

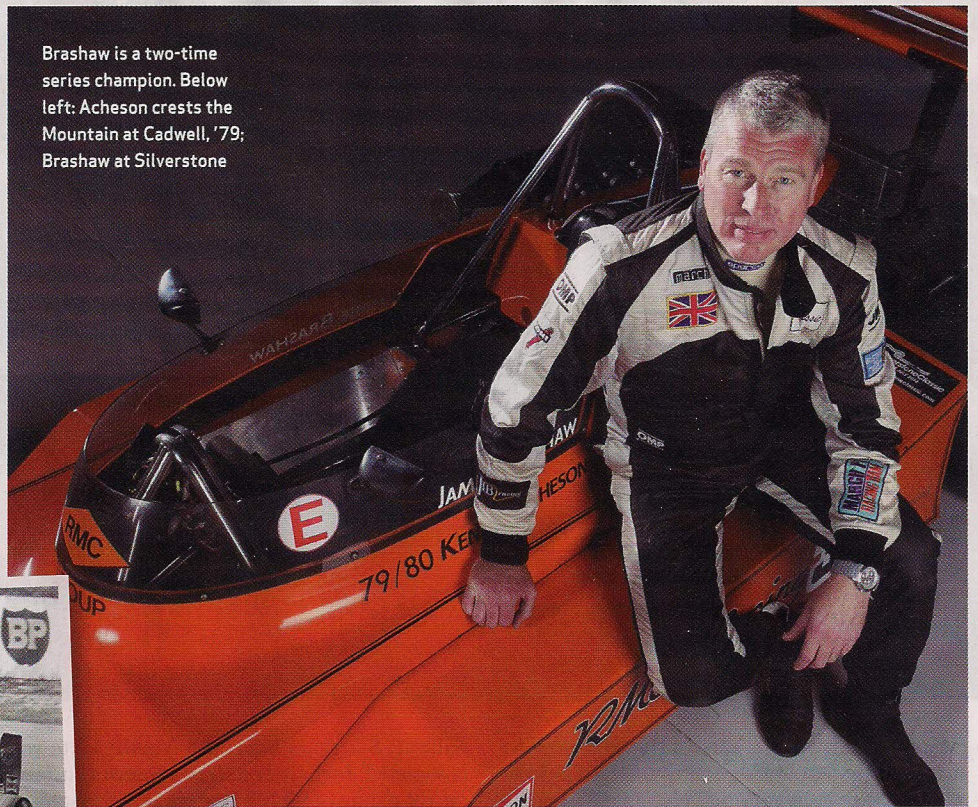
# “They look good, they’re easy to maintain and they’re quick”

So says Hugh Price of the single-seaters in the Classic Formula Three Association’s popular series. **James Page** meets the men who are reliving a golden era PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES MANN/JAKOB EBREY/LAT

**T**oday’s complicated system of junior formulae stands in stark contrast to that facing young motor-sport hopefuls 40 years ago. Many stars graduated to Grand Prix racing directly from F3, which could trace its roots to the post-war 500cc category that nurtured such talent as Stirling Moss before being superseded by Formula Junior in the late 1950s. F3 returned in ’64, initially using engines based on that series’ 1-litre powerplants.

The Classic F3 Association covers cars from 1971-’84, a period in which the likes of James Hunt and Ayrton Senna passed through the ranks. From ’71-’73, 1.6-litre Ford powerplants were *de rigueur* but Toyota dominated the later 2-litre era and – driven by firms such as March, Ralt and Chevron – aerodynamics progressed from basic wings to ground effects.

Brashaw is a two-time series champion. Below left: Acheson crests the Mountain at Cadwell, ’79; Brashaw at Silverstone



## JAMIE BRASHAW MARCH 793 TOYOTA

Brashaw is a consistent front-runner in Classic F3, and started his competition career early: he was racing dirt bikes at the age of 12. He then had a brief spell in stock-car racing, before settling down, getting married and having kids.

