

## #23 : ENGINEERING AS SPORT - THE RACE IN THE HILLS 1/2.

27th / June / 2022.

Photographed and written by Adrian Maidman.



Amongst the rolling hills, a roar emanates from the following valley. It helped me with navigating the unfamiliar town of Francorchamps in Belgium. I'd wake up, grab my loaner bike, and begin the struggle up and over the great hill that separated me from the famous Spa Francorchamps race track. Once I was over the crest, I coasted my way to the main gate and then the tunnel into the paddock.





Luck isn't enough to explain the sheer fortune I have experienced. A nameless friend who works for a driver had procured a media season pass for me and my exploits. With this fabled piece of plastic, my boundaries were

not set by the security but rather by the relationships I had with the teams.

The World Endurance Series (WEC) stands as one of the most highly regarded, innovative, and historically influential racing series in motorsports. Containing the 24hr Hours of LeMan, WEC is for all the biscuits, outside of Formula 1.

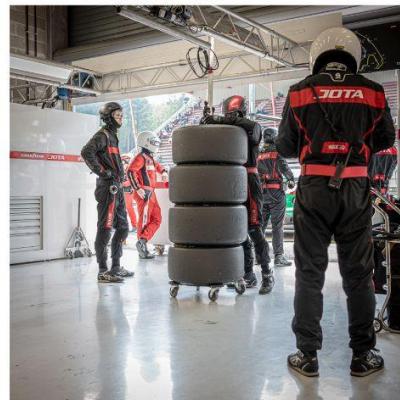
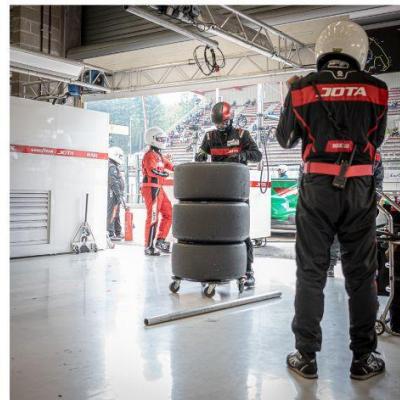
My initial plan was to stay out of the way and float from team to team exploring, learning, and photographing the experience of participating in the 6hrs of SPA. My nameless friend suggested I get in touch with the Tunbridge Wells LMP2 class team JOTA since I knew some of their engineers. I was welcomed with open arms and allowed to occupy some space in their garage.

“DON’T CROSS THE RED LINE WHEN THE FIRESUITS ARE OUT! ”





My goals were to make art and embrace this unique experience. In the past, I have found I have ignored my surroundings for some practical goal, photographing for this journal for example. But access to these kinds of opportunities doesn't come around often, so I wasn't going to let a task get in the way of witnessing one of the greatest technical and organisational events to occur within the sporting world.



Endurance racing is a game of strength, skill, resilience, competence, and control. There is a boundary that gets crossed where there is nothing more that the engineers can do and it is up to the driver, car, and universe to decide the team's fate. Every outcome is considered and a clear strategy is laid out. Within this, there are variables that cannot be predicted. Other cars for example. They are the pure force of chaos that threatens the team's success.

That being said, a lot can be done to tame the chaos they must face. I am not entirely sure of the technical requirements to win a race like this but I know that it requires an impressive amount of knowledge, sophisticated skills, and communication to simply get the car onto the start line.





A game - a sport - has a broad definition. Chess is a game, as is pole vaulting. What is their primary similarity? Simply that there is a contention between the individual/team and the boundaries of control.





Within any sport, a player can contend with another opponent, themselves, and the universe. Either mentally or physically. Motorsports sit in a unique category since it contains an element that exists in few other sports - only Battle Bots comes to mind -; A focus on engineering and mechanism. Endurance racing, for example, shares the teamwork found in rowing and football but finds that most of the team's physical and mental resources are directed towards the understanding and control of the mechanisation within the racing car

itself. Mastery of physics is at the heart of all this, as is with all other physical sports - duh -.

Throughout my time within the pits, I observed a brilliance and harmony between engineering and the team that simply amazed me. I'd liken it to a rocket launch. What was the Space Race if not a race?

Precision engineering meets the fleshy mind and body in what feels like a very rapid ballet.





The driver, of course, plays a big role. Technically and financially. But there is a team behind this racing team. I got to eat with and speak to the folks who keep the tires warm, among others. The candidness and humility

that juxtaposed the magnitude of their job left me impressed and comforted. Egos appear to only exist in front of the camera's eye, and since the team gets little limelight, I found the engineers to go about their masterful work with modesty and kindness.

As trivial as "keeping the tires warm" sounds, these people are trained, skilled, and blisteringly competent at making N0.28 and N0.38 go really fucking fast. As proven by car 38 finishing in 3rd position at Spa. Then 38 in 1st and 28 in 3rd at the 24hrs of LeMan the following month.







The amount of people I owe thanks to is vast and I am so grateful to all of them for supporting my journey so far. Shout out to Sam, Bob, and my nameless friend.

It isn't over yet. I will be in Milan for the 6hrs of Monza and I am looking into getting myself onto Japanese soil for the 6 Hours of Fuji. The next journal will be part two of my time at Spa and will focus on the rest of the field in terms of cars and the technical innovation that exists in this sport.

=====

*My relationship with journalism is fickle and I am still trying to find the approach I want to take in future projects. I struggle to describe what I do as journalism since I see journalism as a practical service that must be without opinion. My work on the other hand is far from that. I want opinion to be at the core of my art. I want to explore experience and emotions, in the same manner, that a journalist explores politics.*

=====

The following journal title will be ...

#24 : THE RACE IN THE HILLS 2/2.

Link to the rest of my journal entries:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jix0-yr6n7Ra9LVLtXerNRjMfLxudDm6?usp=sharing>

If, for whatever reason, you wish not to receive any more journals, let me know and I'll remove you from the list. You coward.