



The new Stardust Funny ran again at Snetterton on Sunday, Allan Herridge driving.

DRAG

Snetterton's excellent drag debut

The inaugural meeting at Snetterton must have delighted the promoters and organisers for the first time in months not a drop of rain was seen all day, and a large crowd was on hand to see the country's top cars performing on what proved to be a first class strip from the spectators point of view, with banking and grandstands protected by Armco giving a really close view. From the racers point of view, a dip in the right hand lane where the strip joined on to the circuit was a problem for the more powerful cars, but otherwise the traction seemed good, with a more than adequate braking area and a return road leading back into the pits.

Biggest news on the entry list was the Santa Pod Stardust funny car, a most welcome addition, and hopefully a foretaste of next year with more forays away from home base. Joining this in the Top Comp and funny car field were seven more cars, although eventually both Herridge in Stardust and Dennis Priddle in his STP Avenger elected to race each other. Herridge laid down a fine 7.06 s/202 mph run to take number one spot. Priddle replied with a 7.48 s at 192 mph, with the next car being Dave Stone's altered at 7.8 s/180 mph. Mike Hall did not run with his altered, while Keith Harvie's new Chevrolet blew a seal in its 3-speed B&J gearbox and retired. Ed Shaver ran an easy 9 s with the Castrol funny and Roland Pratt clocked a 9.5 s with the new Revell Scimitar.

With the big twosome pulling out for their own private duel, Dave Stone became favourite for the win, and his chances were improved with a bye run to the final. Roland Pratt and Ed Shaver faced off in their funnies to give another showing of what has become the number one class with the crowds. The new Scimitar looked particularly impressive and sounded very crisp.

On the green, Shaver's car bogged slightly and was left by Pratt, but as he crossed the bump in the right hand lane the car veered towards the centre and crossed the line in front of Shaver. By the time he had got the car back into his lane, Shaver had started to move after him, but as crossing the centre means instant disqualification, he too shut-down to take the win safely. For the final run Stone

had the "bad" lane, and in one of the biggest upsets of the year, this was to cost him the race, as he went up in smoke and got wildly out of shape as Shaver poured it on to his best ever at 8.1 s/161 mph to Stone's desperate catch-up attempt of 180 mph in 8.3 s that for once was just too late to do any good.

Meanwhile Allan Herridge had fallen foul of the lane in the funny car match with Priddle after the two cars had filled the confined start area with smoke from two burn-outs apace.

With Priddle moving first, Allan thundered after him as he crossed the dip, and was then fighting for control as the big car veered on to the grass verge. With his legendary skill at the wheel of the funny he got out of the slide but was out of the race as Priddle shot to a 7.26 s 196 mph clocking.

The second and last round, the last run of the day in the early evening, was spoiled when someone got lost in the clouds of smoke that drifted across the start and stepped on the control box for the Christmas Tree. Only when both cars had gone some feet past stage was this realised and with both motors getting very hot, a hurried flag start was laid on, but in the confusion neither car was staged properly and Herridge left very early before the flag was even lifted, so that Priddle shut off rather than partake in a futile chase.

Now rather eclipsed by the funnies, the Top Fuel entry of four cars was down to three when Priddle broke a half shaft. Skilton, his car repaired by Priddle but only partially clothed in primed alloy, ran a 7.2 s at 192 mph to check out the new front axle, just ahead of Roz Prior's best ever 7.23 s at 202 mph. Malcolm Quick in Revolution Three had trouble getting used to the car, but qualified, going to the final to meet Roz Prior as Skilton was unlucky enough to break a rod when a cracked head filled up a bore with water. Roz's solo run was a 7.37 s at 208 mph, top speed of the meet, and her winning time against Quick (who was another to change lane, but this time behind Prior) was a 7.30 s at 200 mph, her first win in Top Fuel, and luck not withstanding, a deserved one at that.

In Top Dragster, although Gerry Andrews went through to another easy win with the

Stones injected Chevy rail, the new car from D. B. Motors driven by Jeff Morris showed that it is well capable of winning, for after braking a half shaft qualifying, the team had the car running again later for a single pass at 9.1 s and 166 mph, the first real all-out attempt, and one with plenty of room for further improvement.

In Senior Competition, Clive Page widened the gap further between his teams 427 Chev "Panic" and the rest of the class with a stunning 9.7 s/150 mph clocking, backed up with a 9.4 s/144 mph run, the best times ever recorded for a carbureted petrol-burning car in any class. Second fastest was Freeman Rodgers who got his 427 Ford back into the tens with a 10.8 s. After he had beaten Dickson's Olds/Pop 10.8 s to 12.7 s, and Page had beaten Dick Sharp's Pontiac A35 with a 9.9 s to 10.8 s, the two met. Page really revved his car on the line to warm up a cold motor, and surprised himself with the extra horsepower, so that a wheelie a few feet off the line could have cost him the race had not Rodgers dropped back, giving 11.45 s to a 10.7 s.

