



Racing is colorful

Romancing the Race Car

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Vintage car racing offers the easiest access to close-up race car photography. Whether it be high-speed track shots or colorful pit-row activity, local vintage race car associations make it affordable and accommodating. There are many vintage racing associations across the nation, i.e. Vintage Auto Racing Association (VARA) or Sportscar Vintage Racing Association (SVRA). Entry fees are in the \$10 range.

Every kind of car from a vintage Indy race car to an MGB will be accessible. And, barring any official track photographer, there is the opportunity to sell your photos to the drivers.

Rest assured, most of the drivers already have a multitude of car photos and that is why you need to be creative. Granted, you'll need a good basic photo. Still action shots are usually shot with a 100-400mm lens at f8, 1/1000-1/4000 second shutter speed and around 100-600 ISO in sunny conditions. Because of the close proximity at a vintage race car track, a lot of your shots can be captured with a 200mm lens. If you stop by the registration desk, you can usually talk your way into being able to wear a safety vest which provides total track accessibility, especially if you offer to send them some photos. Please don't cross any track at any time unless the track is deemed

"cold." And, don't interfere with any "flag station" functions.

Some creative tips are:

1. Rotate the car image about 30 degrees from horizontal to exaggerate the angle for more dynamic shots.
2. With a car portrait, outline the car image and feature it on a black background. Then outline again and use the motion blur tool. Print on metallic silver paper, which helps to duplicate the metallic surface image of the cars.
3. Use photos of country roads, foreign street scenes, or classical art as backdrops for car images.
4. Experiment with Corel Paint, especially the Pastel Chalk feature and print on watercolor paper. Use "soft edge cloner brush" to restore as much detail as you desire. Results are usually very "arty."

Additionally, the pit area and staging area provide unique photo opportunities. You'll be able to get right up close and everyone is very friendly. Close-up shots of the drivers in their cars are readily accessible. There are a lot of colorful car paint schemes, driver helmets, multiple row car shots and mechanics working on cars.



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Photos © Thomas Griffith

Wide-angle or fish-eye lens can handle car interiors well



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Occasionally a photo model is on site and is usually cooperative. Wide-angle, ground up shots and fish-eye car interior shots can produce visual

excitement. Most of these shots can be captured with a 17-40mm wide-angle lens, or something in the 28-100mm range.

The photos illustrated were shot with a Canon 40D, Canon 70D, a Tamron 28-300mm lens, and a Canon 17-40mm lens.

The following tidbit is a more “romantic visualization” of the vintage auto racing experience:

They silently slip in like ships into a harbor. As dawn breaks an armada of motor homes, pick-up trucks, SUV’s and long trailers appears. The air is energized with engine revs, each a different tone, detonating raw power like wild beasts. These wild beasts have four wheels for legs and they are called Porche, Bimmer, Jag, Healy, Vet, Mustang, Lotus, Alfa, Volvo, Swift, Winkelman, Hawke and many more. Their keepers scurry around them. Some have teams of technicians dressed uniformly; others serve their stead solo. Timing, fluids, tires are checked, all in preparation for the task at hand—the race.



Merging three images with blur effects



Black and white pen ink effect

The beasts have a challenger: It is known as the "track." It will test the beasts with tight corners, high speed straight-aways, multiple shifting and breaking points. Who will harness the beasts and control their efforts to beat the track? Enter the "drivers." They know the beasts' every characteristic. They steer the beasts through every corner claiming every g-force capable. They extract every ounce of power at the right time. And they themselves are tested. Each "track" brings its own unique, trying challenge. They must endure and stay focused.

Practice laps, qualifying laps and finally the race. Now all elements come to bear: the beasts, the track and the competition. The PA system announces Group 1 to the staging area. The cars are staged, displaying their glory in bold colors and graphic designs. The drivers are harnessed in; in their gleaming helmets with visors closed they resemble knights. The pace car leads the pack onto the track, the green flag drops, the race, the challenge is on. Tech crews, family, friends and fans closely observe and cheer in anticipation.

Victory lane is reserved for podium positions, but all who raced felt the adrenalin and experienced the joy of competition. When the



helmet comes off and the fire mask removed, there is a big smile on a visibly sweat-drenched face. The garage area is filled with the buzz of: "I almost had 'em," "I missed a gear on turn one," "Hell of a race."

The beasts are put back into their trailer stalls. The parking lot empties. The track goes cold, dormant until that familiar roar awakens it again. ■

Typical stop action photo, F8, 100-400 zoom, 500-4000 shutter speed. rotate image 30 degrees for dynamics

Merged image on black background using Photoshop with blur effect

