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ISSUE 1, 2023

**miata**

**MOTORING**

# IN THIS ISSUE

# Miata

## M O T O R I N G

### Thousand Words

The art of storytelling goes beyond words. Just ask a photographer.

# 3



### On the Cover:

Want to shoot your own version of this cover shot? Photographer Mike Trimpe shares how he did it on page 3.

### A Young Tom Matano

In his own words, Tom gives us a glimpse into the childhood that influenced his life in automotive design.

# 8



### Two Minute Magic

In racing, as in life, choosing the right car can make all the difference.

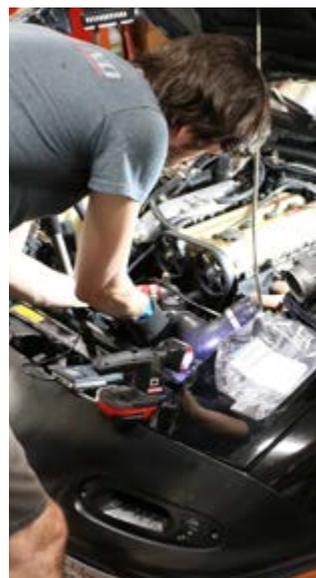
# 11



### The Underdog

Adventure, life lessons, and a bit of mechanical therapy. This car is our hero.

# 14



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# PERFORMANCE SALE

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SEE CENTER FOR DETAILS

## Miataland

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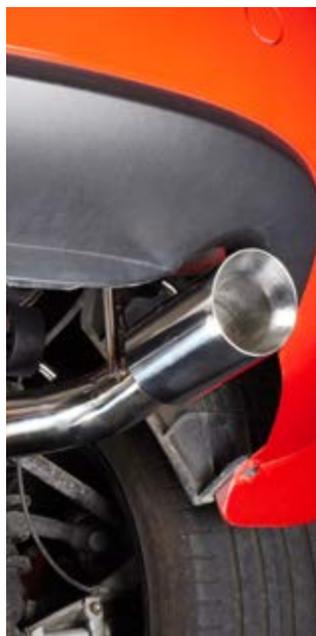
# 18



## Gear Box

A spot to find Moss parts you might not have known your car has got to have.

# 21



## THERE'S MORE ONLINE!

From YouTube to Facebook to Instagram and more, Moss Miata news and fun are just clicks away. We're also working on developing a dedicated *Miata Motoring* website for stories and tech articles to be permanently stored and easily accessed. Stay tuned!

## WORD WRANGLERS & GARAGE GURUS

### WE WANT YOU!

Share your experience, wisdom and talent with Miata enthusiasts across the country. Contributors whose work is selected for use in the magazine will receive credit on their Moss Miata accounts! Now, since there is no way to print all the terrific stories and tech articles that are sent to us, we will place relevant and first-rate submissions on [MossMiata.com/miatamotoring.com](http://MossMiata.com/miatamotoring.com). We may choose to share your story in social media or in a Moss Miata email for all to enjoy. Sorry, submissions that are published online are not eligible for Moss credit.

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The very best way to submit material is via email. Please attach digital photos at full size.

### \$200 Moss Credit

Three- to four-page stories and articles (approx. 1800 words). This includes: technical/restoration articles, historic accounts, Club and Event experiences and anything that will inspire or entertain. Please include pictures for us to choose from—the more, the better.

### \$100 Moss Credit

Cover and main feature photography, general interest stories or medium-length tech articles. Tech tips, cartoons, illustrations, humorous anecdotes and other odds-n-ends that help make Miata Motoring great.



# Driving Around the **WRITER'S BLOCK**

by David Stuursma - Editor

**M**y high school football coach said excuses are like armpits. I agree with him that we all have them, but in my mind not all excuses stink. For example, I like to use my three sisters as an excuse to be vigilantly gender inclusive. I have before and I will again. This time around I'm asking you female Miata owners to help a sorry excuse of a brother (with a trio of amazing sisters) and raise your voices in future issues of this magazine. Ladies, please send me content, stories, and photos to share. And gentlemen, you keep 'em coming, too. Just as the Miata is superbly well-rounded, with masculine and feminine attributes, this magazine can and should be as well, right?