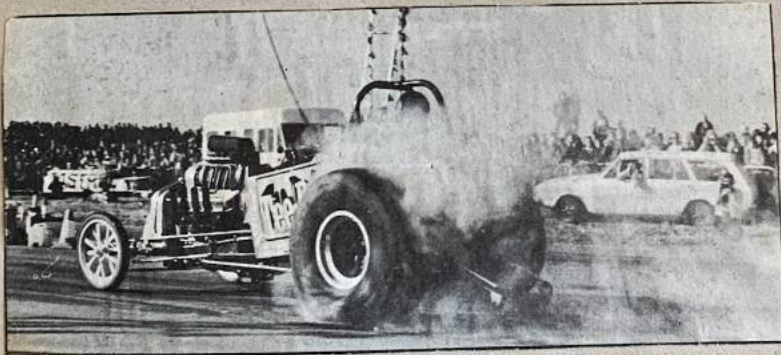
In Middle Competition, the ever popular "Strip-teaser" Jag Minivan had the crowd cheering its wheels-in-the-air antics through each round to the final where Bob Messent took it to an 11.25 s win over Keith Harvie's (not the Top Competition entrant of the same name) neat 3.5 Rover/Buick powered Vauxhall bodied Altered at 12.7 s.

The amalgamated Pro and Superstreet classes saw Colin Mullen take the "Heavy" Dodge through to another win on handicap in a somewhat confusing elimination; his 9.9 s being the fastest time of the day, with Dennis Stone in the Precision Tapes Escort Chev runner up.

The meeting did have teething troubles, with the pits perhaps being too far from the track and a PA system that was virtually inaudible except directly under the rare speakers; but it had the closeness that is such a part of the sport that is missing from most venues, and with the lessons learned, this must make Snetterton one of the best places to go drag racing in 1975.



AUTOSPORT, OCTOBER 3, 1974





Roland Pratt gave the Hillbillies Revell Scimitar Funny Car its first race at Snetterton recently.

Drag racing too was affected with the Santa Pod event abandoned after qualifying. There are now two events left in the calendar, both in November.



Lawrence Burn, who has been running both the ex-Roz Prior 454 Chev Top Dragster and the Avenger/Chev Senior Comp Altered this year has sold both cars within the past month, and was on hand at Santa Pod recently to see Clive Skilton crash in his new acquisition—the GTX dragster. Following its rebuild, Lawrence has decided to go ahead with the deal and has plans to run the car next year with one of the iron 392 motors that was up for sale with the car. Following in Roz's steps, Liz Burn will continue to drive, having run an 8.9 s with the Chevrolet rail a couple of meets ago.

Roz meanwhile, having just picked up sponsorship from Revell for next year, has lost the backing of Accles and Pollock, who, although well satisfied with their time in drag racing, have now stopped producing the Chome-Moly tube that is used extensively in drag racing chassis construction, and therefore are diverting their promotional budget elsewhere. Like so many other drivers, Roz will be looking for someone else to help, underlining the real need for a major sponsor to back a Top Fuel championship as the cost of running the cars continues to escalate.

Keith Harvie's news

One of the few to make a substantial improvement at the recent rained out event at Santa Pod was Keith Harvie, who was running his new American built Fuel Altered for the first time at Santa Pod. Following its Snetterton gearbox failure, the team had got some new seals for their B&J three speed from Dennis Priddle, whose STP Avenger funny runs a two speed of the same make. This is apparently a fairly common failure with the design, the very high hydraulic pressure used for the actual change blowing the rear housing seals out of the case.

With new seals fitted, the car launched strongly to an 8.7 s run, Keith shutting down very early as he felt his way into the car. Running on straight methanol, the car has already previously run a 6.99 s in America, so it should provide stiff opposition for Dave Stone's Tee Rat, with a best of 7.7 s to date—although the car has yet to be really hard pushed.

AUTOSPORT, OCTOBER 24, 1974

At the recent US Nationals, Top American Funny car driver Don Prudhomme continued one of the longest and most successful winning streaks of all time in the sport, coming into the Funny car elimination and running just hard enough to get to the final, and then winning with a 6.33 s over Billy Meyer, who had earlier set a new National record of 6.19 s in his Vega funny. He suffered from a lack of traction in the final and slipped to 6.46 s.

Prudhomme's Army sponsored car came to the event with a whole string of 6.1 s runs to its credit, and a best of 6.01 s set just a few days prior to the event—a staggering time that puts the car behind only a handful of Top Fuel cars in absolute performance. Running the new 17 in wide 35 in tall M&H slicks, he qualified at 6.29 s on a rather indifferent surface but he was just pipped for the Number One spot by Meyer's 6.28 s, but went on to win without ever having to push the car to its potential.



Dennis Priddle, who is British and European drag racing record holder, with a 6.49s time for a quarter mile at Santa Pod



'MALIBU-EXPRESS'

Team Castrol

D.B. MOTORS

AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE

of Leicester SALES, SPARES & TYRES

★ ★
**Funnies
 are
 FAST!**

SMOKE BILLING from the rear tyres and the mighty roar of a V-8 engine—it can only be one thing; a fantastic plastic-bodied Funny Car being let loose on the ¼-mile dragstrip. With its hinged glassfibre body enclosing a supercharged fuel dragster engine devouring great quantities of fuel—up to 6 gallons of nitromethane per run—Funny cars are without doubt the most spectacular class in the exciting sport of drag racing.

Leading British Funny car driver is a little guy from Hayes, Middlesex who goes by the name of Allan Herridge, or "Bootsie" as he is nicknamed, for when he's strapped in the cockpit his right foot knows only one position and that's holding the accelerator pedal flat on the floor! The car that he drives, called "Stardust", is powered by a supercharged 8-litre Chrysler V-8 engine and enclosed by a replica Barracuda body which flips up to



Above: With his nose almost touching the windscreen, Ed Shaver takes off in the unusual mid-engined Castrol Funny Car. Below: Really laying it down — Dennis Priddle, driver of the famous Mr. Revell Top Fueller also drives this Chrysler-powered, Avenger-bodied car.