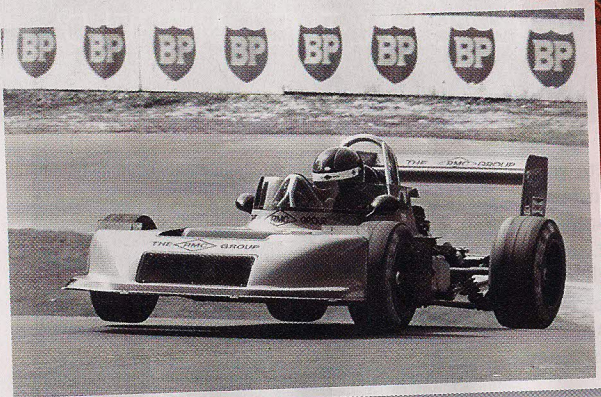
“I then did a track day,” he says, “and went to look at a car that I could use for those. The guy selling it also had a Chevron B47. I didn’t know what it was. It had the wrong engine and hadn’t even been very good in period. I struggled to get it to work, then bought the March and won the championship twice!”

Brashaw’s 793 was originally driven by Kenny Acheson, who took it to sixth overall in the ’79 British F3 Championship. Highlights have included a podium finish at Portimão in a race

that also included Formula Two machinery – “That was my first event abroad and it was a big do” – plus a win at Brands Hatch when the French Formula Three series visited. He has also dabbled with Formula Ford, but didn’t find the cars to be powerful enough.

“The camaraderie is there in all formulae. The whole historic scene is great – people share information such as gear ratios. With these cars, you’ve only got 160bhp, so most of your gains come from the chassis. I’m constantly messing with it – it’s understeering at the moment.

“I’ve also got a 782 F2 car, but that’s a big jump in cost. For the money, nothing’s better than F3, and the late 1970s was such a great time for the formula. Loads of people come up saying that they remember it.”





## HUGH PRICE CHEVRON B38 TOYOTA

Price is chairman of the Classic F3 Association, and started racing in an Ensign in F4 with the 750 Motor Club in 1977. He then “gave it all up for a while” before going Porsche racing and pooling resources with a friend in the mid-1990s to buy a 911 GT2. They competed in the FIA GT Championship and finished 13th at Le Mans in '97 – the first British crew home. “After another Le Mans in '99, I then retired,” he says, “licking my wounds from excessive spending.”

“I loved the 1-litre F3 screamers, so I bought a Brabham in 2005, and the later F3 cars were racing at the same meetings. I found this Chevron in Germany, collected it from Dusseldorf and put it back into period livery.” The car was driven by Derek Warwick in the 1977 British F3 Championship, but he swapped mid-season to a Ralt RT1. Chevron’s honour was upheld when Derek Daly claimed the title in another B38.

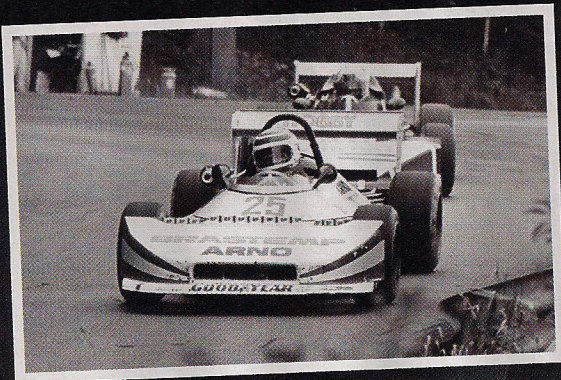
“I mainly look after it myself since it was rebuilt in 2006,” says Price. “I thoroughly enjoy it – in terms of bangs for buck, these cars are great. They look good, they’re relatively easy to maintain and they’re quick. This is my eighth season with the car and it’s tremendous value.”

“The initial cut-off point for the Classic F3 Association was 1980 – people were reluctant to let the Ralt RT3 in. We copied the French series and now go up to '84, although the RT3 has to run without its ground-effect underbody.”

“We need more cars out in the UK events, but we can run with the French series and are getting included at more big meetings. Our fellow racers are nice people – it’s competitive and that’s what club racing is all about.”

