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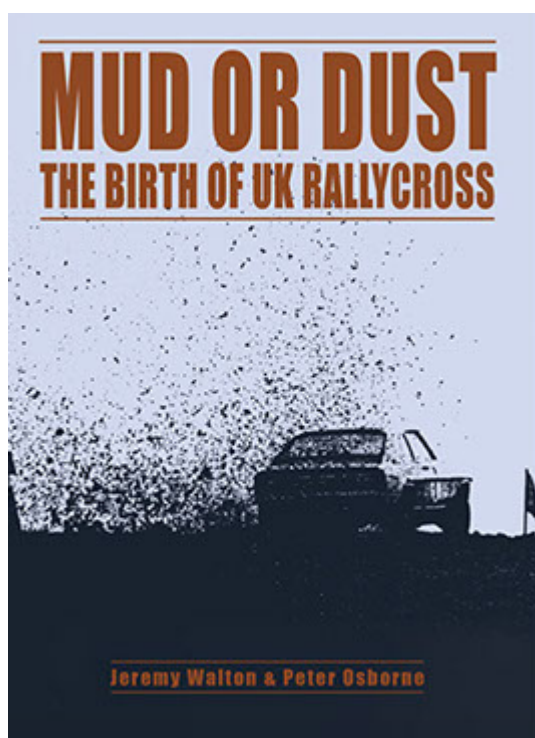
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For Your Bookshelf – “Mud or Dust – The Birth of UK Rallycross”

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Reviewed by Kim Henson

Author: Jeremy Walton and Peter Osborne

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90 pages (paperback)



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Back in the late 1960s/early 70s, Saturday afternoon television sports coverage often included motoring competition, notably Rallycross, and yours truly enjoyed watching some the epic battles that took place between the drivers involved. There were plenty of humdingers between these drivers with their then-dominant Fords (Anglias, Escorts and Capris) and BL models (especially the ubiquitous Minis), with added spice in the form of fascinating Daf, Hillman Imp and Volvo machines (for example).

As the title implies, the predominantly winter sport of Rallycross typically involved plenty of mud or copious quantities of dust, with tarmac and earth or cinder surfaces alternating within the same circuits. This resulted in some combative and interesting racing as the drivers fought to make progress against track conditions as well as rival drivers, and made for some captivating and atmospheric Saturday afternoon viewing on often dismal winter days.

This new book, written by Jeremy Walton and with superb black and white photographs by Peter Osborne and Mike Black, captures those moments for car enthusiasts to enjoy again (or, for younger readers, for the first time!), and for posterity.

Jeremy's fully descriptive text is written in his own inimitable style, bringing to life the battles between the drivers and how they performed in conditions that, at times, were pretty dire. The fact that Jeremy was there at these events, reporting for the weekly magazine 'Motoring News' as well as the monthly 'Motorsport' title, and driving hundreds of miles each week to stand for hours in a muddy paddock or freezing trackside bog while recording the details of the racing, is remarkable in itself. What makes his reports of the time, and this book, even better to read is that his interest in, and in-depth knowledge of, the cars and the competition shines through.

Without wishing to spoil the text for readers who may buy the book, here are just two



examples of the brilliant way in which Mr. Walton describes the action on the track...

“...Best placed Championship Ford emerged from the multiple Capri results of Rod Chapman, staggering into fifth with a failing clutch and an erratic 4-5 cylinder version of V6 disharmony”.

Plus:

“...Next on that run was Grewer, bounding as though he had a bootful of bunnies...”

Wonderful!

Included within the book are several reprints of Jeremy's contemporary Rallycross reports that appeared in Motoring News... well worth studying to recapture the excitement of those events.

While the text is well-written and informative, the brilliant mono photographs of Peter Osborne and Mike Black tell their own stories too, depicting in detail the cars and the drivers, the mud and the dust, and the dramatic action that often involved sideways sliding plus (sometimes) contact between vehicles and the surrounding scenery, roll-over crashes, etc.

VERDICT

Rallycross was always a very important and highly competitive branch of motor sport, and this book brings it to life with an excellent combination of enthusiastic text and top quality photographs.

It's an accurate and highly entertaining portrayal of weekend motor sport as it happened half a century ago.

My advice is just to buy and enjoy a copy before they sell out!