Above and right: Allan "Bootsie" Hertridge, driver of Stardust (far left). The fireproof helmet has filters that protect the driver from deadly nitromethane fuel fumes.

Above: Another view of Dennis Priddle's Funny car running against a Volvo 1800 sports car-bodied Funny in the same Silverstone drag meeting.

Below left and right: Costing about £5,000, the engines for the top Funny cars can work out expensive if they blow up! This engine is fitted to a mid-engined Castrol car. The body is just being lowered over driver Ed Shaver before he moves off into the "fire-up" lane prior to making a "burn-out" and a run up the strip.



This is Hounddog, once owned by the fastest lady driver in the world, American Paula Murphy. Now driven by Owen Hayward it has made a best run of 7.19secs/195mph.



At Santa Pod (centre, top and bottom) Hounddog runs off against Stardust. Above: Owen inside the car. A starter motor is connected to the blower pulley and used until the engine fires.

allow the driver to gain access to the cockpit, and allows for easy maintenance on the engine.

Allan was asked to describe the feelings experienced driving Europe's fastest Funny Car.

"The sensation of speed is incredible when shut inside the body as the car accelerates at a phenomenal rate to over 200mph. I suppose the 1-mile trip could be described as similar to riding a bucking bronco at a rodeo as we hurtle down the strip—the ultimate experience to be in command of such an enormous amount of power, some 2,000bhp!"

Questioned as to whether he was ever frightened of the car, Allan replied, "No, but you have to treat it with respect, because with all that power there is little room for error. But if I didn't feel that I was the master then I certainly wouldn't be driving a car like that."

"Bootsie" Hertridge certainly has the qualifications to drive a "car like that", having built and raced one of the first dragsters ever seen in England some 12 years ago, powered by a "straight eight"

cylinder (eight cylinders in-line) Buick engine. Since those early days Allan has built and driven a variety of increasingly powerful machines, culminating in "Stardust", owned and prepared by Roy Phelps.

At Santa Pod Raceway during the Whitsun drag meeting little Allan Hertridge became the first and only Funny Car driver outside of America to cover the standing quarter in less than 7 seconds when he hurtled down the Bedfordshire strip in 6.87 seconds, having recorded terminal speeds of over 204mph!

Stardust was bought from top American racer Don Schumacher when he came over to race an international race meeting last year. On only the third run since Allan started driving it, the super-charger exploded, blowing the top of the body 30 feet into the air—at the time the machine was travelling at 200mph! That explosion worried Allan, but only to the extent that it meant that he couldn't drive the machine again until it should be repaired!

The gleaming engine is a super-

charged V-8 Chrysler built by top American builder Ed Pink and has a capacity of almost 8,000c.c. Unlike a dragster the funny cars are started not by being pushed but by plugging a massive electric starter motor into the super-charger drive shaft. After checking out that oil pressure is normal, the fuel is switched on and the motor crackles into life. Two spectacular smoky burnouts precede the run which often sees the front wheels getting airborne!

Transmission is handled by a "slipper" clutch and a special 2-speed planetary gearbox designed to avoid any chance of a missed gearshift which would spell instant death to the motor. Completing the drive line, those rear slicks are fully 16 inches wide.

Other top English Funny car racers include Dennis Priddle who is the quickest accelerating driver in Europe in his fuel dragster, and his Avenger-bodied Chrysler powered Funny car is the fastest British-built machine with times of 7.19 seconds—195mph, and should soon follow "Stardust" into the six-second bracket.

Most machines have the engine in front of the driver, but Ed Shaver, an American currently residing in England sits with his nose almost scraping the windscreen, in front of the motor. Ed prefers it that way in case the motor does go bang, but until the handling is sorted out it is not possible to say whether this setup will prove superior.

Last of the top British drivers, is also the newest, but in less than a year of driving the Hounddog car he is challenging Allan Hertridge for the No. 1 position with a best run of 7.1 secs/190mph. Although now owned by Nobby Hill, this car has an interesting history, having previously been raced by an American lady driver, Paula Murphy, the fastest lady driver in the world, who drove everything from street car to rocket powered dragster!

Well, that completes a brief look at the Funny car scene, but to appreciate what it's really all about you've got to see, hear and feel the ground-shaking power of these incredibly fast and colourful creations!

record holder, with a 6.48s time for a quarter mile at Santa Pod



Watch out for Webster

HAVE YOU got your breath back yet from Tom Christenson's electrifying performances? Tom's superb set of 8-second runs made one thing clear—this type of run will come to England only when our riders have transmission set-ups equal to those the Yanks are using.

This has set a lot of fast men thinking and having a close look in their piggy-banks. Next year we can expect to see a rash of Jumbo rear tyres, with slider clutches and new transmission systems designed to handle oodles of power and get it on the ground in an effective way.

It looks like the days of crowd-pleasing smokey runs are over, but in their place will come times well below nine seconds.

Bob Webster has already fitted

a five and a half inch M & H rear slick and is getting times in the middle nines without having to use a burn-out to get enough grip.

All this traction gave Bob another problem—the poor old Norton gearbox just cannot stand being in between a supercharged nitro-burning engine that is putting out something in the region of 140 bhp and a fat rear tyre that refuses to spin.

The result is gears that break up, and that's no way to go fast. Now Bob has parted with a lot of bank notes for one of T.C.'s special two-speed gearboxes and also has plans in hand for a twin-cylinder engine that will be around 900cc's when he wheels out his 1975 creation. 1975 could be "Watch Out For Webster Year."



