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Foreword Review

Hot Rod Pin-ups

David Perry
MBI Publishing (Mar 28, 2005)
$34.95 (144pp)
978-0-7603-2109-6

There's just something about girls and cars. While the garage might seem the domain of men, the presence of women there, from the girl next door to the devil with a blue dress on, has long been part of the scene, especially when featured wearing a bathing suit, or less, on a calendar hanging on the garage wall. The appeal of pin-ups, with their bad-girl allure and trashy glamour, is indispensable in the hot-women, fast-cars equation. Or is that the fast-women and hot-cars combination?

Actually, both apply in this book. The author is a veteran photographer and car fanatic, who studied photography at Art Center College of Design, and whose previous books include *Hot Rod* and *Bordertown*. Perry also throws a healthy dose of lowbrow art into the mix. The title of his latest book may evoke the nostalgic images of Vargas, Elvgren, and other masters of classic stag-mag era, but Perry delivers something else. His pin-ups are the backseat babes, wrench-wielding wenches, and girlie grease monkeys of the new millennium who are idealized by the "rat-rodder" culture of guys who restyle retro hot rods to have a relatively unfinished appearance. Sometimes, the women do, too.

Perry's photographs have the feel of a gutsy blues riff in a classic rock song, and he dares to search for beauty in pierced, tattooed gals and dusty roadhouse parking lots. In his more vintage-themed shots, he pays detailed attention to period hairstyles and clothing, and to finding models who capture the particular chemistry of both *femme fatale* and good girl, the hallmarks of the golden age of pin-ups.

Then there are the cars that share center stage with the girls. Gleaming and color-drenched or perched up on a garage rack, 1929 roadster or 1960 Oldsmobile, wide whitewalls on dragsters or a '56 Chevy hood grafted to a Ford F100, the hot rods here are photographed lovingly, while still relaying the rockabilly-loving, PBR-swigging, tiki-bar-patronizing culture of rat-rodders.

Accompanying Perry's works are commentary and anecdotal stories with tantalizing titles by hot-rod legends and cultural observers like Eric Kroll and Robert Williams. Kroll's highly entertaining "Of Tetanus & Bullet Bras," for example, dives right into the male fascination with girls and cars before offering a behind-the-scenes look at working with Perry, ogling his models, and speculating about the thin line between fetish and obsession. (The reference to tetanus here is about the possible collision of rusty fender with undressed flesh.)

Much like the photographs, all the essays are infused with a muscular, swaggering sense of machismo that, when peeled back, reveals the sweet sentimentality and unbridled enthusiasm of a young boy who has a hot car and hot girl lined up for a hot Saturday night.

(August 18, 2009)

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