto, but an instant launch filling my nostrils with foul air; not a face full of NitroPower like Gene Snow's when he ran a 4.99, the first 4-second pass outside Texas, and while Big Daddy warms Swamp Rat 1 (here SR1A in [2015 action!](#)), I'm trying to hold the jaws open as Nancy takes the shot! Ooops, I guess you saw the pole by my feet, but you gotta admit it's a real beastie indeed; much like my shot of the Snowman, an' they're both kinda cool!



My time in Manatee County was truly close to paradise, living halfway between a beach with oh-so-soft white sand and DeSoto Dragway, and good fortune came my way in getting to know its track owner from my first days, and by springtime when the big cars came to play, the late Art Malone told me, "Get as close as you like, j'st don't get run over by the cars!" Used a big gun on ForcePower, but the lens fell to bits at the NHRA's Keystone Nats, then I decided to give the Pod a miss, driving back to be a beach bum (after dropping Harlan T off at the airport – just as well, it rained!), and at the 1988 Snowbirds with a 28mm lens the shot above was damned close, but Nancy's Nikon had flat batteries so it meant leaning on a barrier next to track's edge, hand-held available light – and there wasn't much! But on auto the camera stayed open for the whole 4.99seconds of NitroFire that took me by surprise just like the f*ckin' gator, but it's an awesome kinda shot to my way of thinking! Following the Colonel's passing on March 29, 2012, his long-time friend Don Garlits wrote "Art took to Drag Racing like a 'duck to water,' setting the new Drag News 1320 Record at his first outing," he raised that mark a few times, and was also the first to exceed 190 in the quarter, hitting 195.63mph in September 1959. Art built his own car and won Bakersfield's US Fuel and Gas Championships in March 1963 with Ed Iskenderian as crew chief! Art also won \$10,000 from NASCAR's Bill France for being the first driver to exceed "180mph on a closed course," setting a Daytona record with a 181.561mph lap, August 28, 1961 in 'Mad Dog'- a winged version of an Indy car, and even raced the Indy 500 for Andy Granatelli in 1963 and '64, when he finished 11th. The Colonel was indeed an amazing man, and lovin' an' living in Manatee County was really cool, but let's go racing, at Famoso with my all time favourite Nostalgia Fuel Coupe, John Hale's tribute car to CHRR 2015's Grand Marshal and drag racing legend Big Jim Dunn who had no idea it was being put together – maybe it didn't win, but when John stood on the NitroThunder the rainbow colour in motion was an awesome sight, much like this amazing and totally unexpected shot of my current favourite librarian Eleisha who said she was going to Thailand's famed island of Phuket where happenstance found her enjoying a "totally mesmerizing" close encounter of the most personal kind, she was "not scared, just "very excited," but her eyes showed amazement, and quiet, my mind recalling an email sent after entering Burma's Shwedagon 50years after first sighting it, "F*ck the nitro give me bliss!" They never responded



Eleisha has the bliss I felt in Shwedagon, awesome! Lucky gal too. Click it to view the pagoda