Straight up WITH JIM REYNOLDS

AFRICAN KING

BACK IN 1971, Mike Bramley brought the first South African drag bike to be seen in this country over to UK and rode in a few events—Mike's best were in the low 10's, but he never really had time to get the big double Triumph dialled in to British conditions.

Now he wants to come and try his hand at the British scene again, probably during the proposed International events at Santa Pod, when he would like to have a shot at some of the American big names.

And South Africa's top runner could be quite a surprise. Running unblown, Mike has built two big Routt-barrelled Triumph engines that drive through a home-built two-speed transmission and a special clutch to a Kosman mag-alloy rear wheel that carries a sixth and a half inch slick.

Best time to date is 9.58 at 151mph. But this was clocked on the deteriorating surface of the Rainbow Dragstrip, in Johannesburg. That strip is about 6,000 feet above sea level.



A chain of events for John



John Todman—has had several single-figure runs this season on Apollo IV

A MUCH improved rider this year has been John Todman, the London rider who campaigns on a 1500cc double Triumph that rejoices in the name "Apollo".

John got into the single-figure bracket several times, with a best of 9.74 seconds at 149 mph during the MCN-backed Silverstone meeting in September.

John is happy to link two 750cc Triumph engines together with chains, despite the general move to gears for this task. Dur-

ing his early days with the double, running in 1300cc form, John had endless trouble with broken linking chains. Then along came Alan Baker—the man who distributes Denselube chain—claiming that his product could stand the pace.

John really has put that chainman's claim to the test this year, fitting big barrels to bring the bike up to 1500cc's. But he hasn't broken one chain, despite performing some of the best burn-outs in the business. Point well proven, Mr. Baker!

Bigger all the time

IN AMERICA, they get even bigger. Carl Ahlfeldt's double-engine Harley made its debut at Beech Bend Raceway, Tennessee, recently.

The two V-twins total a displacement of 236 cubic inches, which is around 3,726cc's according to my reckoning.

I hope expert mathematicians will pardon my figures and accept the obvious—that's this is one great big motorcycle. A quick one, too—Carl qualified third fastest with 8.90 seconds.

Another interesting sight was a double Kawasaki-Four, ridden by Harold Eide, but not getting

into the results at this stage.

In the Top Gas class, Mary Jorgenson's single-motor Harley boasted a 3.75" bore and a 5.25" stroke to come out at 116 cubic inches—which is about 1868cc's. Mary had trouble getting the big twin to run strongly as the standard Harley cylinder head simply cannot be opened out enough to pass enough gas to fill such a big cylinder at higher revs. No such trouble with a nitro-burner, however—the oxygen-rich fuel requires less natural air to fill the combustion chamber with the correct amount of fuel/air mixture.

Mighty Pegasus will be back

IAN MESSENGER and Derek Chinn left the last Silverstone meeting feeling pretty sick. Their beautiful, Bike-sponsored double-Norton "Pegasus" had really been flying off the line in a qualifying run, but the rear motor threw a con-rod 100yds short of the finishing line and the bike

coasted through the lights with a 10.24 run.

If the motor had held together, that would have been their first nine-second run.

To show that the 1656cc Norton can get into the nines, Ian and Derek will be at the next Santa Pod meeting with the tank laced with a drop of the hard stuff.

And to keep things together down below, they invested in a set of American Corrallo con-rods, at a cool £23 each, which works out at around £92 for the rods in the mighty "Pegasus".

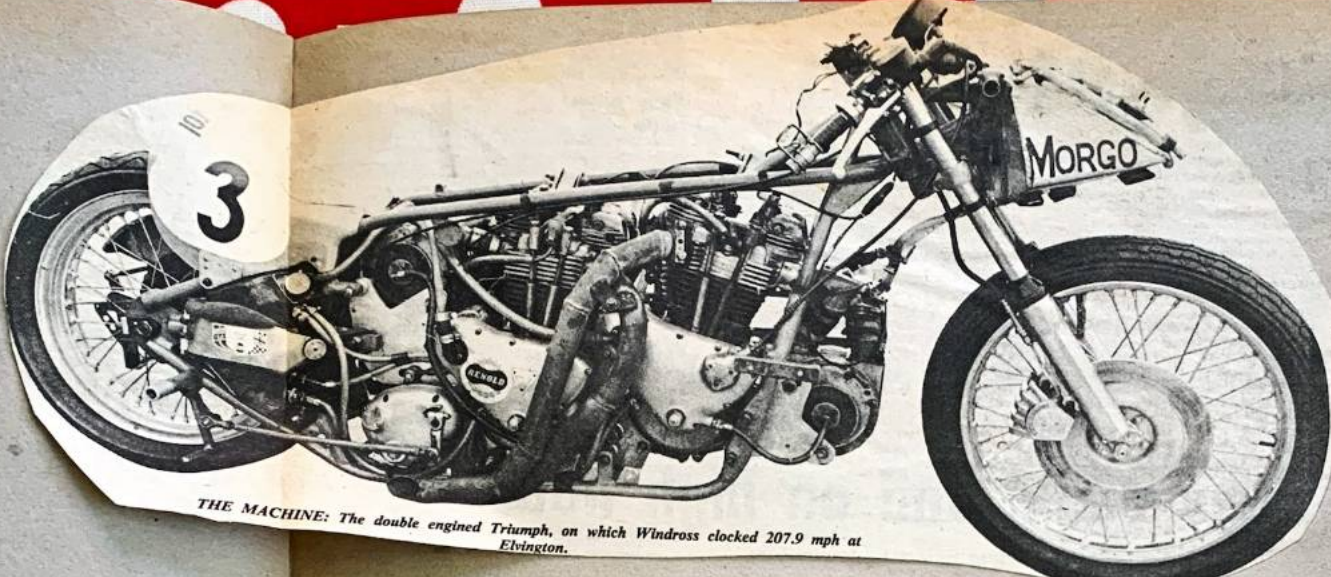
Someone else who thinks "Pegasus" is a nice bike, as well as me is John Gregory, who was a mechanic for Tom Christenson during his UK visit.

