

RACE CARS

Steel, Leather and Gasoline; three different substances that, when combined in a car, attract little boys, intrigue women and drive most men to a frenzy. Cars! Sports cars, luxury cars, classic cars, race cars, rapturous sleek red cars, subtle tone gray cars, brilliant yellow cars; all have the common element of four wheels and a motor, yet all possess a power to fire the imagination and desire of men, women and children alike. Cars; possibly no other machine made by man so captures the emotions of people. Inauspicious in their component origins, yet in combination, Steel, Leather and Gasoline, result in something of purposeful joy and wonder; Cars! The blending of these disparate parts is nowhere better rendered than in the classic sports racing automobiles from the era roughly bracketed by the 1930's through the '60's.

Nothing defines the concept of function over form better than a race car. Race cars are specifically built machines that combine innovation and invention, engineering, physics, advanced design, aerodynamics, technology and mechanics; resulting in an automobile that can go fast, have endurance and reliability, handle with precision and predictability, have superior braking capability and do all of these things while providing reasonable protection to the driver. As these developments become perfected and cost effective, they move into the manufacturing process to become the cars that you and I drive on a daily basis. Virtually all the technical, performance, design and safety features that we generally take for granted in our cars have come from racing cars, through the trial and error of testing, racing and winning on the track. There is nothing extraneous or non purposeful on a race car. A race car is the definition of *form following function*.

There is a convergence of unique characteristics that make these cars so pleasing and compelling to look at. Even a person who knows little about cars cannot help but be drawn to and be curious about a race car. The very fact of *form following function*, the aerodynamics that help produce speed, the smooth fluid lines of the metal skin flowing in luxurious function result in a classic beauty that becomes art like.

While function is the prime mover in race car design, one cannot deny that many of them are truly works of beauty, becoming an art form. How can one look at a Ferrari GTO or a Jaguar C-Type, a Maserati 300s or a Mercedes 300SLR and not be rendered almost speechless by their beauty derived from purposeful function? Seen on the grass at a Concours event or in a well executed show room in a private collection, they are without question works of art. But that only resulted from the requirement to satisfy function. Their bodies were formed to facilitate and to enhance their function. Many of the cars that dominated the world's race circuits in their time achieved a dominance that made them noteworthy enough to be kept and preserved and over time to emerge as icons of the automobile world and its auto art.

Of course, as the expression goes, art is in the eye of the beholder. Some people are impressed by the huge values being consigned to many of these cars. Others are taken by the hand craftsmanship of the sculpted aluminum bodies or by the skillfully tooled leather. To some, the exquisite sound of a finely machined engine is the defining element.

Who among us does not thrill to the unique sound of a Ferrari V-12 in race tune? On a different scale, is the signature roar of a 7 liter Corvette, torque bursting from it as if from a thunder cloud. Look at a Bugatti aluminum engine, cast from a single billet of aluminum, with the fine swirl etching coving its surface and not be in awe of the talent that built it so many years ago? Let your eye wonder over the curvaceous form of a Ferrari 250TR and be almost elevated to an altered state of appreciation. Did this creation really come from two craftsmen pounding on aluminum, each just working on half the car, yet the whole finishing off like a Michelangelo sculpture?

Of course, the component of the race car that makes it function is the driver. The names of the men and the circuits they drove on adds the dimension to the race car that either drives it into history or leaves on the rust pile of the forgotten. Juan Fangio, Alfonso de Portago, Mike Hawthorne, Peter Collins, Oliver Giendibien, Wolfgang Von Trip, Phil Hill and Ritchie Ginther, the Rodrigus brothers, Jack Brabham and, of course, Sterling Moss, to name but a few. For those of us following this form of racing back in the time these men and the names of the places they raced were magical; Mille Miglia, Silverstone, Goodwood, the Nurnburg Ring, LeMans, Monsa, Spa, Carara PanAmerica, Nassau, Sebring, Lime Rock, Road America, Riverside; names that jump from the pages of automobile history filling one's mind with the sound and fury of the exploits of the cars and the daring men who drove them.

We are fortunate today to have men and women of means who have saved these cars, preserved them and bring them back to the race circuits of the world for people to see and appreciate this unique combination of STEEL, LEATHER AND GASOLINE.

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