I'm often asked about what kind of stories I'd like to see for this magazine. I have a reply, but I'm not sure how helpful it is. That's the drawback of a vague answer, but I'm going to stick with it:

"I look for a story to do at least one of three things well: Educate, Entertain, Inspire. If the story hits two or all three goals, it has a good chance of getting printed. And if you're having fun writing the story, chances are the reader will enjoy the experience as well."

If you'd like to see your story here, creatively write about your Miata experiences, but also consider

digging into the things adjacent to car culture that bring joy, purpose, and maybe a challenge to your life. Your other interests may align closely to your Miata with, say, activities like running autocross or spending time under the hood sharpening your mechanical abilities. Or, maybe your passions, studies, and skills are, at first glance, seemingly unrelated to cars, but when you squint you notice details and instances that tie those worlds together. In several of the stories on the pages that follow you'll find examples of this. I hope it adds color, spice, and maybe something fresh to your Miata palate.

Like a manual transmission, *Miata Motoring* magazine is a bit of a throwback in this digital age, and we're completely fine with that. But we're also so thankful for the lifetimes of hours of Miata content that's online. In future issues, we'll use some of the space on our pages to steer you toward talented and good-hearted people sharing their know-how and creativity online to make the Miata community a better place. **mm**

## WE WANNA KNOW...

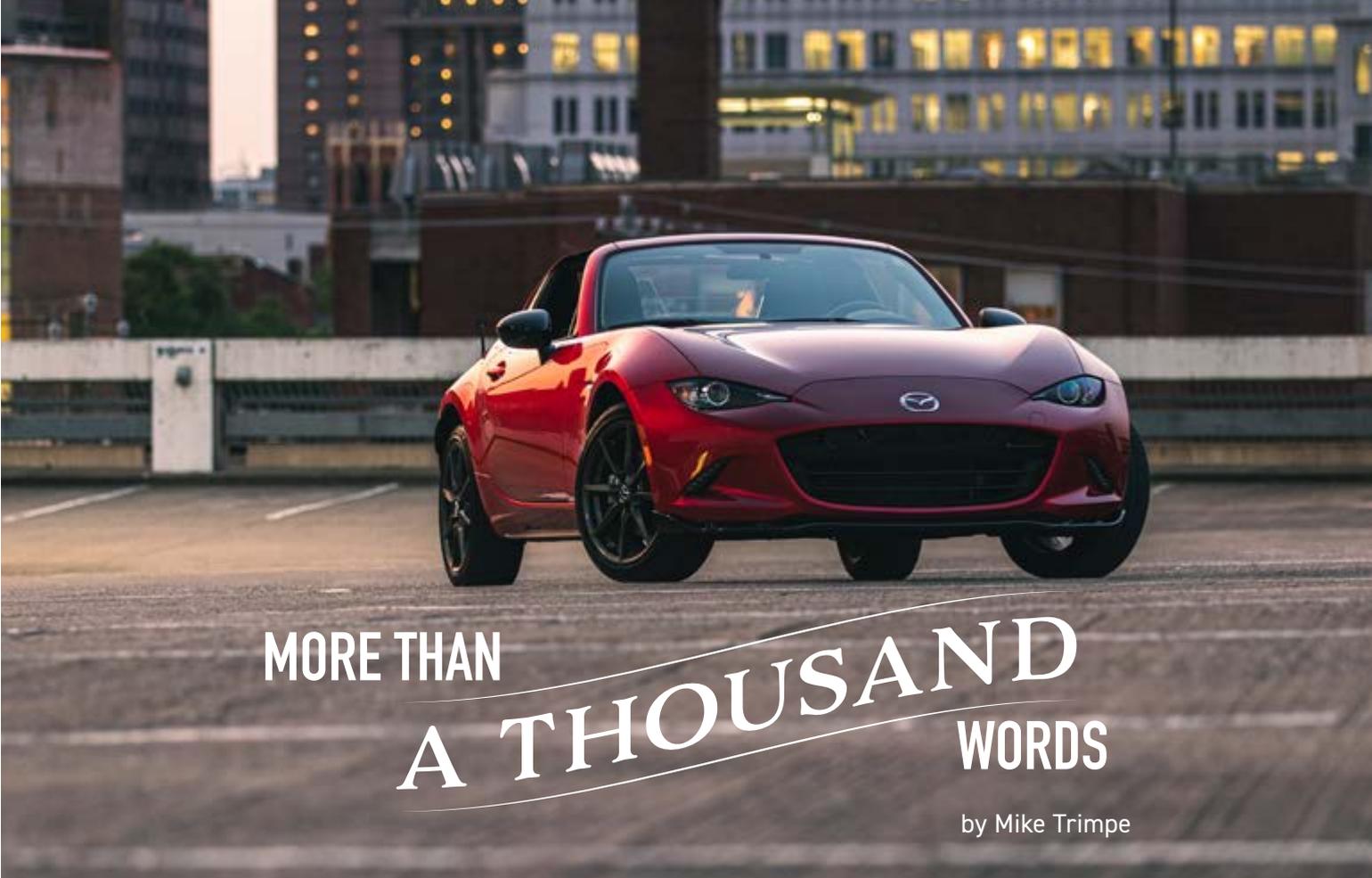
Tell us at [MossMiata.com/best-of-the-web](http://MossMiata.com/best-of-the-web)

