

*OK ... soooooo ... you're a certified/full-fledged/nutball/expert/connoisseur of motor racing movies. For example ... you know that Bella Darvi was the femme fatal in "**The Racers**" and that Jim Garner really did quite a bit of the driving (including setting himself afire at Spa) in "**Grand Prix**".*

It's a good bet that you quite likely know that Bruce "**The Sound of Speed**"* Kessler was the second unit director on Howard Hawks' "**Redline 7000**", and that McQueen did "all" his own driving in "**Le Mans**".

... Perhaps, if you really are deep into it, you also that Joe Alves (the guy who was the production designer on "**Jaws**" who designed and built "Bruce" the mechanical shark) was the guy who got PLN into racing and who worked as an Art Director on Newman's "**Winning**" a few years later.

Of course you surely know by now, that Ken Miles was not so much a son-of-a-bitch as he was portrayed in "that" movie, but a very highly-focused, talented, and respected racing driver. You likely how that word around the race shop is that Cruise did most of his own wheelwork in "**Days of Thunder**" and that, to the contrary Cary Elwes sat out a whole lot of the on-track action.

And we all know that there's a hundred more out there, but let's here cut to the race and ask: what 1970 made-for-tv-movie (that was later released theatrically nationally and internationally to almost no acclaim) starred Sal Mineo and Darren McGavin as a gristled old F1 driver and a cocky pit crew guy?

Originally (if that term can be applied here since this film was made four years after the debut of Grand Prix) entitled: "**The Big Prize**" the film co-stared many TV favorites of the day including Nicos Minardos, and Sean Garrison as teeth-gritting, scowling, bellowing, wide-eyed, blood-in-the-teeth (no Bell Star full-face helmets on drivers to obscure faces and emotions in those halcyon days) racing drivers and Farley Granger as some guy along with Juliet Mills and Anne Baxter each playing a different woman who was somehow faintly involved with the story.

Shot in 1970 using a lot of stock footage, and staging the action scenes at Paramount Ranch in the Malibu Hills, and the "Chauenga side" parking lot of the Universal Studio Tours, this film ended up with more more aliases than Tony Curtis in "The Great Impostor".

It was shown once on TV as "**The Big Prize**" but that name changed thereafter and forever to "**The Challengers**" at least in the domestic market.

Abroad it was known variously as “**Seida Sulla Pista Del Fudco**”, “**Smrtonosna Pista**”, “**Sensation Paracebanan**”, “**Vidas En Peligro**”, and “**Herausforderung Zum Grand Prix**”.

The aforementioned Joe Alves was a racing buddy of ours and, just by chance was the Production Designer on this masterpiece. He hired out a bunch of formula cars from local racers to stand in for F1 cars. My Lotus 18 was one of them, that's it, number 5, fake exhaust, with taped-over bodywork “racing” past the pit set in the studio parking lot in the accompanying movie poster.

It was great fun, including me being pressed into service by the producer to coach Mister McGavin how to slip down into a formula car (he kept trying to sit down first and would get stuck) more like the carefully gristled old pro looking at what might be his last race that he was playing.

And the contest, ah yes the contest...

Not really a contest as much as a quest. To be perfectly **Frank**, I've never seen this film (except for a terrible trailer with some of the worst quick cuts ever made on film).

(Now back to being perfectly **me**:) Sooooo ... I need a copy (preferable a DVD, but I'll take a VHS). The reward will be in the research itself and added to by my profuse thank you's, and (possibly) vaguely innocuous offers to “buy you a soda” when next we meet. **-DS**

**look that one up, you'll see some of the earliest (and best) on-car camera work and a title sequence that was blatantly lifted whole cloth and that lead off the movie “Grand Prix” that was shot four years later.*