

SHOW REPORT

International flavour at PRI

The annual US trade show saw a truly global mix of exhibitors and attendees

PERFORMANCE RACING INDUSTRY SHOW, ORLANDO CONVENTION CENTER, DECEMBER 2009

The Dome S102 Le Mans prototype had only ever appeared in public once - at the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2008. So to see it at the PRI Show in Orlando shortly before Christmas was a real surprise, but it really summed up the increasingly international nature of the biggest motorsport industry trade show in the world. Alongside the LMP1 was a showcase of Dome's composite expertise, from the first showing of the F20 junior sports racer outside of Japan to cycle helmets and shock absorbers, this well respected firm stunned many visitors. See Stockcar Engineering issue 6 for more on Dome's offerings at the show.

A whole section of PRI was dedicated to firms from the far



A rare appearance by the Dome S102 LMP1 coupe drew the crowds to the Japanese Trade Mission area

“ the US is not a closed shop ”

eastern nation, complete with a Toyota Camry NASCAR Nationwide car on display.

The land of the rising sun was not unique in having its own

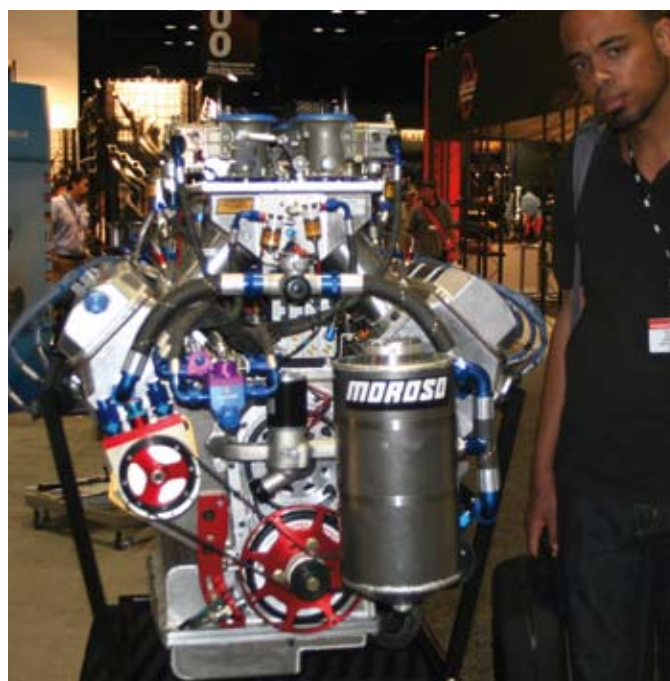
pavilion, however; the European contingent was out in force as always, with Italian firm CRP Technology joining the usual gaggle of British firms. CRP

showed off its new spindle, which is approved for the 2010 NASCAR Sprint Cup season.

Meanwhile, another nation represented in force was Argentina, again with its own pavilion. This South American nation had a wide range of its national products on show, from very nice air jacks to uprights. In total, there were sixty-one nations represented in some way



'GreenPrix' all electric Champ Car was a sharp contrast to the swathe of V8s



Environmental awareness may be growing, but big CCs still rule the roost



Carbon-bodied dampers on display from Japanese company, Dome

at the show.


But it wasn't all about the overseas exhibitors, some of the homegrown product was equally eye catching, notably the new ASA Late model series bodies from AR Bodies.

C&R Racing was one of a number of firms offering innovative ways to add lightness to both Sprint Cup and Nationwide Series Cars of Tomorrow, showing off a range of carbon fibre components developed by ex Toyota F1 engineer, Gunther Steiner, as well as a selection of its own lightweight radiators.

Ford Racing Technology unveiled two 'new' engine projects during the the show. The first involved two versions of its Pro Stock drag engine, offering both wedge and mirror image

combustion chamber designs to appeal to racers moving from GM or Dodge powerplants.

The second was a new 1600cc Kent block cast from CGI (Compacted Graphite Iron), although not in its final design iteration. Ford is planning to produce the block regardless of approval by the SCCA for Formula Ford use, due to demand from historic racers. Casting the block in CGI will give a considerable increase in durability over the old Kent unit, potentially reducing long-term costs.

It seems then the inevitable impact on the North American market of the global economic situation was more than made up for by new overseas exhibitors - PRI remains the top show of its kind and displays no signs of getting smaller. 

On show were new body styles for ASA Late Model Series cars. Highlighting the growing trend in Stockcar racing for cars with 'character', two distinct bodies were previewed. The Mustang, shown opposite, was accompanied by a Chevy Camaro, both of which, it has to be said, looked awesome! Combined with the new NASCAR Nationwide series cars, US Stockcar racing is developing a fresh face with a retro 'Pony Car' slant - something fans old and new are sure to appreciate.



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

➔ The annual PRI show can be a rather daunting prospect for a first time attendee. The initial aspect that strikes you is the sheer scale of the event; as with most things in the US, it is big - really big. Similar to all trade shows, a clear plan of attack is vital. If you simply wander aimlessly around, you will never see the people you need to; however, some browsing is necessary to spot the technological gems among the old school Detroit Iron. It should not be surprising given its location that the show is dominated by oval track racing. For non-US visitors, though, there is some welcome exposure to less familiar forms of motorsport, such as off road racing.



LAWRENCE BUTCHER

It was interesting to note the number of UK and European companies in attendance, showing that the US is not a closed shop, as some may think. A good example of this is the success that UK-based Titan Motorsports had with its new range of drag racing specific steering racks and oil pumps. By spending the last year investigating potential markets and developing a US branding strategy, they have been able to capitalise on a potential customer base with cash to spend.

It was also clear that manufacturing and parts costs in the US are considerably lower than in Europe, a point also highlighted by US F1 team principal Ken Anderson in justifying a US-based Formula 1 operation. The benefits of a strong indigenous manufacturing base were very apparent, and while constructors at the grass-roots level of motorsport have felt the economic squeeze, competition between suppliers has kept prices low and quality high.

Overall, the PRI show gives a good overview of the state of the US motorsports industry, and if one looks beyond the wall of V8s, it is clear that high-end technology and even 'Eco Racing', in the form of the 'GreenPrix' electric Champ Cars, is increasing in prominence. Even with the world still emerging from the economic downturn, European companies would be foolish to ignore this show and what is certainly the world's largest domestic motorsport market.

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