What are your Miata bookmarks?

What are your favorite  
online Miata resources?

What Miata YouTube channels  
are you subscribed to?

How about Instagram? Tik Tok?



# MORE THAN A THOUSAND WORDS

by Mike Trimpe

I'm pressed against a concrete barrier atop a parking garage, kneeling amongst scattered cigarette butts and broken glass, sweating from the late evening humidity. I've finally positioned the Miata the way I want it, and I begin clicking my tripod into place, racing against the fading light and a darkening city skyline.

It's a Tuesday night, and I've got work in the morning, but I'm laser focused and brimming with energy.

If you love cars, you know they can surprise you.

Sometimes you want to take a swing at them with a hammer. But often, they grant us unexpected joy, relief, escape, and adrenaline. This is the case for Bill Martin, who lost his wife to pancreatic cancer in May of 2020 as the pandemic bloomed around us.

The disease arrived as it usually does: without warning and aggressively. She passed after a six-month battle, less than two years after she retired. For Bill, after 40 years of marriage, there was seemingly no clear path to solace, no way to heal. Half of who he was had been ripped away. He was sucker-punched and reeling. This isn't a sad story though, so stick with me.

That summer he purchased a '78 MGB. This allowed him to escape from his now empty home, fueling his spirit with fresh air and twisty back roads. After months of this, he decided he wanted something with more pep and less fuss. He added a Miata to his collection and he credits the car with helping him transition into the latest chapter of his life. So I was thrilled that when

I called him about scheduling a shoot, he was all in.

I want to tell you about why this shoot is the kind I live for, and I can't do that without sharing a bit of background.

I grew up loving cars, as my Micro-Machine collection in 1988 would suggest. My dad was constantly restoring American muscle cars, then moved on to British sports cars. Over the years, I learned to appreciate a ride that was balanced for handling and pickup versus laying down brute strength in a straight line.

Often, the aroma of oil and grease would waft into the kitchen from the attached garage and mix with whatever my mom was cooking for dinner.

When I turned 16, I begged my dad to let me buy this '86 Trans Am—black with purple ground effects, and boasting rad undercarriage neons to match. This thing leaked like a sieve, and the whole time I owned it, it

smelled like gasoline and Dollar Store French Vanilla air freshener.

It actually helped me land a girlfriend though, so the gas bill was worth it.

I started learning automotive photography with an iPhone. I'm thankful for this, because iPhone photos are simple in that there are limited ways to manipulate your shot. With no reason to learn about shutter speed, aperture, or ISO, I could focus on practicing composition, and simply press the button. I took a lot of shitty iPhone pictures.

