

Car show brings in the crowds

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STAFF WRITER

Crooner Tom Waits would've been proud, seeing Watsonville come alive with motorists reflecting the theme of his "Looking for the Heart of Saturday Night" cruising classic.

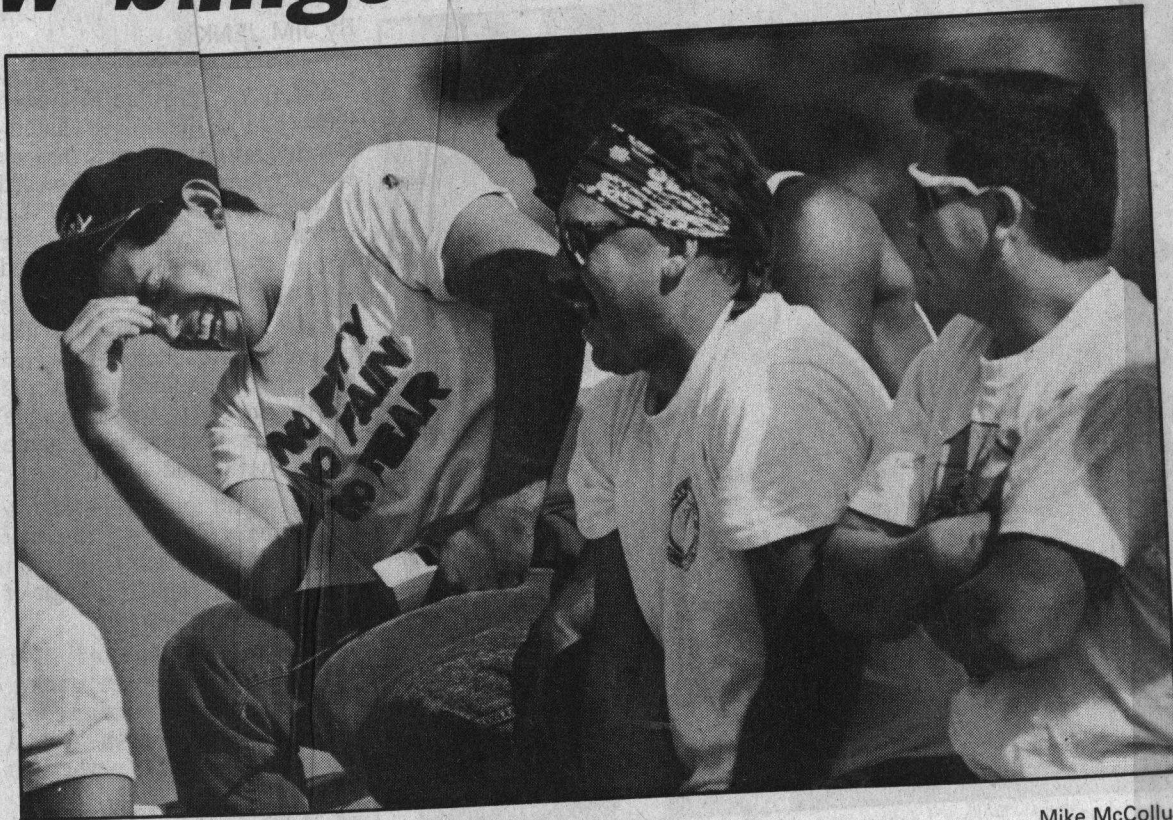
*"Stopping on the red
going on the green
cause tonight'll be like nothing
you've ever seen*

*When you're cruising down
the boulevard*

*looking for the heart of Saturday
night."*

Gleaming metal and chrome and the searing scent of tailpipe exhaust took over downtown Watsonville Saturday night, as the "Twilight Time" car parade of the Beach Street Revival hit Main Street. Round and round the Plaza circled the motorcade as bystanders inched closer and gasped in open admiration.

On the fourth-floor scaffolding of the Lettunich building, a pair of tanned men braced themselves to watch.



Mike McCollum

The bikini contest drew an enthusiastic crowd.

Fifteen-year-old Oscar Dearmas, whose primary language is Spanish, could barely understand announcer John Amos's banter. But the teenager, who happened on the exhibition by chance, knows what he's going after when he reaches legal driving age.

"One of those cars," he said, as, hands in pockets, he followed the route of two red Camaros.

The nearly 400 entrants in the vehicular parade were greeted by thousands of people along Main Street, East Lake Avenue and other main arteries in the revival's Watsonville debut. Until about 11 p.m., bumper to bumper traffic inched its way up Main Street and Freedom Boulevard. No major mishaps were reported by a beefed-up Watsonville Police Department force.

"All we did was stand there and do a parade," said Chief Terry Medina as he joined yesterday's hordes in front of the amphitheater stage.

The only unpleasantness officers reported were the enveloping emissions each time an engine was revved.

But according to preliminary reports, some revival enthusiasts who made their way to Santa Cruz that evening came away with traffic tickets.

"We wrote more tickets than we normally do on a Saturday night in October," said Lt. David Larson of the Santa Cruz Police Department, who couldn't provide specific figures or the nature of the violations involved.

In accordance with Beach Street Revival tradition, only pre-1969 cars were eligible to enter event competitions.

But some little ol' rule didn't



Mike McCollum

It was wall-to-wall cars in the display area.

keep about 200 enthusiasts with newer models from joining revivalists in their weekend revelry.

"They just show up to see what it's all about," said Beach Street Revival founder and promoter Rick Petersen.

He estimated about 800 cars participated in all events.

By late Sunday afternoon, Petersen estimated 10,000 people had been admitted to the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, where the grassy surfaces and spacious halls were transformed into automotive showplaces. The 51-year-old former real estate broker began the car show after recalling the cruising days of the 1960s in a 1977 article published in "Good Times."

A get-together centered

around the cruising scene attracted 300 people and 50 cars to the Coconut Grove later that year, and the revival, from then on a Santa Cruz event, was born. Recent conflicts with the city of Santa Cruz sent event organizers south in search of a new site.

If preliminary reports are borne out, the revival may have found a permanent home in Watsonville.

"We got a better response than we hoped for," Petersen said.

From the back of a flatbed truck parked across from the Plaza Saturday night, director Becky Brayson surveyed the parade crowd approvingly.

"There's never been this many people," she said.

Grinning broadly, fair manager Ron Haedicke eyed pedestrians cramming the concession pathways and offered his endorsement of the revival: "We want them back."

At the fairgrounds, coloring contests for children, a Miss Beach Street contest, helicopter rides and musical entertainment were among the offerings.

The one improvement recommended by Petersen, who during the parade rode in the back of a 1969 Plymouth once in the service of the Los Angeles Police Department, concerned accommodations for out-of-town visitors.

"We need some motels," he said. "People wanted to stay in Watsonville."

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