

NEWS STORE

[f2 home](#) > [News Store](#) > [Advanced Search](#) > [Results](#) > **Article**

[Quick Search](#) | [Advanced Search](#) | [Company Search](#) | [Browse Archives](#)

DRAG KINGS

Author: ANDREW LEIGH

Date: 24 Sep 1993

Words: 1290

Publication: Sydney Morning Herald

Section: Spectrum

Page: 6

TWO hotted-up street cars sit side by side on a dark street in one of Sydney's industrial areas. The starter, standing between the cars, makes a "V" with his fingers and, raising his arms above his head, drops them three times. On the third time, the cars leap forward and roar off down the road. The assembled crowd hurries onto the road and watches as the cars charge off in the distance. Although the cars are only about a metre apart, they won't slow down until they reach about 200 km/h.

Welcome to the world of illegal street car racing. Every Sunday night, on one of the many long streets in Sydney's industrial areas, a group of 60 to 100 young men (and perhaps five or 10 women) will gather to pit their street cars against one another. These are the cars which sit throbbing angrily next to you at traffic lights before they race away, leaving behind clouds of tyre smoke and exhaust fumes. Hundreds of hours of careful work has gone into each one, to get the body as light as possible, and the engine as fast as it will go. In short, they are an insurance company's worst nightmare.

My access to the world of street racing was through a guy called Pete. Although he was a little hesitant when I spoke to him on the phone, he soon seemed enthusiastic about showing me what went on. So we began by driving out together to the meeting place for Sydney's drag-racing crowd - M4 McDonald's.

Nobody would mind my telling you about M4 McDonald's, because the McDonald's management and the local residents have been complaining about it for months. By the time we arrive, the police have gone over everyone's cars to check for defects. A standard defect notice carries a \$45 fine, plus the cost of remedying it. Tonight, a few people have got standard defects - and one person has even received a red defect notice - which means that the car cannot be driven, and has to be towed home.

There is general agreement that we need to move elsewhere, so a service station about 10 minutes' drive away is suggested. Once there, I begin to suspect that I've wandered into a mechanics' convention. All the conversations centre on cars and the awesome power beasts that each person plans to create. No-one is here to drink, fight or even to bet on the races. They just like cars.

The races are organised by Richard, a friendly character who seems to know almost everyone. He claims to just do it "because no-one else wants to" - but it's clear that he has a certain status among the group. Once he has lined up a few races, he tells us a street name. In the past, races have been held at East and Carter streets in Lidcombe, and in Bennelong Road in Homebush. However, since the police have been cracking down recently, they decide to go further afield tonight.

Richard's decided that we're going to Kurrajong Road, in Hoxton Park. On the way there, everyone sticks to 60, to avoid drawing any unwanted attention. I ask Pete whether the cars in the convoy with us are really all that quick.

"Some of the cars here would do 14 seconds for a quarter mile (0-100 in 7 seconds). One or two might even do 10 or 11 seconds (0-100 in 4 seconds). It's funny at the car dealership where I work when they get me to drive their \$200,000 sports car, and tell me to be really careful of it because it's better than anything I'll ever drive. But it'd only do a quarter mile in 14 seconds, so a lot of cars here would thrash the s--- out of it."

Once we arrive at Kurrajong Road, it doesn't take long before the races get going. The first race is an old yellow Holden against a turbo-charged Datsun 1600. Then there's a couple of slower Datsuns, and finally two big V8s. Meanwhile, I chat to some of the spectators to try to discover the attraction of this type of racing.

"Eastern Creek is too expensive and, besides, this is more exciting. Like, when the cops come to bust up a meet, and you've gotta get out of there fast -it really gets your adrenalin going." (Richard, 26)

"Well, it's a cheap night out, isn't it? Like, I might go to a nightclub and spend \$40 on drinks and still not get really pissed. Whereas here, you won't meet any girls, but at least all you pay is petrol." (Paul, 21)

"It only costs \$25 to race at Eastern Creek but here, all it costs you is petrol and tyres. Out here is also more fun because it's illegal. I'll be doing it forever. Who knows, I might even bring my kids out here one night." (Rob, 31, father of two)

Back at M4 McDonald's, Richard wants to line up a few more races. After a bit of persuading, he manages to get some interested drivers. Mumbling a street name, he dashes off to his car. Again I missed it, but Pete knows -Devon Street, Rosehill.

It takes only five minutes to get to Rosehill. When we arrive, Pete wanders off to chat to some friends. Suddenly, several cars speed off, tyres squealing. As Pete runs back to the car, I realise why. Behind him, with lights blazing, is a police car. "Let's go!" he shouts. Dust flies everywhere as 30 cars all attempt to escape as fast as they can. I'm more concerned with being hit by someone else than being pulled over, especially as I'm driving a van rather than some conspicuous sports car. Unfortunately, the car in front of us, a brightly painted Mazda RX3, isn't so lucky. Pete suggests what might happen to the driver.

"THEY'LL go over his car and find anything they possibly can to give him a defect notice on," he says. "I know one guy who got a defect notice for a missing rubber grommet on the firewall. Another got one done for having narrow tyres on the front of his car. Once, they even pulled me over and tried to defect my car because it had loose floor mats."

When I talk to the police, they claim that issuing defect notices is about all that they can do. As Constable John Reardon from the Flemington highway police put it: "That's our main weapon - once we defect one car, the others just leave because they're worried about being defected too. Even if it doesn't cost them much to fix the defect, it still means that they have to take their car up to the RTA, and nobody likes going through all that."

As it stands, the police are realistic about their chances of stopping drag racing in the Auburn area. They know that the drag racers have scanners and are able to leave before the police arrive. They also know that with only two cars in the area, they stand little chance of arriving when a race is in progress. But they claim that the problem has been getting much worse since the start of this year. In a few more months, they say, the police plan to conduct a major operation which should wipe out drag-racing in the area for at least six months.

Yet in the long term, street drag-racing will always be around. While young men are able to get their hands on fast cars, there will always be an incentive to pit one car against another. And it doesn't matter how many racetracks are built, because breaking the law is just another tempting ingredient to add to that addictive cocktail that is street drag-racing.

[Back to Search Results](#)

[f2 Network Privacy Policy](#) | [Conditions of Use](#) | [Member Agreement](#)

© 2002 f2 Australia & New Zealand Ltd.