My favorite lever to pull was the saturation; this is the knob that cranks up the color. We all love insanely bold colors, right? Saturation was my hammer, and every photo I snapped was a nail. More color, awesome. Let's make this one crispier. Nice. I did eventually learn the fundamentals of color grading, which is a never-ending journey in itself.

Over time, I drew inspiration from photographers like Amy Shore, Drew Gibson, and Aaron Brimhall, among others. I started soaking up all the knowledge I could, scored a DSLR camera, began taking lots of photos, and followed photographers on Instagram. This last move led to lots of frustration.

It's easy to get sucked into the allure of Instagram photography. Trends erupt then die hard. You watch other photographers getting love, and you want to emulate their style. You find yourself grinding out content to try and win some eyeballs, only to discover that granulated, shaky video clips outperform the photos you share.

The journey to find my own style really began after I stopped caring about all that.

I decided I didn't want to make "car porn" in the sense that I would lug around artificial lighting, take multiple images of the same angle





and stack them together, or spend hours in Photoshop carving out shadows and adding skies that never existed. To me this is sterile, like an ad for male enhancement drugs or laundry detergent. It's technically beautiful, but it doesn't make you feel anything. And while I can appreciate the talent that goes into making these images, I just don't care about them.

I realized I wanted to tell stories that cars create, and for those of us who love them, we understand how deeply connected people and cars can be. They're liberating, frustrating, mysterious, intricate, raw, beautiful, and most interestingly, woven into the most important moments in our lives.

This Miata especially.

I rang Bill, and he agreed to meet on a Tuesday evening in Covington, Kentucky, a bustling blue-collar town

that's springing back to life in the shadow of downtown Cincinnati.

Scouting is the hardest part of automotive photography. You don't want trees or poles growing out of your car. You should avoid trash bins, road cones, and other cars. In short, you're looking for a clean setting that doesn't distract too much from your subject. And, you're dancing with the weather and the activity of the city, so there are plenty of variables to navigate.

In motorsports photography (at the track), it's almost pure journalism. You're capturing a raw moment as an observer. When you schedule an automotive shoot (on the street), you have the luxury of curating your shot. My goal is always to achieve something interesting and beautiful without losing the element of story.

Bill's car is a 2018 ND with an electric hardtop, and the Mazda Soul Red paint glows and shifts in an otherworldly fashion. By all accounts it's a beautiful car. I knew I wanted to showcase the color, so I set out to find locations that would accomplish this. I landed on an upscale hotel near the river constructed from muted beige-red brick and adorned with gold trim. The afternoon light filters in from the left at this location, and there's plenty of hustle and bustle, which worked because I wanted to see the car in an everyday city setting.

When I arrived, a woman in a luxury SUV was parked smack dab in the middle of our shoot location, seemingly just killing time with her hazards on. I waited patiently as my perfectly-planned 7:20 PM lighting began to vanish. I wanted to ask her

to move, but I pictured her elderly husband inching his way outside with a cane and luggage, thankful for the short walk to the car. Finally, I sat down across the road and started snapping practice shots, with my eye about a foot off the pavement. Maybe I creeped her out, but she finally pattered away and we were able to roll the Miata into our spot, with no other cars around. Boom! It was time to go to work.

This yielded the urban life I was after. I set myself up for a long exposure to capture the blur of a passing car. As I finally landed one with the right shutter speed and passing car color, an old man exited the hotel with his dog. I checked my camera display and knew we were finally finished.

The second location was the Roebling Bridge, which was built as a prototype for the world famous Brooklyn Bridge. It's a suspension bridge coated in robin's egg blue, so

between the city backdrop, spiraling cables, and setting sun, I knew the car would burst to life.

I tethered myself to the seat anchors in the back of my Jeep with a repelling harness, clicked on the walkie talkies, and asked my assistant to drive as fast as he (safely) could across the bridge, with Bill following in the Miata. It was time for the requisite rolling shots.

