

HAPPENINGS AT PREDATOR



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September marks the beginning of wind down time in the racing season and, with Monterey Historics over, the lads at Predator Performance are already thinking of what to race for next year. I went up there last week to get news and take a few photos and here's a sum up of coming events.

First and foremost, the lads are going to be running one, and maybe two, Riley Daytona prototypes at the Daytona 24 hours. Ugly cars, I know, and hardly historic/vintage but they have 550 horsepower (BMW V8 engined is this one), are very safe at speed and NASCAR sportscar racing does provide good racing - I know, I've watched the last couple of races on the TV.

So while I was there, Bill (who looks after David Ritter's Lola T70 coupe and his McLaren M6B) invited me to climb into the Daytona Prototype's cockpit. Bill offered to help me in but I demurred, I can still get into a racecar's cockpit! And I did... although the experience was not simple... Open door, legs over rocker panel, grip bar over cockpit opening and slide into seat... by the time you are in there, you suddenly realize just how claustrophobic these cars are. With the top of the windshield blanked out by a sunscreen, it's like sitting inside a knight's helmet from the 14th century. Just one narrow slit to look through. Plus sideways visibility is severely restricted too, by the seat's headrest, which extends, NASCAR style, along the sides of your helmet.

Looking for the instruments, I found there weren't any, all instrumentation is electronic and on the steering wheel, together with numerous buttons to activate various functions, like lights, radio and the pit speed limiter. (That looked fun; stick it into first, give it a bootful and it gets up to speed, cuts at whatever you set it to and you cruise down pit lane.) Of

course, the gear change is also sequential, so you can just give it full throttle, don't lift off, and pull back on the gear stick to change up; a microswitch in the gear lever base "feels" you touch the lever and holds the throttle automatically whilst the gearbox shifts gear in milliseconds before releasing the throttle once the next gear is engaged. This sounds exciting! One nice touch that Bill showed me was the cord that attached to the passenger door that a driver could reach easily to slam the door shut, if it didn't close properly in the heat of a pitstop. How many drivers have had to pit again after just one lap because the door hadn't closed properly?



Drivers so far lined up for the first car are Brian Johnson/Byron de Foor/Jim Pace and maybe, just maybe, a very well know racer as a fourth. The plan for the second Riley is to use a team of "young guns".

Next interesting car was Larry Ligas's Daimler Dart, which he has owned forever (well, since at least 1972) and he's just finishing off as his next year's racer; I've never been fond of these cars looks but, as a racer, with extended wheel arches and wider wheels, it

looks just great. I'm looking forward to seeing how Larry gets on with it... Quite how he can put his glorious E Type aside for even one race, I can't imagine but he says he's going to try the Daimler at Sebring next month, so watch this space.

Then there's Andrew Cuarto's beautifully built MGB V8 coupe, which he's built at Predator's premises. Should be very interesting to watch that lightweight go too...



Four teams of Predator's customers are going to compete in next month's Carrera Panamericana: David Hinton is taking his XK150 coupe, with "English" Mike Harris as co-driver/navigator; Predator are building up another XK150 for Jim Pace and Russell Gee; George Tuma and Stella Thomas are taking George's Maserati 3500 GT, now very well repaired after last year's crash; and Bob Summerour and Bud Felcraft will be fielding a Ford Falcon.

Another project at Predator's shop is a 1966 Jaguar E type FHC that has belonged to a Gentleman for over thirty-two years... It's very original and is in for a "proper" restoration.



Finally, a few photos of George Tuma's 1955 Mercedes 300SL roadster, which he's owned since the early 1980s. Apart from having it well maintained mechanically, George hasn't attended (on purpose! - ever heard of an "original" car?) to the cosmetics at all, so it's a glorious time warp, if ever there was one.

So it's all go at the shop and won't stop now for another twelve months at least....





















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