

Gasser Wars: Drag Racing's Street Classics: 1955-1968

Larry Davis

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In the late 1950s, thousands of street legal hot rods participated in organized drag races across the country they ran in three major classes: Gas, Modified Production, and Modified Sports. As the racers got more serious, these cars were street legal in appearance only. Yeah, they had headlights, taillights, and interiors, but they were full-on race cars, with huge blown Hemi engines, wide racing slicks, raised front suspensions. Racers soon discovered that small, lightweight cars were the fastest, and the classic Gasser was born - cars like the Stone Woods & Cook '40 Willys. Because these cars resembled street vehicles, they had a huge fan base, and their short wheelbases and wildly overpowered engines made them exciting to watch. And, as cam manufacturers began sponsoring cars and touting their accomplishments in ads, the "Gasser Wars" were born. Thousands of spectators flocked to events where the top Gassers in the country would face off in grudge matches. Some cars even raced internationally in Europe and Australia. These were among the most popular and exciting racers of the era - many of the top original cars have been restored and are now valuable museum pieces, and the "Gasser" look is popular again among hot rodders.



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