After several bumpy passes from Kentucky to Ohio and back, I realized we were about to lose the sun; I'd spent too much time at the hotel. I didn't need to swap lenses, so I hopped out of the Jeep and sprinted up the road and out onto the bridge to collect panning shots. Panning technique is where your camera follows the car as you shoot in bursts, and everything else in the shot gets blurry. When done right, it portrays energy and intensity. It takes much practice, and you know you've arrived when one shot in every ten is usable.

We wrapped up on top of the aforementioned parking garage as the lights sporadically flickered on inside the skyscrapers behind us. For this last shot, I wanted to score a "hero" image; the one that would be on the movie poster, cape billowing in the wind, muscles bulging. And to achieve this feel, I needed a high level of compression. I'll spare you the tedious technical reasons, but this is why I'm backed up from the car as far as I can go, cornered into the cigarette butt-decorated edge of the parking garage.

I finally nailed the shot, moments before the horrible blue-green garage lamps buzzed to life above us, signaling that the location was no longer usable.

I noticed all evening that when Bill wasn't driving, he was 100 feet down the road on his cell phone. He finally reminded me that this very night was the two-year anniversary of his wife's passing. Once again the



car, as I so often find, brings people together in a way that's difficult to describe other than that, well, it's just kind of magical.

We capped off the evening with Modelos and street tacos, sitting outside in the warm air, watching the nightlife and the motorcycles cruise by.

You never really know if you nailed the shot until you look at it on a larger screen. Still, I knew that even if my photo session wasn't a success, the night was a big win. I started down this storytelling path because of the way cars can impact our lives.

I got what I came for. **mm**



If you have a story you'd like Mike to tell, fire off an email: [coachlightphoto@gmail.com](mailto:coachlightphoto@gmail.com) or visit [CoachlightPhoto.com](http://CoachlightPhoto.com).





# my Childhood with **CARS**

by Tom Matano

Born in 1947, and raised in Tokyo, Tom Matano's childhood influences would one day help steer the design direction of cars from General Motors, BMW, and Mazda—including, of course, the original MX-5 Miata.

**T**he earliest car memory I have was from when I was six years old. The car was my grandfather's. He lived in Nagasaki City, at the southeast end of Kyushu Island, south of the mainland. He had a chauffeur-driven Morris Oxford sedan. And since it was a British car that had the earliest influence on me, my appreciation for them runs deep.

Is it common knowledge that the Japanese political system, constitution, and other infrastructures were modeled after the British? Japan's right-hand drive cars, and its narrow-gauge rail systems, are remnant clues. As a young child in Japan, the English language was taught with British style, pronunciations, spelling, and

grammar. This was switched to an American-English style during my junior high school year by the Ministry of Education in the early 1960s.

My annual trip to visit my grandparents lasted the whole summer. The dark gray Morris met me at the train station. On the weekends, my grandmother took me shopping or to the beach for a picnic lunch. That's where I fell in love with red leather seats—the smell, the touch and feel, the texture of the natural grain.

Because of that Morris interior, and of the wonderful memories of my grandparents, I would opt for leather interiors in all the cars I owned, if it was available.



A young Tom Matano living in Tokyo at approximately four, six, and ten years old.

My grandfather owned an automotive and marine fuel distribution business, fueling piers for the fishing fleets as well as several gas stations for the southwestern region of the island. One of the gas stations was near his house. My uncle worked there, and he would pick me up in his Datsun truck in the morning. I loved to ride in that little truck and sat close to him on the tiny bench seat. The best part of our morning ritual for me was arriving at the gas station first thing in the morning and opening that garage door. The fumes of oil, grease, and fuel that had built up inside overnight escaped out into the morning's sun-warmed air. That aroma was like a friendly greeting. That was it. Ever since I inhaled that air I was a Petrol Head.

I watched my uncle load up his truck for his morning delivery route. Under way, my job was to operate the lever for the turn indicator. It was one of those that the signaling arm came out as I twisted the knob on

the dash. On the rainy days I loved watching and listening to the blades wipe the screen. The windshield wiper was vacuum operated and made a distinctive sound on each stroke.