"The best prepared drag bike I've seen. Their engineering is really neat," he said.

Coming from the man who keeps T.C.'s "Hogslayer" in trim, that's quite a compliment.

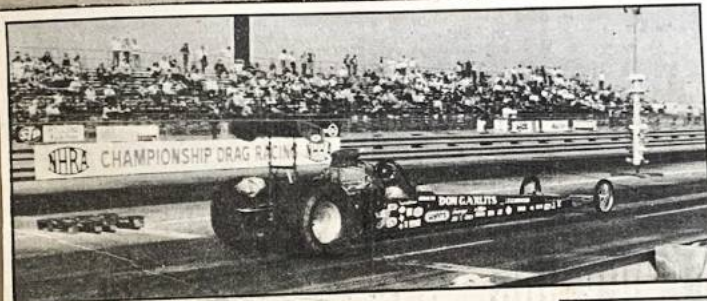
Riders air views

RIDERS will have a chance to comment on the way things are run at Santa Pod during the coming British Drag Racing & Hot Rod Association Riders' Meeting. Time—about 7.30 on Tuesday, 22nd October. Place—the Abbey Hotel, North Circular Road, Brent, North London. If you don't fancy the traffic in the Smoke, hop on a Tube and make for Hangar Lane station.



THE MACHINE: The double engined Triumph, on which Windross clocked 207.9 mph at Elvington.

MOTOR week ending November 2 1974



Don Garlits (left) on his way to another sub-6 sec time for the 1/4-mile. The rocket car above does it even faster, but streamlined wheels did not help 'California Charger' (below) further than the quarter-finals.

'Big Daddy' does it again

Drag racing folk hero Don "Big Daddy" Garlits, now 42 years old, successfully defended his 1973 National Hot Rod Association title in the drag-racing Super-nationals held at Ontario Motor Speedway in Los Angeles on October 20.

Driving his "Wynns Charger" A/A Fuel dragster, Garlits came to the line for the final alongside Dave Settles (Candies & Hughes) after a gruelling series of qualifying runs in which he had set a new national record for the quarter mile of 5.78 seconds.

Pause now to consider the way in which drag races are run. Competitors may leave the start when they get the green light, and it's a straight race to the finishing line. But their runs are not timed until they cross the start-line timing beam.

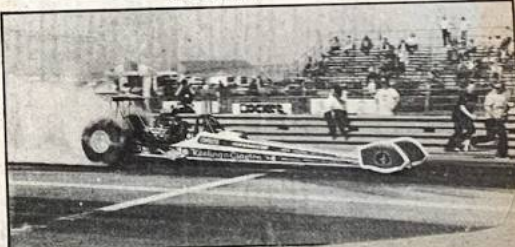
Thus a quick run which starts a fraction too late may not be good enough to beat a quick-starter whose time is actually slightly slower. This is what happened in the Garlits v Settles showdown. Garlits got a 1/4-length "hole shot" (advantage) over Settles when the light turned green and held it to the finish, which he reached in 6.115 seconds at a terminal speed of 237.46 mph. Settles, with a fractionally faster time of 6.101s (241.93 mph), had to be happy with 2nd place.

If you've never seen a drag race, you can't call yourself a motorsport enthusiast. There's absolutely nothing like the earth-shaking roar as one of these behemoths, spurring acrid flame from its giant exhaust pipes, hunches up on its "wrinklewall" tyres and literally disappears down a drag strip.

Garlits has been doing it longer than most. He won his first national title in 1963 and has recorded more than 30 runs at under 6 seconds. By contrast, the British record stands to Clive Skilton at 6.52s, while the slowest man to get into the last 16 qualifiers at Ontario managed "only" 6.05s.

The engines used by top dragster drivers are hugely expensive pushrod aluminium V8s based usually on Chrysler parts. With giant truck superchargers mounted on top, they produce "snap" power figures around 1500 bhp. Reliability is not a strong point, but the Melodon unit in Garlits's "rail"—for example—has iron cylinder liners. In the event of a piston seizing, the complete piston and liner may be changed in under 40 minutes.

Also demonstrated at Ontario, although not eligible for an award, was the Revell-sponsored "Armor All" rocket car, which managed a quarter mile run in an

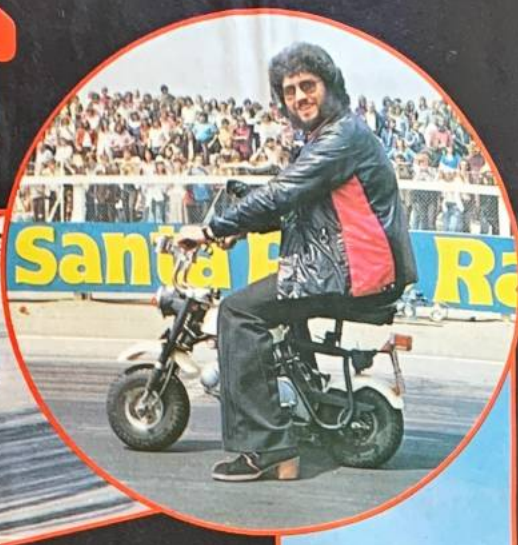


unbelievable 5.24 seconds with a terminal speed of 328.46 mph. Its compact rocket engine is fuelled by a hydrogen peroxide substance which is so unstable that it's not allowed in this country.

