



Opposite: *The Road Hammers*, on the set of their video, "Mud", featuring mud bogging

*Wheel
Life*

The Race of Gentlemen



Race Back in Time

Story by Brenda Rees. Photography by Bryan Helm

In the bright blue sky, the sun bakes as drivers eagerly climb into their vehicles, ready for this sweet moment in time. Oil-stained hands position Red Baron-esque goggles onto sweaty foreheads; others tighten straps on leather helmets. Eyes peer out in focused determination. Slowly, drivers move to their mark, a simple line in the beach sand where a tattooed flag girl beckons them into starting position.

One last rev of the engine and then a heavy pause of anticipation. The flag is up...then down. The transformed metal

beasts charge into motion, lunging forward with thunderous acceleration as they snarl, spit sand, and hurl on a vicious smoke-fueled trajectory, leaving a reign of excitement in their wake. The crowd – on cue – goes wild.

At The Race of Gentlemen (TROG), the official contest may be only seconds long, but takes perhaps thousands of hours of preparation to bring these automobiles and motorcycles to this exact point in space and time. Crafted by backyard mechanics and gearheads supreme, these marvelous



machines don't just resemble their retro roots, they are the real racing deal: 1920 jalopies, pre-WWII roadsters, first-run Harley choppers, all handcrafted rides that fuse art, mechanics and history into an era when American ingenuity and audacity ruled.

This year, the West Coast gets its chance to witness weekend beach racing as TROG hits the sands near Pismo Beach on Oct. 15-16, 2016. That's a good thing for participant Clayton Paddison who lives in Vancouver, Washington and made the trek last year to Wildwood, New Jersey where the race has been held annually for the last five years.

"It's one helluva party and everyone attending are such hoots," says the 32-year-old who will once again be racing his 1927 Model T Ford. His love of early American car culture can be traced to his hot rodding grandfather who drag raced and photographed the events in the 40s and 50s.

TROG is unlike other car events, says Paddison, because the vehicles actually move. "This is not a static car show on manicured grass where everyone stands by their car," he explains. "You get to hear the engines. Smell them and watch them come alive. Nothing beats that thrill."

Paddison is one of a lucky group of racers handpicked to participate in the competition that was the brainchild of Mel Stultz and Bobby Green. Born in Oklahoma and now living in Southern California, Green embodies early Americana. His 1933 Group presents meticulous reimagination of old time neighborhood bars and drinkeries like the gloriously resurrected Highland Park Bowl in Highland Park (Los Angeles, CA) and barrel-shaped Idle Hour in nearby North Hollywood. Green can typically be found daily with rolled-up sleeves at his Old Crow Speed Shop in Burbank where he rebuilds and restores vintage vehicles.

"Cars, clothing, products, movies, everything back in those days was designed so beautifully," he says explaining that TROG came out of an online community with a common love of pre-WWII automobiles and cycles.

Today, racers come from all over the globe to show and be seen in an immersive experience that's more about being authentic than achieving speed. "Life slows down when you are in an older car and you pay attention to the car," says Green. "I find these cars relaxing. You just stop thinking. They are the ultimate therapy." ★

Opposite page, top: Mason's vintage military collection. Bottom right: Mason and his hotrod. Bottom left: Mason and Decana with their Great Dane. Center: Dyer Brand board shorts. dyerbrand.com



