



## 5th Edition of 2015

your letters, classifieds, obituary and  
Hot Rods to Hell (1967) film review

**WHEELSPINNER**

The chronical of the Austin-Healey Club of America's Modified Section, written by and for Nasty Boys, their hot rod Healeys and 1950s and 1960s American car culture.

# EDITOR'S DESK

Welcome gang, to the 5th issue of the Wheelspinner for 2015. I would like to thank Ralph Scarfogliero for his generous financial contribution to the Wheelspinner.

I am pleased to introduce our guest film critic, Ken Anderson. Ken is a noted LA based freelance movie critic and commentator on 1950s and 1960s movies. For this issue, Ken reviews Hot Rods to Hell (1967). Maybe we can see this great 1960's juvenile delinquent car culture film at the drive-in movie at the 2016 Conclave.

I regret that I must report the death of our Club Founder, Leroy Joppa. Kate and I met Leroy and Susan at the 1993 AHCA Conclave in Atlanta, GA where we sipped some moonshine together out of a glass jar. We re-met them again at the Louisville, KY 1994 Conclave. They joined us there with all the Nasty Boys up in the penthouse suite where we all partied. The Joppas were putting together a Modified Chapter of the AHCA with about 23 names. That list has grown to over 263 members of the Nasty Boys' Club and devoted readers of The Wheelspinner. I am proud to have been Leroy's "Propaganda Minister" for 20 years. More recently, the Joppas visited with us for a few days at our home on Hilton Head Island as they traveled the country. We had a lot of fun. R.I.P. - Russ Keep



Ken Anderson

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Russ,

A fellow Midwest AHCA (Chicago) member and I attended Leroy's funeral on Monday, July 6, 2015. We spoke with Leroy's brother, Roger, about what would become of Leroy's Healeys.

The family has not accessed Leroy's garage yet and actually don't know what is in it! We know of 3 maybe 4 Healeys, Weird Willie (small block Chevy,) his "new" big block Chevy-engined Healey, Sue's BJ8 (wrecked a couple of years ago and not repaired) and possibly a Bugeye. Brother Roger is looking for help in determining potential value of all the cars, no one in the family is interested in Healeys or Nasty Boys, thus they intend to sell everything related to the cars.

Being from the Chicago area it was a 6 1/2 hour drive to the funeral, thus we did not offer to help. I did offer to contact some Nasty Boy contacts, you! In particular we are looking for the names of Nasty Boy owners that could help the family determine values. The best thing would be to find someone in northern Wisconsin or Minnesota that could help. As "Wheel Spinner" editor do you have anyone in the mailing list that might be a candidate?

Roger Joppa's email is [rcjoppa@yahoo.com](mailto:rcjoppa@yahoo.com), please contact him directly with any input you may have.

Thanks for any help you can provide. - Bob Brown - Nasty Frog - #27 on Nasty Boy website



Hello Russ,

Being a nasty boy for so long you must have seen lots of V8 cars with 'glass fenders. I am working on a '63 3000 Calif. car with perfect fenders that I can't bring myself to flare. I have had this car since 1969 (I was 18) and now that the kids are out of college and the house is paid off I finally have a little money to put into my baby. I did a 350 Chevy plus 4 speed in around 1975 but couldn't get enough tire under the fenders. If you know where flared or fiberglass fenders might be available for sale or know someone who might know I would really appreciate any assistance you could offer. Regards, Terry Odenbach

-Todenbach@yahoo.com

Greetings Russ,

Thanks for keeping the Wheelspinner alive! To the right is my "nasty boy" well over 1000hp with a B/W T-56 LT 1 six speed transmission... We're talking nasty! Hahaha!! Thanks again, Ray Bencar - jlbent@ameritech.net



Ray - You are sick! I like that in a Nasty Boy! - Russ

Russ, What's with these guys that call their cars "nasty boys". Let's set them straight. We are the Nasty Boys...not the freaking cars. Cars are modified, hot rods, rat rods, or customs, or whatever else you want to call them ..... but not "nasty boys". That's just wrong!!!! Richard Mayor aka Nasty Boy - RM@richardmayor.com

Mayor Richard, AMEN! - Rev. Rust, Church of the Bitter Truth

Hi Russ, how are you?