While I was in Tokyo, our neighbors owned a Lincoln with large red tail lamps. Perhaps, it was a 1953 model. We lived on the back side of a large mansion and their garage was in front of our house. The Lincoln was dark blue and driven by a chauffeur. He washed and waxed the Lincoln in front of the garage often. I was so impressed with depth of shine on that car. There was a Citroen 2CV up the street on the corner of the next block, too. It was owned by an artist who spent some time in Paris, and he brought his car back from France. Also in our neighborhood was an Austin Cambridge that belonged to the General Manager of the Tokyo Giants baseball team. There was quite a wide spectrum of cars to appreciate right around my house, and the effect on me was life-long. **mm**



# A QUICK OLDER CAR REFRESHER COURSE

by David Dicks

I bought a very nice 2000 LS. One owner, original window sticker/documentation, all receipts from new, and only 35,000 miles. With a low-mileage car, it can be a worry that it might have sat for months at a time. Fluids need to be circulated regularly to coat seals, bearing surfaces, etc. I try not to let my cars ever go more than a few weeks without driving them. They need to reach operating temps, so I take them out for at least 10 miles.

In my usual meticulous way I went through the entire car, from front to back, to bring any age-related maintenance items up to date. Here are a few of the details of this process that I hope you may find helpful.

## Oil Change

When to change oil? With modern oil, once a year or every 3-4000 miles.

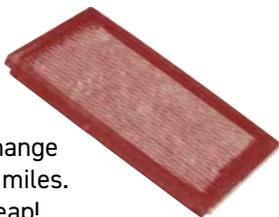
I've already forgotten if the Miata has a gasket on the oil drain plug but—if so—always get a new one. I use only 6-point sockets to remove drain plugs. That way, you're unlikely to damage them.

The oil filter on NAs and NBs is a pain in the butt to get to. Some companies make filters with a nut welded on, which makes it *much* easier to get off. *Don't* use it to tighten the new one on—hand tighten only, but as tight as you can.

I fill the oil filter full of oil before I install it. If you swirl it around, it will be absorbed by the filter media and won't come out when you twist it on. Make sure you oil the new gasket lightly with your finger before installing. And make sure you wipe all the old oil from the housing after removing the old filter.

## Air Filter

A no brainer. I'm overly cautious and change these at 10,000 miles. Hey, they're cheap!



## Coolant

Antifreeze is generally good for about 10 years. My car had it flushed 12 years ago, so it was time. I buy the concentrate and mix it 50/50 with distilled water. Don't use tap water which can have impurities. The radiator in my car looked like new inside. If you have dirty fluid, rusty fluid, or calcium build up, you will need to buy some sort of radiator flush and use the garden hose. I just drained out the old (which looked like new) and added the new. But that was after I changed all the hoses and the thermostat.

Make sure you have the heater on when you first go for a ride to circulate the new coolant. Otherwise, the coolant in the heater core won't be mixed with the new.

## Belts

The two belts—one is for the alternator, the other for A/C and power steering—were also original. They looked pretty good but, again, I don't trust them. Replacements were inexpensive. The belts were also too tight. You should be able to deflect them easily—at least 1/4 of an inch. Anyway,



the belts are easy to change. There are two bolts/nuts that must be loosened on the alternator, and on the power steering pump—one in front and one in back. The one behind the alternator is difficult to get to, and can only be loosened from underneath the car. There's not much clearance, either, so you will need a short manual-socket T bar. A long wrench might not be able to get enough torque on it. And you're more likely to strip the bolt head, which would be catastrophic, given its location.

Once loose, **DO NOT REMOVE THESE BOLTS/NUTS**. Then, you will see a bolt going horizontally across—from left to right—in front of you, on both units. Loosen the bolt enough, and you can pull the belts off.

While the belts are off, spin the alternator, the power steering pump, and the A/C pulley. Make sure they're moving easily and freely. If it wobbles you have a problem, and you should replace the offending unit.

