For Your Bookshelf: Mes Années Matra

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Bruno Morin
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ewed by Kieron Fennelly.

Title: Mes Années Matra

Author: Bruno Morin

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In 1967 engineer and racing enthusiast Bruno Morin left Thomson and took a substantial pay cut to join Matra's racing division. He sought adventure and was not disappointed. Beginning as a chassis engineer calculating damper friction rates, he became involved in Matra's assessment of Ford's Cosworth and le Mans-winning V8s which led to the development of the famous Matra V12.

By 1969 Morin had been co-opted to Tyrrell and worked with Stewart on Matra's championship winning car; when Tyrrell moved to the Ford Cosworth engine, Morin stayed with the Matra F1 works team as it persisted with a home-grown V12 which would ultimately prove more successful in Matra's sports racing cars. Effectively team manager in 1971-2 he oversaw two frustrating seasons as Amon struggled with the inconsistent Matra before boss Jean-Luc Lagardère decided to concentrate on Le Mans and abandon F1.

Morin recounts how he became part of the Tyrrell *équipe* and appreciated working with the thoroughly professional and communicative Stewart. He liked Amon too who joined the Matra team in 1971, but there was a casualness and inconsistency about the New Zealander which finally began to irritate Morin and when after an indifferent season Amon admitted he did not believe he would ever win a GP, the Matra engineer did not demur.

The struggles with both the chassis and the V12 figure largely in the text and the author says how it took them months to understand that the V12 would not rev to its 12,000 rpm limit (and so crimping its performance) because of air/oil churn in the long crankcase, something that the shorter Cosworth engine had overcome with strategically placed baffles……

VERDICT

Highly trained engineer though he was (he went on to manage R&D for the Paris transport system) Morin, a seemingly modest fellow, is never afraid to admire people, such as Stewart, or admit to mistakes and his account is totally absorbing. The layout in short, headed paragraphs makes the text straightforward to read as does Morin’s clear writing. The book is copiously illustrated, the photography selected from a variety of French sources (not Bernard Cahier) is particularly impressive. A fascinating and valuable historical record.