I finally found your card I had misplaced in my car!

I have to tell you how much me and my friends loved this picture you took of me in your vintage car! I have this love for vintage cars... And it was so cool checking out yours! Now I wish I get to test drive it someday .... Maybe when I go back to Sea Pines?

I also enjoyed meeting you and having a small talk with you at the Sea Pines gas station. You were pretty cool!

Anyways, my ride back to Maryland was pretty fast, and I made it in 7 hours... Just in time for my meeting.

I wish you a great summer and continue to enjoy your rides and life as you seem to do!

My very best, Luz



Luz,

I would be happy to have you test drive "Frankenstein." Unfortunately, my wife would claw your beautiful eyes out.

Cordially, Russ

Hi Russ, Here are a couple of pictures of my 4.6V8 all alloy and carbon Healey. First finished back in 2002 but has been vastly modified again since and with one of our hardtops on it. Hope you like? All the best, Pete - [pete@petefarmer.com](mailto:pete@petefarmer.com)

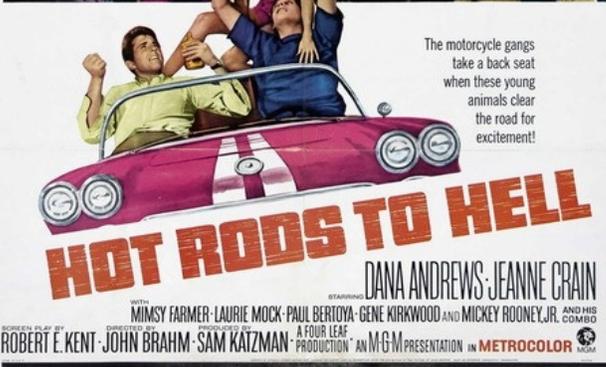


Hey Pete - Looks great! Big improvement over stock, especially disappearing the Healey hood scoop. The hardtop must come in handy over in rainy England! Last year Kate and I took a cruise ship around the United Kingdom- Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man, Ireland and back up the Thames to London. It rained every day! You and I met in NC at a Concours 20 years ago with Leroy and Suzie. You were shepherding those AHCA guys in racing fire suits who kept giving toasts all night. - Russ



*Psycho Chick - "Run him off the road, Duke! Run him off the road!"*

**Hotter than Hell's Angels!**



The motorcycle gangs take a back seat when these young animals clear the road for excitement!

***HOT RODS TO HELL (1967)***

***By  
Ken Anderson***

***Well, if you're going to Hell, I guess a hot rod is as good a means of transportation as any!***

An example of Grade-A, Drive-In kitsch at its finest, Hot Rods to Hell-arious is a camp hybrid of 1950s drag race exploitation films and those reactionary, youth-gone-wild, juvenile delinquency social problem flicks - all with a suburban midlife-crisis "reclaim your manhood" domestic melodrama thrown in for good measure. It's a gas!

*Hotter than Hell's Angels? Dig the bad fake photography and the added on black leather biker jackets! - Russ*

After suffering a spinal injury in a nasty Christmas season auto accident, Boston traveling salesman Tom Phillips (Dana Andrews), emerges a broken and shaken man (“It all came back to me. The horns blowing, the lights, the brakes... 'Jingle Bells'...”). On the mend from his external injuries, Tom nevertheless carries within him an ugly, shameful disease. A pitiable malady bordering on the abhorrent if discovered, even in minuscule traces, within the stoic, bread-winning, man-of-the-house, post-50s suburban macho American male. That disease is insecurity. Yes, folks, Tom's self-image and the entire foundation of his 60s-mandated, nuclear family teeter on the verge of collapse under the strain of Daddy actually having an emotional reaction to almost losing his life in an auto accident. How dare he! Men just don't DO that! Passages of *Hot Rods to Hell's* screenplay read like a Ward Cleaver lecture on the perils of middle-class/middle-aged men having their masculinity usurped due to the enfeebling act of having feelings. To make his humiliation complete, not only is wife Peg the one who decides to make the move to California, but (\*gasp\*) she does all the driving!