The fuel "ignites" after passing over a special catalyst, but for drag racing only 20 per cent of the available power is used. It is said that an egg-cup full of the fuel would be enough to blow down a small house: driver Tom Paxson happily sits on top of 22 gallons of the stuff for his single run!

DLT

Drag Racing DJ



Photos: Keith Lee

THIS IS the Hairy Monster broadcasting on 247 metres on the Medium waveband. Everybody knows the "monster" in question is Radio One dee-jay Dave Lee Travis, and from his radio show you probably also know that his favourite pastime is Drag Racing.

Dave was initiated last year when he was invited to Santa Pod, and made a couple of runs in a Ford Torino owned by Dennis Mutton.

This year, the Stones Racing Team, who campaign both the quickest Competition Altered and Top Dragster in the country, invited the Hairy Monster to race their other car—an Escort, but one with a difference! No 1,300cc Ford engine in the Stones' car. Instead it sports a 5,000cc V-8 Chevrolet motor of the type used in Formula 5000 racing cars.

And whenever he can get away from his radio show that's where you'll find DLT—in the hot seat of the most powerful Escort in the country, called Tender Trap.

First time out in the car, DLT was runner-up at Santa Pod, and he followed that by winning the Super Street class at Silverstone, hitting best times of 11.9 seconds or 120mph in the blue and white Escort and beating a very strong field.

DLT is a natural clown—who else but he would challenge opponents to a match race on roller skates or on a pogo stick—but when he is strapped into the car all the clowning stops. He takes

orders from team manager Dennis Stone, who described Dave as "a very good driver, and improving with every run, even beating much more experienced drivers away from the start line".

It's hard to tell the car from a standard Ford, apart from the big rear slicks, and a hump on the bonnet which serves as an air intake for the carburettors mounted on top of the V-8 motor, which feed it with a plentiful supply of petrol.

A lot of effort was needed to "shoehorn" the motor into the small engine compartment, and routing the eight exhaust pipes was something of a plumber's nightmare. But the end result is very pleasing, and both car and driver are a real crowd favourite.

Fast though the car is at present, DLT will have his hands full when Dennis and son, Dave Stone, finish building a new motor for the machine—an even bigger Chevrolet engine with which the team hope the Manchester-born Hairy Monster will become the first 10-second dee-jay.

Above, left: The Hairy Monster hits the strip. DLT soon got the hang of things and put up some very respectable speeds. Above: A great crowd favourite, DLT finds time for a bit of clowning with a mini-bike and (right) a pogo stick. Below: Dave's Escort, the Tender Trap, has a potent Chevy 5-litre V-8 tucked under its tiny bonnet which has already taken it over 120mph in 11.9 secs.



IS WET AND WINDY OCTOBER RIGHT FOR RECORDS?

TWO EVENTS have dominated the straight line scene in the past month — the Elvington records meeting and the flying visit of Tom Christenson.

The 1974 Elvington meeting was my first trip to the cold, bleak airfield near York, and things weren't too different from quite a few of the drag races this year, with the wind and rain playing a major part.

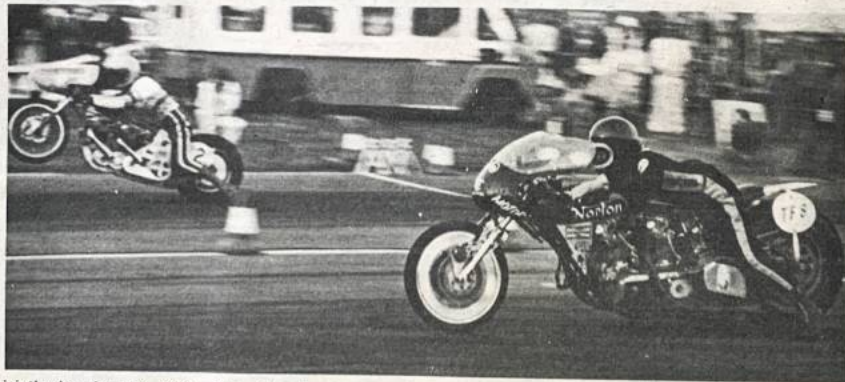
Certain questions have to be asked about the event, and one of them must be whether or not October is the right time of the year to hold the meeting. Admittedly some of the competitors make it an end of season "go-or-blow" effort, but at the same time it has suffered bad weather for the past few years, which is not conducive to record-breaking.

The competitors aren't happy, either, at having to pay £25 for the privilege of sitting and watching the rain fall. Surely a date nearer the middle of the year is a must, because a cold atmosphere is no good for a nitro-burner, and a cold track cannot yield good traction.

Even so, at least this year's event (organised

DRAGSTRIP

by KEITH LEE



Right: Sneaking a look at TC's transmission set-up is John Hobbs.

Below: Mick Butler heads for the clouds as Tom Christenson rounds off his UK tour with a win at Snetterton

jointly by the ISO, NSA and Auto 66 clubs) did produce some quick standing-quarter times in just about every class except the 1,300 cc category.

Showing how times have progressed recently, Tony Weedon's new 500 cc record of 9.69 seconds, set on his blown Triumph Blue Rondo, is almost identical to Dave Lecoq's Volkswagen-powered Drag Waye, put up only two years ago.

