For Your Bookshelf: “Fast Fords” – 50 years up close and personal with Ford’s finest

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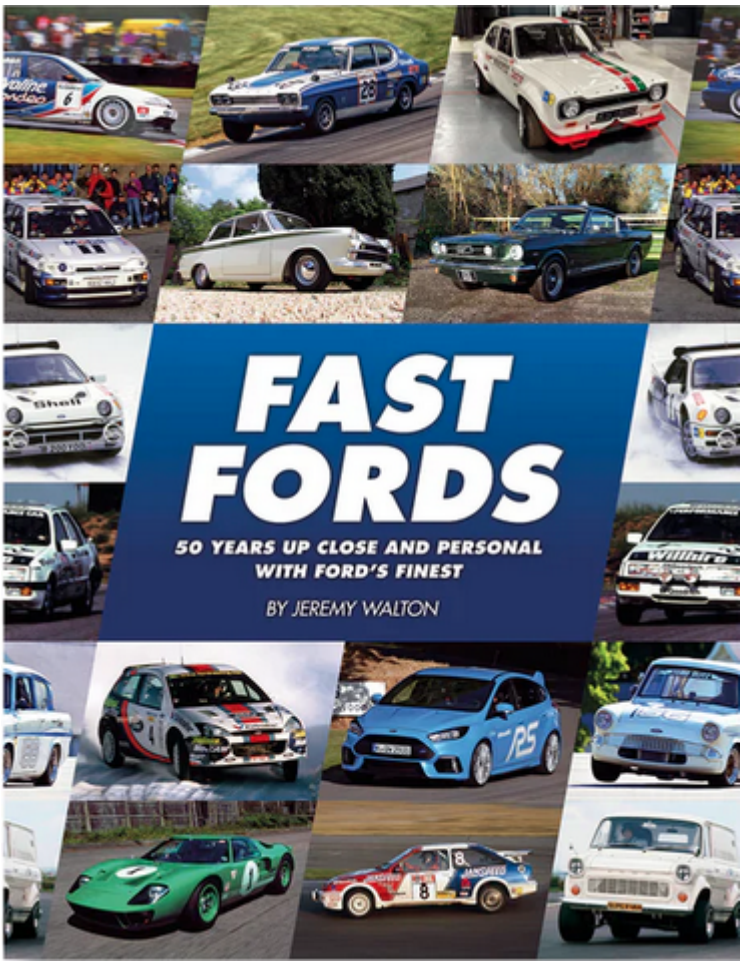

Book Review: Fast Fords

Reviewed by Kim Henson

Author: Jeremy Walton

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408 pages (hardback), large format (270 x 210mm), and including 300 photographs

UK Price: £60 (or £75 for copies signed by the author, Jeremy Walton)

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Over the years there have been many books written about classic Fords, including sporty versions for road use and those aimed more at bringing success in motor sport, but this substantial volume is unique… and very special.

Written by Jeremy Walton, who started his motoring writing career in 1967, this book encapsulates a lifetime of driving, having fun with, racing, writing about and enjoying the fast variants produced by Ford, from the Anglia 105E, introduced in 1959 (and even also briefly covering highly modified Popular 103E models from the late 1950s), to models produced up to the 21st Century.

It is written in the first person and, taking each model one at a time, represents a detailed and highly individual view of the cars.

It is honest in its appraisal too, and the author does not shrink from mentioning shortcomings, where applicable, in the vehicles, and nor does he hold back from talking about other makes and models.

Indeed in addition to a six decade (so far) affinity with, and affection for, the Fords covered by the book, Jeremy is deeply knowledgeable about, and has personal experience of, a wide variety of cars from manufacturers across the spectrum, and covering everything from

humble saloons to out and out racers. In his work as a motoring writer, he has assessed cars of all sorts, and he has also piloted many vehicles in motorsport. He has written many highly respected books (37 so far!) on a range of motoring subjects, including (for example) truly iconic volumes on Audi and BMW.

The text in his new Ford book reinforces this broad perspective while comprehensively shining a retrospective light on each of the Fords included, and conveying to readers the way in which each drives. Importantly and cleverly he describes the *feel* of each model in terms of performance and handling (among other aspects). His words are all the more credible because he has personal experience of driving the cars on the road and, often, on motorsport circuits. I should also mention that he was employed by Ford in Britain and Germany during the 1970s, and thus able to drive and assess many of the cars when in their heyday.

Jeremy has raced examples of Escort, Capri, Fiesta and Sierra Cosworth (until the year 2000), while his on-road driving in now-classic Fords has covered models from Anglia to Mustang, Thunderbird to V8 'Supervan', and everything in between.

In the 21st century Jeremy has also revisited some of the models that he drove as far back as the 1960s, driving examples again and in this book contrasts his memories (and his magazine reports of the time) with his impressions of the cars today, in the light of automotive progress generally over many years.

However it is not just the content that impressed me, and had me hooked on reading each chapter (put together in chronological order), but the *way* in which it is presented. For me what brings the words to life are the many true anecdotes that Jeremy recalls about specific vehicles, the people he encountered and the places visited. As just one example he describes the excitement of his first work-related trip to the U.S.A. and, in addition to the cars driven there, he writes about the enjoyment of visiting the west coast, with California and its beaches, plus the large portions of food on offer – etc.

The vehicular details, technical data and performance figures included in the text are comprehensive in their depth and clarity, in some cases nearly 60 years down the line. It is clear that in putting together this book Jeremy has drawn extensively on his own archive material as well as his sharp memories of the cars and events included.

I also found it fascinating to study the wonderful photographs used throughout the book, many of them depicting the cars in their heyday and often with Jeremy at the wheel!

VERDICT

First class, top notch, excellent – a must-have book for any Ford enthusiast, or indeed for anyone interested in classic cars and the motoring scene in general, and it has been written in Jeremy Walton's inimitable style.

He is a highly-respected, deeply knowledgeable author who has great enthusiasm for the cars covered, and for driving in general.

My advice, buy it and enjoy the read; a classic book for sure.