*In this artfully composed shot worthy of Kubrick, Tom nurses his bad back while being silently mocked by his wife's handbag. - Ken*

*Andrews is reported to have been a 3rd stage alcoholic with children in college which may explain why he took such a "pinata role." - Russ*

Under advisement of his physician to take things easier (“What does the doctor think he is, a MENTAL case?” bellows Tom's compassionate brother), Tom agrees to leave Boston and assume ownership of a motel in the small desert community of Mayville, California. On board with the whole relocation thing are supportive wife Peg (Jeanne Crain), and freckle-faced, “all-boy” towhead son, Jamie (Jeffrey Byron). The sole holdout is daughter Tina: an early prototype of the sullen Goth teen (“All the kids drag, Dad!” she spews with typical adolescent bile), and walking Petrie dish of festering hormonal agitation.



## Judging you

Loaded into their pre-mandatory-seatbelts station wagon, the Family Phillips motors cross-country to Mayville. The unseen, presumably uneventful, first leg of their road trip taking an instant turn for the melodramatic once they hit California. Depicted as a vast landscape of open roads devoted to car culture and thrill-seeking teens, 1960s California takes on the feel of the Old West once the Phillips' gas-powered covered wagon catches the attention of a trio of exceptionally clean-cut juvenile delinquents (they all come from "good" wealthy families).

*Get your kicks on  
Route 66! - Ken*

*Looking like an out  
take from The Road  
Warrior, the hotrod  
gang performs  
choreographed and  
syncopated periotics  
around the hapless  
family.*

*A concealed carry  
law would have  
ended this movie  
quickly! - Russ*



What follows is a comically escalating game of cat-and-mouse where what began as high-spirited, run 'em off the road kicks ("Everybody's out for kicks. What else is there?"), gets rapidly out of hand. Soon the road-hogging hot-rodders make it their business to see

that Tom Phillips and family never reach their destination (square Mr. Phillips plans to crack down on the "fun" once he takes over that motel), or get the chance to squeal to the police (or "Poh-lice" as Dana Andrews peculiarly intones).

*Go get 'em baby!  
Go! Go!*



Passions flare, dust flies, tires screech, rock music blares and everybody either overacts shamelessly or unconvincingly. Meanwhile, many questions arise: Will Peg ever stop treating Tina like a child? Will good-girl Tina succumb to the lure of bad boys? Will little Jamie's respect for his father ever be restored? Does Tom still have the ol' poop, or has he lost it forever? The answers to these, and several other questions you don't really care about, are answered in *Hot Rods to Hell*.

Adapted from a story written at the height of the mid-50s juvenile delinquency panic that spawned *Blackboard Jungle* and *Rebel Without a Cause*, *Hot Rods to Hell* elicits laughs and inspires giggles because it feels so out of step with the times. It really should have been one of those 1950s American International cheapies shot in black & white.



*State Fair, 1945.*



*Same couple 22 years later with kids! -Russ*



*“How far have you gone?” Peg yells at her daughter, Tina. “Is that what you want? To end up in a motel room with any man?!”*

If you've never seen veteran actors Dana Andrews or Jeanne Crain in a film before, I beg you, don't start with this one. *Hot Rods to Hell* will leave you wondering how they ever had careers in the first place. This is their fourth film together (*State Fair* - 1945 / *Duel in the Jungle* - 1954 / *Madison Avenue* - 1962), and to say the photogenic duo went out with a whimper would be a gross understatement. Andrews, hampered by a makeup artist trained during the days of the silents, is so unrelentingly stiff and gruff, he's a figure of derision long before his character has a chance to be made sympathetic. Hammily scowling and grimacing in his Sansabelt slacks, this is far from Andrews' finest hour, but he's awfully entertaining.



