

CLASSIC DRIVER

The Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion 2010



And I really mean action! On Saturday, from eight o'clock in the morning to late afternoon, the Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, just a 30-minute drive from Monterey, was the place to be.

Same venue but a new name for the event: RIP the '**Rolex Monterey Historic Automobile Races**' and long live the '**Rolex Monterey Motorsports Reunion**'. The name change reflects the **Sports Car Racing Club of the Monterey Peninsula** ('SCRAMP') taking over its running from **Steve Earle's General Racing** company. Whether it was better or worse for the change I am certainly not qualified to say, having only attended the **Laguna Seca** races once before, in 2008.

I can state, though, that much of the on-track activity was very serious stuff. So much so, unfortunately, that a big accident involving three cars halted the third race. Veteran driver **John Morton** ended up in hospital for precautionary checks after the **Scarab** he was driving performed end-over-end flips near Turn Two.



On the restart, this race was won at a canter by the British driver **Alex Buncombe**, at the wheel of the **1959 Lister-Jaguar Costin** prepared and entered by **JD Classics**. If **Morton**, **Larry Bowman** and **John Miller** had survived the first-lap fracas, it would have been a hell of a scrap.

Practice and racing was all held in one day. Which was great for the spectators, because the short practice periods in the slickly organised event meant the drivers really had to step on it, and whenever you were trackside, there was always something happening.



I don't intend to give you a blow-by-blow account of each of the nine races. What amazes a European visitor (and I really want to get this across) is the depth of cars that we just don't see this side of the pond. And, even better, they're cars which were raced Stateside in period. Such as the horde of **Porsche RS 60s** and **RSKs**, the **USRRC Cobras** and, in addition to various **Old Yellers**, mad one-offs like **Frank Zucchi's 1960 Piranha Sports Racer** with its flame-outs under braking.



For stars-and-stripes, home-grown American racing, however, nothing beats the **Trans-Am** cars. Following a toe-to-toe battle in the previous weekend's **Pre-Reunion** races, the blue **#2 1969 Ford Mustang** of **Bruce Canepa**, the orange **#13 1970 Chevrolet Camaro** of **Tomy Drissi** and **Ken Epsman's** lime green **#77 1970 Dodge Challenger** were at it again big time this Saturday. It was eight laps of real 'door handle' racing, with the crowds never sure who was going to be leading into, through, or out of the corners.

It was **Canepa**, though, in the **ex-Dan Gurney 'Mustang Clubs Racing Team' Boss 302** that took the chequer.



Terrific stuff; an equal to anything at the **Goodwood Revival**. And the excitement wasn't just confined to the big-capacity cars, as earlier on a variety of **BMW**s, **Porsches** and **Alfa GTAs** in the under-two-litre class fought it out over another 10 laps of the twisting, rising and dipping track.



As the shadows grew longer, it was time for the **1964-1969 FIA sports cars**. The organisers were playing slightly loose with the rules here, as several cars were from 1970-71, but who really cares? And this turned out to be another stonker with **Canepa**, this time installed in a **Gulf-liveried Porsche 917K**, trading places with **Peter Kitchak's** red **Lola T70 Mk IIIB**, the Porsche just keeping ahead after eight hard-fought laps.



The **all-Bugatti** event was, perhaps, more familiar to a Brit, with many European-based cars in attendance. Still, 30 **Bugattis** in one race is an impressive sight.

The last race of the day turned out to be a benefit for **ex-Ferrari Grand Prix** driver **Stefan Johansson** driving **Zak Brown's 'Blaupunkt' 1986 Porsche 962**. Having been kept reasonably honest in practice by the green/white **Group 44 Jaguar XJR** of **Rick Knoop**, the Swede really floored it in the race and was uncatchable, driving in what the commentator quaintly described as "the European style - really using all the track". Yessiree, that's how we like to do it over here.