With the new belts properly installed (make sure they are completely seated in each pulley), tighten snugly, but don't overtighten the four bolts/nuts you loosened before. **mm**

**MIATA MECHANICAL MAESTROS - WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

From basic to hardcore technical advice, Miata Motoring readers of all skill levels appreciate learning from those with firsthand experience. Please help the community with a how-to article (with photos) on a project, big or small, that you accomplished.

**Submit your article to: [MossMiata.com/miatamotoring](http://MossMiata.com/miatamotoring)**

# TWO MINUTE MAGIC

by Cory Gordinier



Living in southeastern Michigan, it's near impossible to not be affected by car culture. The Big Three and their suppliers have an influence on everything, from town size to road conditions, to employment opportunities, to education, and my life was certainly no exception. I grew up the son of a life-long GM employee, and I was taught how to drive in the C3 Corvette my dad owned and personally maintained since 1977.

In 2012, I bought what I believed was my "dream car"—a 2007 Mustang that I had been drooling over since I first saw it premier at the North American International Auto Show. While it wasn't a Camaro, and he

wasn't in love with the fact that I *insisted* on buying a manual, it was something similar to his beloved Corvette, and he knew I'd baby it. In fact, I took it to another level—I taught myself proper detailing, and once spent an entire day painstakingly removing every single swirl mark from her, restoring her to the same state of perfection I saw her under the lights at NAIAS.

In 2018, I sold it. Why?

I tried drag racing at the local strip, and while I had a fun enough time, I found the process of waiting for a run, not knowing who I'd be paired against, and obsessing over tweaking my engine to be unpleasantly tedious.



A friend convinced me to just try a track day at GingerMan Raceway in South Haven, Michigan. I got hooked. Hard. Soon, I was obsessing over tweaking my brakes without breaking the bank, and looking at how much suspension packages would cost for the Mustang, all while still wincing every time a pebble off the track bounced against her perfect paint.

There's a known solution for "I want to go to the race track and have a good time, and I don't want to go broke doing it." In January, 2017, I bought a \$1,900 1991 Miata—untouched, but with all the joys that come with a sub-two-grand car.

It dog-legged the entire drive home. The top let in as much rain as it kept out. The battery was flat dead, and any time I stopped for gas I needed a jump or a bump. It had electrical gremlins and a couple spots of surface rust. It blew clouds of smoke every start up, and the clutch was starting to slip. I don't think the previous owners had ever done much maintenance; one hint being, the driver's side mirror showed a trace of a butterfly sticker any time it fogged up.

I taught myself how to really wrench on her. Paid a friend in beer, pizza, and a little extra money to help

me pull the trans and put in a new clutch. Paid another friend to help me do my first ever timing belt and water pump change. I threw in a roll bar and new set of wheels and tires and started raking up the track miles—on a completely blown, 200,000-mile OEM suspension. Looked damn funny when going over an elevation change.

She started getting driven more and more. Sunny day forecast, but the morning is wet? Take the Miata, leave the Mustang in the garage. Traveling out to a brewery or winery? The Miata top goes down. Cars and Coffee, but it's overcast? Miata. I probably had some new changes I wanted to show off anyway.

I sold the Mustang because it started collecting dust. In a year, it had gone from beloved dream car to just sitting in the garage day after day, unloved, because I was always out and about in the Miata.

I kept working on that Miata, kept pushing her, kept learning where my limits as a driver, and her limits as a car were. I drove her to the track, and I knew she'd get me home. I kept setting goals, kept pushing a little harder. I remember driving the hardest I ever had, and feeling completely overwhelmed in every single turn, feeling they were coming at me too fast, and wondering if I was actually doing a good job or if I was better off "in rhythm" and not pushing as much.

My goal: A sub 2:00 at GingerMan. Not impressive if you have a massive V8, as that track favors high-horsepower cars, but absolutely hauling in a 1.6L Miata—and certainly faster than I ever dared push the Mustang. I wanted to do it without any engine modification. Sure, I had some go-faster suspension bits, and I was occasionally trying Spec-Miata take-off Hoosiers, but that'll only get you so far on a high-horsepower track.

