



I was interested in this idea that Mooneyes was as much of a lifestyle brand as it was a speed equipment manufacturer. "There was no such name for a 'lifestyle brand' back then", Shige explained. "Mooneyes is based on hot rods, customs and racing. Those three are very important for us and we like it that way! We have so many different lines of merchandise - from socks to blowers. Not many companies sell hardwares and soft items at the same time, but for us, both are very important." Shige reflected, "I guess I may be able to say it's a 'lifestyle brand' now."

Mooneyes still chase land speed records on the Bonneville salt flats, Emi Suganuma drag races a Chevrolet Vega Wagon, and Shige and Chico continue spreading the good word of MOONEYES while touring the dragster across the United States and beyond. The Yokohama Hot Rod Custom Show brings together some of the finest custom machinery from Japan and abroad. It's hard to think of better hands Dean Moon's brand could have ended up in. On the future of hot rodding, Shige doesn't appear concerned. "Hot rodding doesn't necessarily need to be fast cars. Hot rodding depends on people's individual understanding of what their hot rod is. As long as cars are around, hot rodding will never die." Even the threat of electric vehicles doesn't phase him, and as a true creative he posits "the future doesn't even have to be gasoline cars, EV will be fine. You could even put MOON discs on an EV and make it lower. That's custom and that makes it a hot rod to me."

It's difficult to capture the buzz that 2024's Dragstalgia created throughout the nation's lovers of drag racing. It was a weekend of pinching ourselves that the Mooneyes team were actually at our humble little drag strip in Northamptonshire. By the sounds of it, it was just as exciting for Shige and the crew as it was for us. "It was very important for us to bring the dragster back to the UK," Shige said, "It was a big piece of history for people in the UK and of course for us, too. We have to carry on Dean Moon's legacy. We can't drain that no matter what. Going to the UK was to show our pride and appreciation to Dean Moon for his accomplishments in the past."

"We enjoyed Dragstalgia very much! My highlight of the weekend was that the Santa Pod track crew were wearing the shirts that said 'Revell Mooneyes Racing Team'. I didn't even know they were wearing those shirts until I was in the staging lane on Saturday, so I felt it important that I should do a good run for them that day. I'd just like to say: thank you so much for accepting us at Santa Pod Raceway."

The dragster was present again at Hot Rod Drags in September, this time with the legend that is Dale Snoke acting as their ambassador. The dragster represents an iconic piece of American, Japanese and British custom car history, and will hopefully have inspired generations of drag racers to come by gracing us with its presence in the UK. After seeing the leagues of children so excited to see it, and even sit in it, it gives me hope for the future at least.

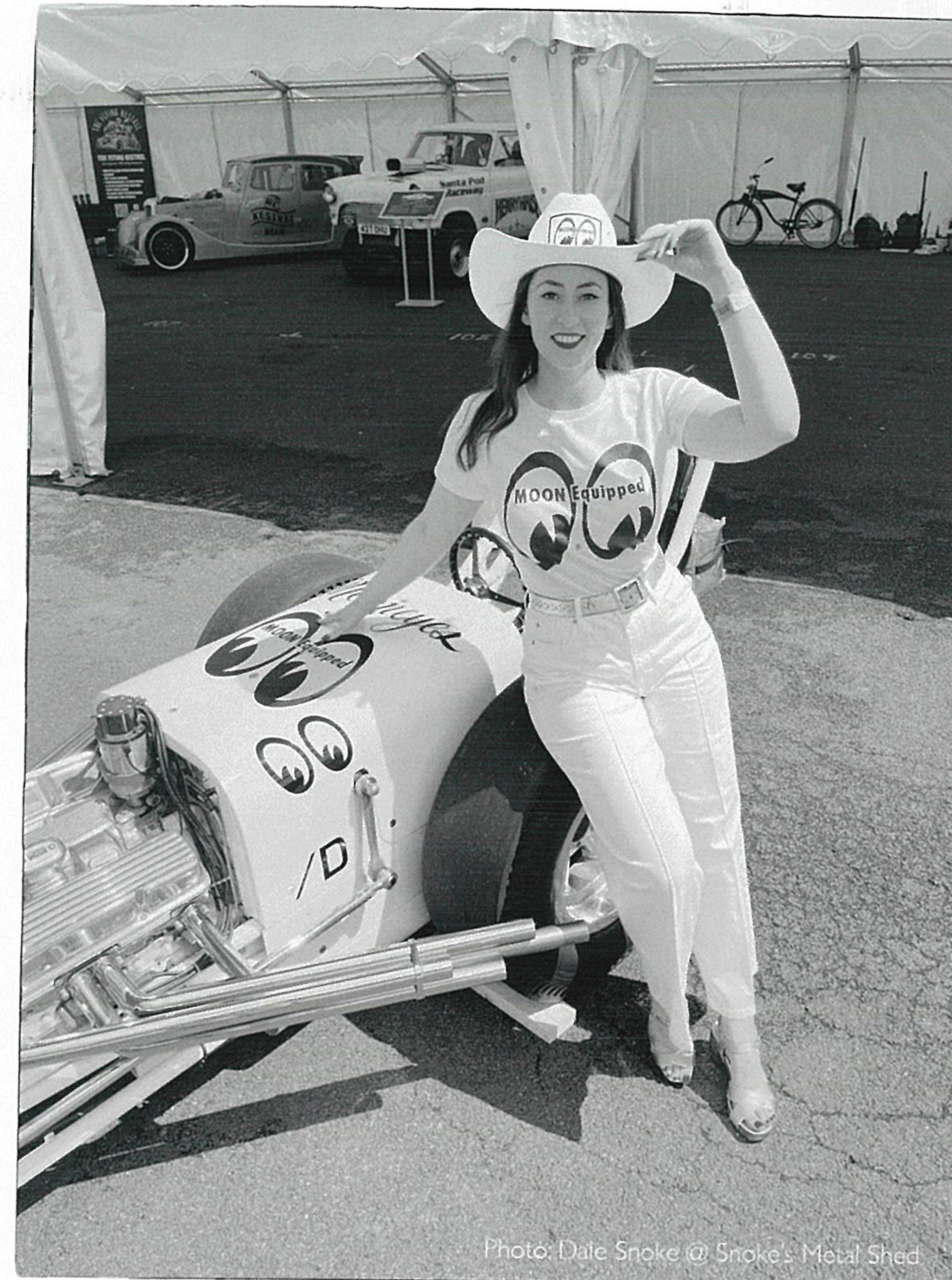


Photo: Dale Snoke @ Snoke's Metal Shed