



Overheard Cams



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The Inaugural Sonoma Speed Festival

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I'll bet just about everyone reading these words has spent some time at the Monterey Histories (now known as the Monterey Motorsports Reunion) watching vintage race cars go round Laguna Seca. Far fewer of you may have attended the Goodwood Revival in England, the amazing historic race in southern England that has been called the greatest vintage race event in the world. I've fortunately been able to do both. Now I've added a third to that list, the "first" Sonoma Speed Festival. There have been vintage races at Sears Point (Sonoma Raceway), in the past but this was the first time for this particular event. The organizers aimed for an experience in between those two hallowed events and they achieved their goal.

WINE COUNTRY DOES VINTAGE

While Monterey is known for its deep breadth of cars and a total focus on the racing, with a bare bones approach to the spectator experience, Goodwood is known for the sublime experience of truly feeling like you've stepped back in time between the 1930's to 1960's, only with much fancier food and drinks. The Sonoma Speed Festival struck middle ground, with large tents set up for the paddocks, so you could get close to all the amazing race cars. They also had large tents set up for dining and





of course, wine experiences—the “Sip & Savor Pavilions.” Notable Sonoma wineries like Williams Selyem, Gary Farrell, Keller Estate and many more all poured wine at the event. If you were attending a racing event with members of your family who didn’t enjoy vintage cars, this event would cater to everyone’s interests. With a children’s play area, the aforementioned wine tents and live music, there was plenty to do for those non-motoring family members.

THE RACE GROUPS

I can truly say they met their goal of having just about every type of vintage racing group. As they said in their initial release, they “*will feature wheel-to-wheel racing with race groups spanning the history of motorsports from the Brass Era to the modern age competing on track, interactive displays for both casual and hardcore enthusiasts, and special Formula 1 demonstration laps by Mercedes-AMG Petronas*



Motorsport Heritage. Vintage Dragsters exhibitions will also run each day.” For the purpose of the our club magazine, I’ve focused on the Alfas that were there, but some of the other machinery was truly awe inspiring. Vintage Formula One cars, IMSA Camel GTs, Prototypes, Trans Am, Can Am and production GT cars all took to the track.

HIGHLIGHTS

Access to the drivers and the cars was superb, second to none. A real treat was being able to head over to the Sim Raceway building at Turn 2 and peak in on Lewis Hamilton's 2016 Mercedes Formula One car. With factory support, everyone had the opportunity to see (and hear!) a modern F1 car up close and personal. With Formula 1 development driver Esteban Gutierrez at the helm, the ten time race winning W07 broke the lap record around Sonoma Raceway ... twice! After first breaking the record on Sunday, he broke it again on Monday with a run of 1m15.430. Of course any time you can see Ferrari 312s, Porsche 917s, Ferrari GTOs, SWBs and TDFs all turn laps it's going to be a good day. Pre-war Alfas, GTVs, GTAs and TZs all took their turns as well.

THE FUTURE

The crowds were relatively sparse for the event, which meant you could easily get round to the different parts of the track to watch the action. Was it a success financially? Will they do it again? We'll see. I can certainly recommend that a quick trip to Sonoma next year will definitely be rewarded with an opportunity for everyone to enjoy themselves. Don't miss it next summer!





