

Old-school Insanity

It's gassers galore at this grassroots nostalgia drag racing site

BY MIKE MCNESSOR

Quick Facts

URL: www.GasserMadness.com

Type: Online gathering place for vintage gas-class drag racing enthusiasts

Focus: Gassers

Registration: Not required

Family Rating: G

Hemmings Rating: ★★ ★

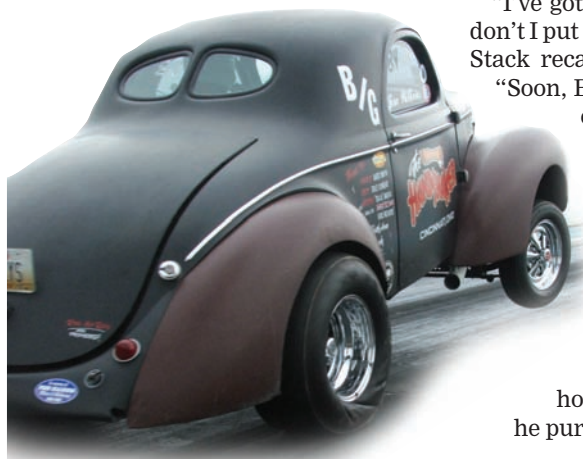
Is there anything cooler than a pre-war coupe, Anglia, Henry J or '55 Chevy perched high atop leaf springs and a straight front axle with a pair of slicks poking out of radiused rear fenders?

Nope. At least, not in the collective opinion of the several thousand visitors who frequent the virtual, retro-drag racing world at GasserMadness.com.

Leave your show-car pretensions behind, this is a place where form follows function: Stock front ends are discarded, sheetmetal is unapologetically cut and antiquated drivetrains are sold off with little or no concern about whether their numbers matched or not.

O.K., so maybe that's a little bit of an exaggeration these days, when gassers are built for nostalgia's sake and many on a budget that no working-class drag racer in the '60s could have dreamed of. But it aptly describes the way gassers were built during drag racing's salad days, which is celebrated by GasserMadness.com.

When most people think of gassers, it's



the famous ones that come to mind, like the supercharged Willys coupes of "Ohio George" Montgomery, Big John Mazmanian or Stone, Woods and Cook.

But those standouts don't represent the original spirit of the gas classes, which were established to accommodate every weekend warrior with a hot-rodged, usually street-driven coupe, sedan or even convertible.

In fact, this is something you can read more about on GasserMadness.com, in an article titled, "It's a Matter of Class" that the site's founder, Byron Stack, wrote for *Gasser Wars* magazine. (It's accessible from the navigation menu via the link: "A Brief History of the Gasser Classes.")

Stack, a 59-year-old ex-crew member for a pair of gasser-age race teams, started his site in 1997, as a way to share and display some vintage drag racing pictures he'd accumulated over the years.

"I've got all of these old pictures, why don't I put up a freebie site on Geocities?" Stack recalled of his site's conception.

"Soon, Bill Pratt, who runs a Web site called the dragracinglist.com, put a link to my site called, gassermadness.com. Well, the site did have a preponderance of gassers on there and I liked the name...."

As traffic increased, Stack added pages by creating new free sites and linking them together in hodge-podge fashion. Eventually, he purchased space on a commercial

server, creating the current site.

Stack is fairly sure that he isn't going to get rich from the proceeds of his Internet venture, which now includes an e-mail group as well. However, he's content knowing he's helping to keep an important era in drag racing history alive.

"I just want to promote nostalgia gassers. It's a type of car I always enjoyed and I'm shocked to find how many other people do, too. I know of at least five cars that were built because of the Web site, and I know it has influenced a lot of young guys to get in it, which I think is cool."

In addition to the historical photos and gas-class recollections, GasserMadness.com features cars and parts for sale; homages to racers and cars that have made their last trips down the return road; the obligatory readers' rides; and even photos of a gasser project in progress.

What GasserMadness.com lacks in design slickness, it more than makes up for by filling a niche that isn't filled as well anywhere else on the Web. Its primary value is as a bulletin board for photos new and old; events listings and links to other places on the Internet where gassers past and present are welcome. There's also some event coverage mixed in for good measure.

If the sight of high-riding racers from drag racing's grassroots beginnings excites you, check out GasserMadness.com—it might just lead to the start of your own back-to-basics quarter-mile project car. 🏁