*George (“Buzz”) Maharis, left, and Martin (“Todd”) Milner, right, starred in “Route 66,” a CBS series which was shot on location from 1960 to 1964. It is as if these two Young Republican types went over to the dark side in *Hot Rods to Hell*. Same year *Vette*, too, just no roll bar or *Psycho Chick!* -Russ*

Personal faves are B-Movie starlets, Mimsy Farmer and Laurie Mock, each playing yin and yang ends of the exploitation movie female spectrum (they would reunite with co-star Gene Kirkwood in 1967s *Riot on Sunset Strip*). As actresses, both are severely limited, but what they lack in talent they more than make up for in their grasp of knowing exactly what kind of overheated histrionics a movie like this requires. Farmer in particular gives her discontented small-town teen the kind of edgy Ann-Margret overkill that's the stuff of bad-movie legend. But a special Oscar should have been awarded to Jeanne Crain, who not only looks lovely in her matronly Sydney Guilaroff coiffure, but overacts so strenuously she takes the entire film to a level of hilarity unimaginable without her devoted contribution. Let's take a moment to pay tribute.



*Tina: "You think every girl is the same!"*

*Duke: "No I don't. Their names are different!"*

*Random sexual assaults are pretty much regulation for '60s exploitation movies. - Ken*

*Laurie Mock's last known role credit was "third nude" in Dirty Harry- I swear I am not making this up! - Russ*

A prime ingredient for the enjoyment of any bad film is often the degree of earnestness displayed by those involved. Like Joan Crawford in the Grade-Z cheapie, *Trog*, I don't believe anyone in *Hot Rods to Hell* had any illusions about the caliber of film they were making, yet that doesn't prevent them from pulling out all the acting stops and carrying on as if they're appearing in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Professional ineptitude without some kind of artistic aspiration or pretension is simply boring, so what qualifies *Hot Rods to Hell* as one of those top-notch bad movies I can watch over and over again is the sense that everyone in it is clearly giving it all they've got...and THIS is the best they were able to come up with.



*1961 Plymouth Belvedere Wagon. Sure wished Tom Phillips had checked the box for the 350 cubic inch "golden commando" twin 4-barrel V8!*

*- Russ*





*Post-coital depression or sellers remorse? Check out the microphone at the top! How do you put louvers in fiberglass? - Russ*



*Mimsey Farmer also appeared in Devil's Angels and Riot on Sunset Strip in 1967. She disappeared forever to Italy and France partly because of her 60's anti-U.S. Left wing ideology. The romance language European countrymen regarded her as a film goddess, not a drive-in white trash bad girl. She is 70 now. Tempus Fugit! -Russ*





*The jacked-up '58 Vette really steals the show. Of course if the Buick nailhead powered '26 Ford "T" Roadster had a roll bar with Ms. Farmer on it, who knows. The "T" appeared in Rod and Custom Magazine, May 1962. By 1967 traditional home built hot rods were eclipsed by factory hot rods from Detroit that were faster, dependable, had warranties, a heater, even air conditioning and were available new or used for as little as \$200 dollars down at the dealership. Some guys joined the military just to be able to buy a factory hot rod and drive it to their hometown (prior to shipping off to Vietnam!) to show off their crew cuts and car. Psycho Chick hands free body surfer or making like a roller-coaster rider! ?- Russ*



*Black and white? Nope. It is supposedly a night scene which gave the movie its original name 52 Miles to Midnight. **Plot disclosure alert!** Here our anti-heros are playing a deadly game of "Chicken."* - Russ

As stated, Hot Rods to Hell has long been a favorite of mine, but an extra layer of enjoyment has emerged now that I'm almost as old as Dana Andrews when he made the film. It cracks me up when I catch traces of my own reactions to today's youth in the humorless outbursts of our stuffed-shirt hero (don't get me started on teenagers and their smartphones). Happily, my fussing and fuming is mostly an internal harangue or confined to the relative safety of social media. Traffic here in Los Angeles is far too congested these days to get involved in any of that other stuff.



*Dig those Radir mags and 15" x 7" pie crust slicks! Psycho Chick on roll bar adds new meaning to "junk in the trunk."* - Russ

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