**Top: Classic F3 Association chairman Price pictured at this year’s GP de Monaco Historique. Right: Warwick at Thruxton in period**





David Shaw is a series front-runner in the car that Nelson Piquet (left) drove to British Formula Three glory in 1978



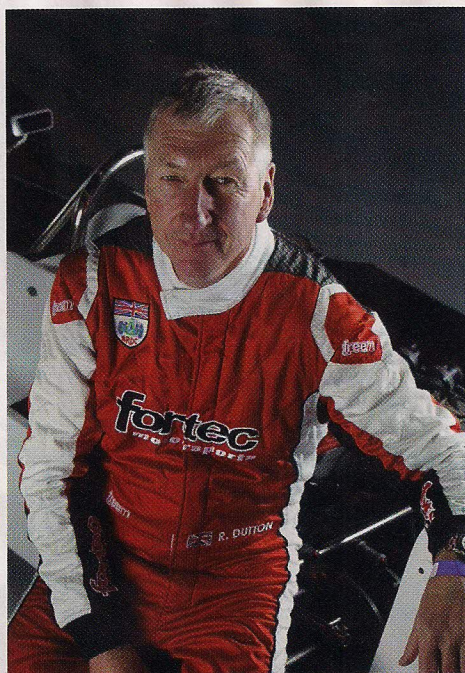
## DAVID SHAW RALT RT1 TOYOTA

This is perhaps the most famous Formula Three car of the period. In 1978, young Brazilian Nelson Piquet won seven races in a row during a season-long battle with Derek Warwick to claim the BARC BP Championship. With March struggling, it was a dominant year for the Ralt and Chevron marques.

"I bought it in 2011," says Shaw. "I knew of its history and couldn't miss it. I was 18 in 1978, and my brother raced in an F3 support series. For me to own such an iconic vehicle that I saw when I was young – it's a piece of my history."

"I raced Formula Ford 2000 in the 1980s, then had a 12-year break before coming back in one-make series such as the Renault Clio Cup and Sport Spiders. I stopped again in 1999, but a friend prepped historic cars and encouraged me to get into it. I've always been a single-seater person at heart and this is brilliant to drive. I use G-Cat to prepare the car because I don't really have the time. We've managed to find a good set-up for it – it's as much fun as anything. Ralt had the RT1 well sorted by '78, but two years later the cars were so much more advanced."

Shortly after our meeting, Shaw put the RT1 on pole position at the Grand Prix de Monaco Historique: "I've been on the pace at most places, and have won at the Oulton Park Gold Cup meeting. I've had a fifth at Monaco in 2012, too, plus a third at Spa. Nelson Piquet has asked about it, but we haven't yet reunited him with it. Takuma Sato ran it up the hill at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, though."



Above: Dutton is back at the wheel of a single-seater this year, in the ex-Nigel Mansell 783 (right)

## RICHARD DUTTON MARCH 783 TOYOTA

Fortec boss Dutton did a lot of racing in the '70s, graduating from Formula Ford 1600 to 2000, and then a March 793 in Formule Libre events. Despite staying in and around motor sport, he then had a long period out of the cockpit.

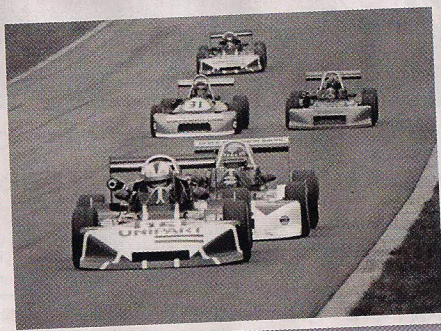
"I came back two years ago," he explains, "and did some events in a Lotus Cortina. Then, in 2013 I raced a Mustang with the HSCC and managed to win the class championship." He also runs an Austin A35 with Neil Brown.

"The March is new to me this season – we've been rebuilding it for two years," he continues. "So far, I've only done a shakedown with it at Pembrey. It's a 783 that had been converted in period to a 793, but we put it back to original."

The ex-works car was driven at Monaco in '78 by Frenchman Dany Snoeck, and then – having been upgraded to include the venturi sidepods – in the following year's British F3 Championship by future Grand Prix star Nigel Mansell.

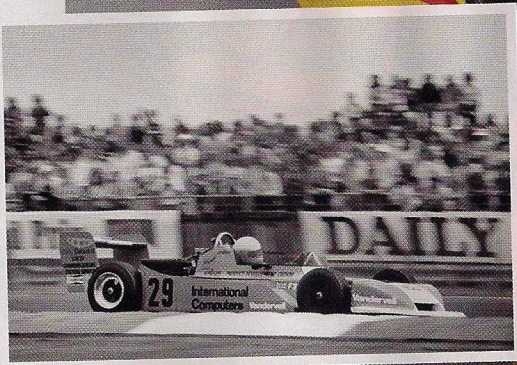
Fortec runs cars in a number of different series around the world, from Touring Cars to Formula Three and World Series by Renault, and time is Dutton's main enemy.