This is an incredible feat by Essex rider Weedon on

his American-sponsored machine, which has clocked times as low as 9.36s. Tony must rate as the most improved performer this year.

Probably one of the busiest riders was Norton works man Dave Rawlins, who was never off the strip on his 850 Commando — and yet didn't set even one record, since there is no class for production machines at present. Hopefully, by next year the ACU will rectify this situation and, who knows, we might also see

the 2,000 cc machines setting world marks instead of just national.

THE OTHER big event during the past month was of course the visit of Tom Christenson who set strip records of 8.9s at the rain-hit Silverstone meeting and 8.81s at Snetterton.

TC really showed his mastery at the first event ever held at the Norfolk circuit by powering his ultra-consistent twin-engine Norton to wins over all the top British riders,

except John Hobbs.

Fate seemed determined to keep John's Olympus II from racing against Hogslayer. The twin Triumph broke a clutch at Silverstone and blew a motor in Holland a week before the Snetterton meeting. But in common with a lot of other riders, Hobbs learnt a lot from the American's visit.

The lesson driven home by the visit of America's top drag racer can be summed up in two words — better transmission. For



most riders it was the first view of a good two-speeder and slipper clutch in action on two wheels.

Christenson merely confirmed what most of our top boys already feared — the AMC box and clutch just cannot cope with the power obtainable from the big nitro-burners. It is even pushed to cope with a blown six-fifty these days. Ask quick-change artist Mick Warne, who has probably lost count of the number of boxes he's busted on his Acclis and Pollock 650 cc Triumph this year.

Major drawback of a two-speeder, though, is cost. Either the unit that John Gregory built for Hogslayer or similar Lenco unit will set you back between £250 and £300.

On the plus side is the fact that they are ultra-reliable in operation — after all, a missed shift can spell instant death to

a fuel engine, so maybe the price is not so high.

One rider quick to appreciate the need for something better is Bob Webster, the first English racer to buy one of Gregory's two-speeders. His attitude is simple. "It may be expensive, but I can't afford not to have one if I'm to be competitive in 1975."

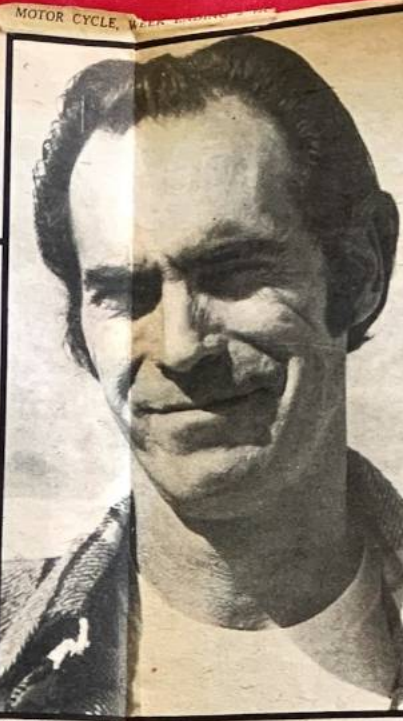
At present, Webster and his partner Dave Cutland are busy gathering bits for the new machine, which is aimed directly at the eights. Bob must rate as one of the unluckiest riders this season. He has qualified every time for Top Bike eliminators, but never actually won. He intends to put a stop to that for next year on board the new machine.

Engine capacity of the new bike will be around 920 cc, achieved by boring his 750 barrels and using a Norton crank in some special crankcases. Pete Davies, who heads Puma Motorcycles — familiar in grass-track circles — has become increasingly interested in drag racing and has produced some extra-strong cases which are 7/16in thick and designed to withstand a blow up. All being well, these special cases will be on sale in the very near future, and will accept either Triumph or Norton cranks, plus all normal accessories.

I also gather that there may be a slipper clutch being tried out by Bob fairly shortly — very welcome news.

With bigger engine capacity and the new transmission setup, I wouldn't mind betting that the Webster-Cutland duo will be a hard pair to beat in the forthcoming year.

BIG BAD BORIS



TALL, thin and pallid he looks like the bad guy in a Western. He talks like one, too — slowly, weighing his words carefully. But there the similarity ends for when you get to know him Boris Murray, ace drag racer and pilot of the Norton record-bid streamliner, is as friendly a character as you could wish to meet.

I made his acquaintance at Bonneville. There he had been called in to pilot the Norton streamliner after designer-builder Denis Manning had found that he could not get the hang of riding a fully-enclosed projectile.

He had driven the 750 miles from his home in Monrovia near Los Angeles in a day and we sat chatting in his Ford pickup.

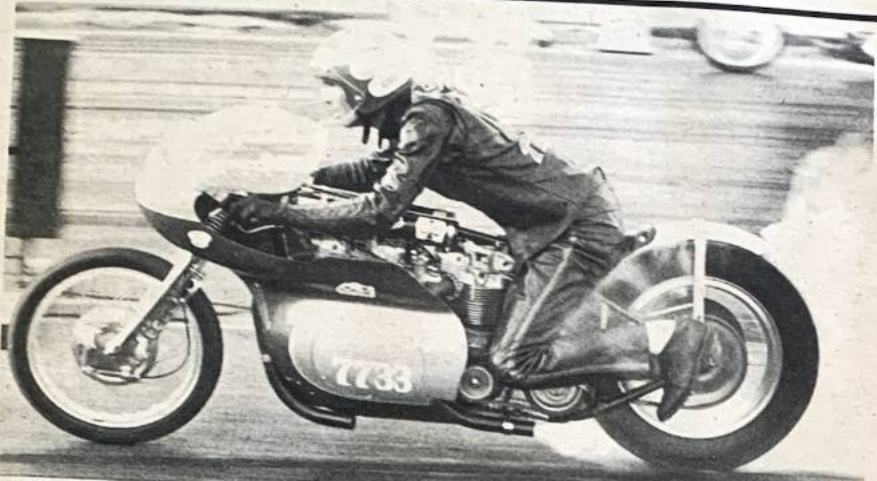
"I would have driven up overnight, as soon as Denis phoned, but I had to see my boss first and explain what was happening. He's been good to me and it wouldn't have been fair just to clear off," said Boris.