All in all, it was a superb day out and it would have been terribly tempting to high-tail it from the **Concours** at the **Lodge** come lunchtime to enjoy Sunday afternoon's racing, which in 2010 featured an **all-NASCAR grid**. But then, there's always next year, oh yes indeed.







*Text: Steve Wakefield
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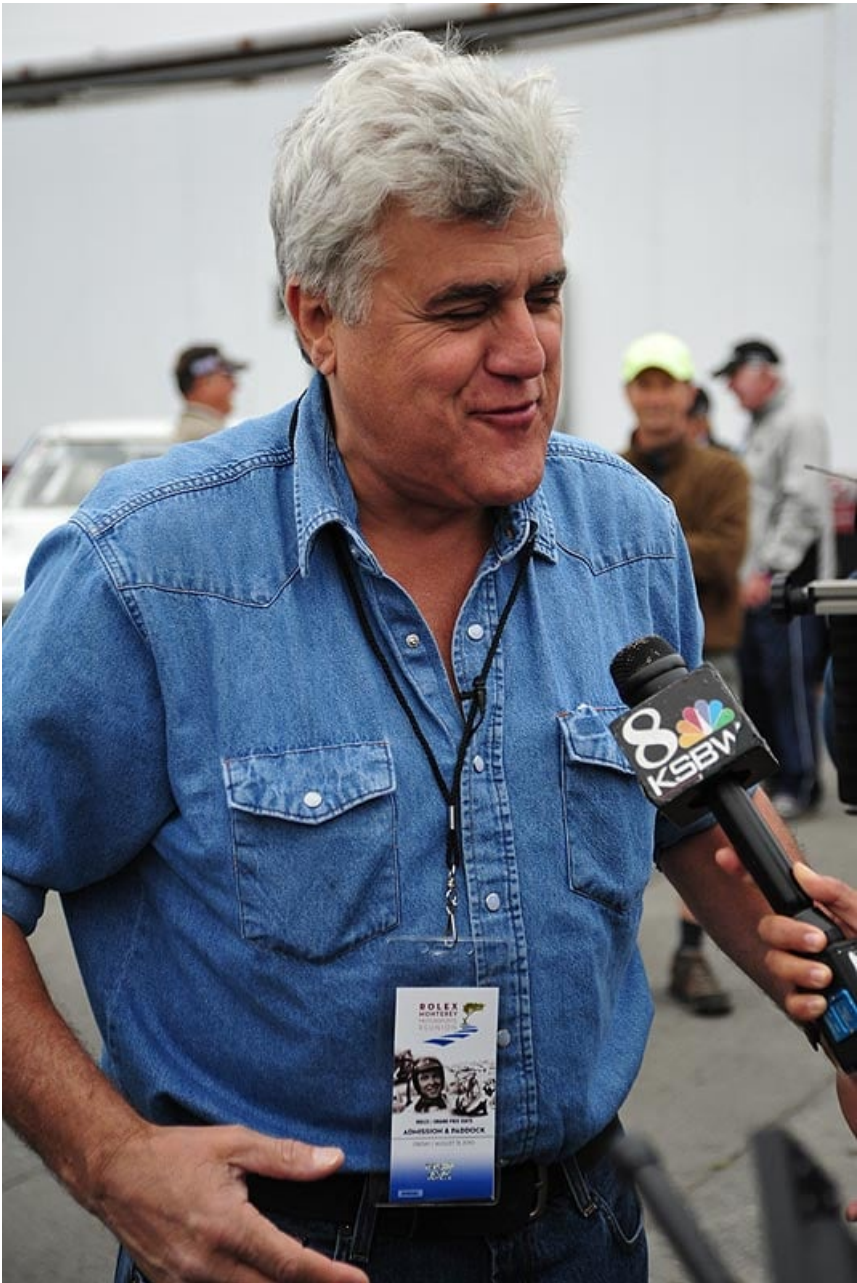
















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