"It's very difficult to fit it all in," he says, "but it feels good – it's all coming back to me after 35 years. I'm hoping to be competitive, but we needed more time to prepare it. Or at least test it..."





Price has followed brother Hugh into the Classic F3 championship. Below: Wilson at Silverstone in 1979, when the car ran in 793 specification

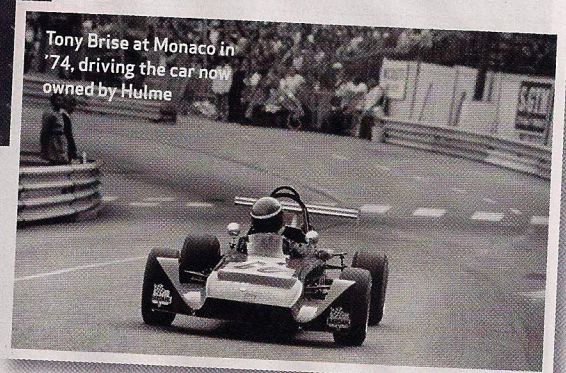


## MARK HULME MODUS M1 FORD

Hulme's Modus dates back to the first year of the 2-litre F3 regulations, which replaced the old 1600cc series for 1974. It is the car in which the previous year's British F3 champion, Tony Brise, returned to Monaco to enter the Grand Prix support race. The rising star finished second behind another budding ace, Tom Pryce.

"I love the mid-1970s Formula 3 cars," says proud owner Hulme, "and bought this as a rolling chassis in 2011. It was an impulse buy – I was building a house at the time but just had to have it! I restored it last winter, and have so far only driven it a couple of times in the wet, so I'm still getting used to it. I have fitted a single-overhead-cam Ford Pinto engine, as it would have had in period. My father-in-law is retired and works on it at home. I've got two more Modus single-seaters as well – they're his pride and joy.

"I started racing in classic Formula Three in 2009. It looked like a friendly, well-organised club, and getting to compete at all the great circuits is fantastic – I hope to take it back to Monaco in two years' time. We're just having fun, though. It's about the cars, not the drivers."



Tony Brise at Monaco in '74, driving the car now owned by Hulme

## JONATHAN PRICE MARCH 783 TOYOTA

"It's my brother's fault," says Hugh's sibling. "I helped him when he was racing Porsches, then bought a Royale RP27. I ran it for a few years, but sold it when I got married and had a family."

Hugh then took Jonathan to see a couple of cars, and the pair ended up buying, rebuilding and then selling an Argo and a Chevron.

With his interest rekindled, he found himself at race meetings wanting to be driving rather than helping his brother. "Hugh and I looked for a car and found this one," recalls Jonathan. "It's been restored to the spec that it was in when Rob Wilson drove it in the 1979 British F3 Championship. It's a nice car to drive – potentially one of the better ones of the period."

The March was upgraded to a 793 for Wilson with the addition of its ground-effect sidepods,

although Price reverted the car to its 783 configuration so that it was eligible for the Grand Prix de Monaco Historique Formula Three race.

One constant is the Toyota Novamotor engine, which was the dominant powerplant at the time: "They're getting valuable. Road-car engines do come up for sale, and you can use those as a basis, but as soon as any spares come up, everyone's after them. Racing engines can change hands for £15,000 each.

"You can have dull races where you lose touch with everyone, but when you're running close together it is exciting and people are generally well behaved. We've got some class drivers with good experience. If you want to drive proper racing cars, this is as good as it gets."

**SilverstoneClassic**  
25 | 26 | 27 JULY 2014

The Classic F3 series ([www.classicf3.org.uk](http://www.classicf3.org.uk); e-mail [richard@classicf3.org.uk](mailto:richard@classicf3.org.uk)) will be part of the Silverstone Classic for the first time in 2014. See [www.silverstoneclassic.com](http://www.silverstoneclassic.com)