That was surprise number one. The tall Californian, most famous name in drag racing, is a wage-slave just like you and me. He works as a welder. He is a top-class craftsman and draws big money but I had imagined he would have his own business.

"I tried that. Making games and so on. But I suppose I spent too much money working on my own things — you could say that at drag racing has kept me poor. There is not a lot of money in it — and while you are doing it you can't be doing other things, like making money."

But he does not regret "I had three good years. I travelled all over the states and did nothing else but drag racing. I and my milly really saw the country during that time but we spent every dollar I made."

This year has been a rough one. "I haven't done any drag racing. I've had domestic problems ending in divorce and I just haven't had time. Now I'm ready to go again and I am preparing my old streamliner for the Super-nationals when Denis rang me."



Boris Murray in action on his twin-engined Triumph in 1971. He set records on this machine which have only recently been broken.

How had he felt when asked to pilot the Norton? "I felt good. I had been disappointed when Denis left me out of the crew. I rode the liner at Speed Week in August when it was fitted with Triumph engines. That ended when a front wheel bearing broke up at 260 mph.

"It went into a wobble and ended up high-siding — just like you'd roll a car. I was shaken up but the strength of the chassis, my harness and helmet saved me from injury."

Now, aged 38, Boris started his drag career back in 1958 when he bought a 650 cc Triumph. "I wanted to see how fast it would go — so I took it along to the local drag strip. I remember I did a terminal of 86 mph and ran in the high 14s — about 14.8s I think.

"I got beat of course — so I just kept going back until I could beat all the guys there. I didn't let it go at that. I wanted to go faster still.

"I bought an old Triumph Thunderbird, a 1954 model I think it was with rigid rear end. I lengthened the frame by four inches and lowered it by two inches.

"I kept on working on that old Triumph till it ran 10.51s with a terminal of 136 mph — and that was the bike I rode when I

came to England with the American team in 1965. Remember that was just a single engine 650 with carburetors.

"It weighed 250 lb — but I weighed 170 lb and as there was no way I could get my weight down (I'm 6ft 4in) I figured I needed two engines."

Late in 1965 Boris built a double-engined Triumph. The first one was powered by two 650 cc engines driving through a Harley-Davidson gearbox, using only third and top gears.

On that Boris cut his times to 9.60s and upped his speed to 157 mph. "But it weighed 360 lb. So I then built one with two 750 cc twin-cylinder engines but with no gearbox. It scaled only 310 lb and I set a lot of records on it. In 1971 in Kentucky I clocked 8.87s and 174.7 mph."

Those records stood for a long time. In fact the elapsed time was not broken until Tom Christenson (Norton) clocked 8.45s in November last year — and the terminal speed lasted until just two weeks ago when Joe Smith on his twin-engined Harley did 176 mph.

In fact Boris' achievement is incredible when you consider he was using a single-speed machine of only 1,300 cc running on

one of the old four inch wide Avon slicks.

"I figured that with a two speed transmission and the wider 5.60 M and H slick that I could go faster — so I built my third double-engined drag bike.

"The motors are basically the same. Old 650 cc Triumphs fitted with Chantland kits to bring them up to 750 cc. I use a Lenco two-speed transmission — you shift with the power on and don't have to use the clutch.

"But I haven't run it for a year. I haven't really got it going. Now I reckon the engines are just too small. I may switch to two Nortons. That way I'll have 1,660 cc."

Has he considered supercharging? "Sure — but I've always managed to run faster without. Problem is that I know nothing about it. I would be starting from scratch and it would take me a year to learn."

For fuel he uses nitro plus PO (propylene oxide). "How much nitro depends on the weather. On a hot humid day I go up to 95 per cent. The PO is what we call an exciter — it helps to ignite the nitro."

Drag racing in the States is expensive — £25 to enter a big meeting and £8 each to get into the pit area, only the rider and one mechanic get a free pass.

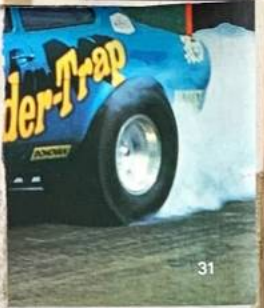
Boris' twin 16-year-old

sons Scott and Kurt were at Bonneville with him. He also has an 18-year-old daughter Tracy. But probably the most famous member of the family, apart from Boris, is Buppy, his black Labrador.

"I usually take him everywhere. He travelled all over the States with us when I was drag racing full time. He'd sit in the front of the truck and watch me all the way up the strip — didn't bother about other people, just watched me. He's one of the crew — we even had him wearing sun glasses when we came up for speed week!"

Has he any regrets? "I wish I'd got into road racing years ago. There's more money in that. But I've enjoyed it. I just love drag racing and it's too late to change now anyway."

Mick Woollett talks to Boris Murray, pilot of Norton's streamliner



Boris Murray explains a problem to one of the Norton crew while one of his twin sons, Scott, repaints the salt-grazed streamliner.