

MELTDOWN DRAGS

Images and words: Dan Podobinski

Ig: @dans_hot_rod_photo





I am a part time, freelance photographer and writer here in the United States. I am also a survivor of stage 2 testicular cancer. I live in a small town called Hebron in the state of Indiana. We are at the southern end of Lake Michigan, about an hour drive from downtown Chicago. Right off the bat, if you are reading this online, thank you! Secondly, if you are reading this in the hard copy print version, I want to thank you yet again. You see, print publication is why people like me found our way into this photography business. Posting images online for the world to see is cool but, let's face it, literally anyone with a phone and internet access can send an image into the infinitely vast world wide web with the push of a button. While the potential exposure is seemingly limitless, there are no real qualifications needed to take part. Print publication is different however. Print publication means that someone somewhere sees your work as being fit for inclusion in their work, in their passion. The little bit of money that I make in this side job as a photographer and writer is nice, but it's really about sharing that work with people that get it, in print publications that get it. That's what this appearance in the Jopurnal of Automotive Photography is about.

So, how did I get to this point? Well, first off, I come from a family full of creativity, particularly on my mother's side. While none of them pursued the arts as a career, almost all of them found ways to express it. Back in the 1970's, when I was a child, my mom did lots of painting, mainly landscapes. I did lots of drawing as a child, built a bunch of model cars and spent hours playing with model trains and slot cars. All of this activity nurtured a vivid imagination, which I feel is key to any type of creative and artistic venture. As I got older, playing with real cars was naturally the next step. At that time, the late 1980's, the newsstands were still packed with automotive magazines. Titles like Hot Rod and Rod & Custom were regular purchases for me. Eventually, when I gained my drivers license, local car shows and cruise nights became regular activities that my friends and I would take part in. Taking photos of my favorites was part of the action, almost from the get go.



"Fast forward 20 years. I now had a couple of shoe boxes full of amateurish snap shots. Lots of out of focus and poorly composed film images, but to me they were like gold. Once I purchased my first digital point and shoot camera back in 2006, it was as if the flood gates had been flung wide open. Suddenly I could see my results in an instant and, more importantly, I could critique them, learn from them and make the appropriate adjustments. With that, my images began to evolve from snap shots to photographs. It wasn't long before I was stepping up to my first digital SLR and a potential second career began to seem like a very real possibility. By the autumn of 2012 I had been introduced to a magazine editor and my foot was in the door. Since that time, I have been a regular contributor to magazines like Hop Up, Car Kulture Deluxe and Ol' Skool Rodz and have made occasional appearances in a handful of other titles.





"These particular images are from an amazing vintage drag racing event near Chicago known as the Meltdown Drags, held from 2010 through 2018 at Byron Dragway in Byron, Illinois. The Meltdown drew competitors from across the United States and Canada and drew spectators from around the globe. It truly was something special. I don't get the opportunity to shoot a lot of drag racing, but when I do, it is something that I thoroughly enjoy. There are different ways to photograph drag racing. There are plenty of shots of cars leaving the starting line. Those are great but, in my eyes, they don't always convey the speed, power and mechanical violence of it. While I do take my share of shots from the line, I really like shooting the cars at speed, from the 60 foot mark or even half track. Conveying that speed and power sometimes means the shot may be a little out of focus, let's call it effectively blurry, while other times the focus on the race car may be tack sharp. Aside from that, I also love to capture the feel of an event through candid and editorial type photography including spectators and competitors and artistic photos of the cars in the pits and in the staging lanes.

I hope that you enjoy these shots and for those who are interested, the incredible Meltdown Drags will be returning in the summer of 2022 for a grand finale that is sure to be an over the top success.





ATTACK

"For the record I shoot with an outdated Canon EOS 60D coupled with a Canon F2.8 17-55mm zoom and F1.8 50mm 'nifty-fifty'



