



Pete Amos/Sentinel

A dazzling array of cars drew thousands to the Beach Street Revival

Hot cars, cruising, nostalgia

9-21-86

By TOM LONG

Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — The little old lady from Pasadena was there. If not in person, in spirit.

There were also about a dozen generously proportioned and skimpily-clad bikini beauty contestants there. They were definitely in person and a good deal of their persons were showing.

Elvis was crooning there, Del Shannon was chasing his little runaway from loudspeaker to loudspeaker, and beer booths were providing lubrication for the crowd.

But mostly, the cars were there. And the people were there for the cars.

Thousands — nobody was counting — of car and nostalgia enthusiasts from throughout the Western United States gathered in the benchlands near the County Center yesterday afternoon to recapture their youth and witness what devotion to automotive beauty can produce.

The occasion was the annual Beach Street Revival, where eternal teenagers, many now balding and bellied but still able to find solace and beauty in a sparkling chrome reverse rim, gathered to remember the great cruises and rides of yesteryear.

There was a dark green '57 Chevy with classic fuzzy dice dangling from the rear view mirror.

There was a '66 Pontiac GTO painted such a drastic and startling red it was hard to look at for long.

There was a '53 primer-gray Studebaker with an engine that climbed so high no hood could ever cover it, and a '68 Pontiac Firebird with an engine so silver-chromed and polished it looked like a knight in shining armor.

There was an absolutely stunning 1950 canary yellow Muntz Jet convertible. What made it most stunning was the fact that none of the many gawkers surrounding it had any idea what a Muntz Jet was and the car's owner was nowhere to be found.

Please see back of section

Hot cars

Continued from Page A1

There were 400 cars in all, and those were only the official entries. The overfilled parking lot featured dozens of unofficial entries that also drew admirers.

Some of the conversation might have sounded like Martian to the untrained ear.

"I had to take 30 pounds off the flywheel, of course."

Of course.

"What's it got? A 357?"

"Nope. I put a 464 in it."

Which made for a difference of 107, obviously.

Tim Mahony from Millbrae brought two cars to the show, a red and burgundy Jaguar and a 1957 red thunderbird convertible that had a constant crowd.

"We had to change the steering and it's got a Jag rear end in it, too," Mahony explained to his audience. "It rides like a new car."

Mahony said the Thunderbird had cost him \$30,000 so far. "And that's a conservative estimate," he added.

"It's just a hobby, but it's an expensive one," Mahony said.

And obviously a source of joy as well. "I do this every year," Mahony said with the smile of the truly committed, as he polished the already gleaming Thunderbird with a red rag. "You could say I'm an enthusiast."

"Actually, I'm a lunatic," Mahony said as he looked up from his constant polishing.

Wayne Watkins of Paso Robles had reassembled the hot rod of his youth for the show — a 1930 Model A Ford. It was painted a metallic green and had radio hits from the '40s playing inside. This was the first car Watkins had rebuilt and the first time he had entered it in a show.

"I just got all the pieces for it on August 17," Watkins said.

"He'd cry tears of joy if he won anything," his wife Donna said.

Many cars sported signs reading "Unless you are nude do not lean on this car."

One young woman began disrobing near a Shelby GT Mustang but friends intervened and she reluctant-

ly put her top back on.

The air was filled with hit songs from the '50s and '60s as Bob Beban played disc jockey near the duck pond in San Lorenzo Park, segueing from Elvis to the Drifters to Jan and Dean.

"It kind of adds to the whole nostalgia of the event," Beban said. "A lot of these people used to actually cruise Beach Street when they were teenagers and they like to relive those times."

Many in attendance tried even harder to relive those times Saturday night as hundreds of cars cruised Beach Street. Traffic was backed up Front Street and Pacific Avenue to downtown as the classic cars formed an unauthorized parade in front of thousands of admirers lining the sidewalks.

Engines were revved loudly, guys hooted at girls, people set up beach chairs, popped open beers and whistled and applauded as everything from souped-up Model T's to a small Honda that had been cut in half roared and putted by.

Some of the revelers were headed for the costume sock hop at the Coconaut Grove. Most were just strutting their stuff.

It was a loud, rowdy circus of a night even by Boardwalk standards and police were forced to close down both Beach Street and the Wharf at 10:30 p.m. But despite the drunkenness and the noise, police reported no major incidents.

A police spokesman did call the evening's celebration "a major pain in the ..." There were 15 police officers assigned to the Beach Street area Saturday night.

Many of the revivalists planned to drag their hangovers out of bed for the official Beach Street cruise down by the Boardwalk this morning from 9 to 10:30.

After that it's back to the Benchlands early this afternoon for one final showing of blasts from the past.

At 3 p.m. this year's Beach Street Revival officially ends.

And the wait until next year's Beach Street Revival officially begins for the eternal teen—ager.