Never succeeded at it, actually. Not with the 1.6.

I blew up the stock engine, shooting bits of rod through the

block at turn 10B. It was a pretty expensive lesson in what truly constitutes driving at “10/10ths”—not recommended on a 200,000-mile engine. It was a rather embarrassing two-hour tow truck ride home. Yes, the one time I convinced my parents to come out and watch me run.

Since then, she's gotten a 1.8L with all forged internals, courtesy of Immortan Automotive, a race shop in southeastern Michigan that specializes in Miatas. I've since learned A LOT about engine replacement and rebuilding, thanks to that experience and their assistance. This motor was able to get me under the magic two-minute mark in 2020. To celebrate I did a “shoey,” Danny Ricciardo style.

I have over fifty events logged in at GingerMan now. I actually spend the majority of my time instructing others at GingerMan and other local tracks like Waterford Hills, which is very popular with Miatas and known as an “equalizer” for favoring handling over horsepower. I teach with an emphasis on being able to drive home at the end, under your own power, and not on the back of a flatbed.

Responsible racing means knowing what 10/10ths is, and more importantly, knowing how to gradually turn up the dial and approach it. You see, driving at 10/10ths is easy to define. You feel like every corner is coming at you a little too quickly, and then you're through and immediately second-guessing if you hit the apex. You're judging your speed and RPM and wondering if you shifted right on every braking zone or straight. You're throwing into the pot everything both you and the car have, and only when the checkered flag waves does it all catch up to you. You pray that you can drive home at the end of it all with your car still in one piece, and that a connecting rod didn't move on the Z-axis of an engine facing X and Y.

7/10ths. That's a number that I teach my students to aim for. It's spirited Sunday driving. It's driving our little roadsters the way they want to be driven naturally. It's knowing that you have more to give, but you aren't pushing so hard that you're sweating and panting at the end of it. Knowing how to dial that up just a hair, and to analyze where you might be able to shave some time, *that's* the key.

As for my little \$1,900 Miata—on top of that freshly built, forged-internals engine, she now has a Garrett GT2560R turbocharger running about 12lbs of boost. And as of March 2022, I've installed Supermiata Xidas and a Nine Lives Racing rear wing. In fact, the only things still stock on that car are the wiring, body, and subframes; everything else has been replaced at some point.

I'm now pushing myself to new limits, chasing down sub-1:50 lap times at GingerMan this season (the pace of Corvettes, Mustangs, and other high-horsepower cars), and I'm enjoying helping others find their own balance by teaching them everything I've learned from this little car.

**mm**



# THE UNDERDOG

by Chris Hill



It all started with a video game. No joke. In college I played a racing game called *Initial D*, and I was drawn to the Miata for being under-powered but able to handle like a champ. Who doesn't love an underdog?

I found a black NA on Craigslist with a hard top and BBS wheels. As luck would have it, an LE. I investigated further and found its sequence number, and also discovered that the previous owner had done some awful things to it. He rattle canned the entire interior, including the beloved seats. He replaced the battery with one from a truck. It was "secured" with pieces of wood, but if I cornered too hard it would leave its post and disconnect. Most of the things that made it such a unique car, like the Mazda Sensory Sound System, were missing. This was just so sad.

A week into owning my little black "Raven," I noticed an issue with the

clutch. I was new to driving a stick but even I could tell something wasn't right. I took it to my trusted mechanic and he said, "Who did this? Looks like a backyard job." Raven did not have an easy life up to that point. She leaked coolant, overheated a lot, was broken down, left on the curb, and towed home more times than I want to remember. I've had to rely on so many people to help me with this car.

I began my journey to restore her the best I could. I found some nice red seats on the east coast and shipped them westward. After scouring the web for months I found an MSSS. (I now have four, lol.) I even found a like-new RED dashboard from a crashed LE in Napa, California. My dad and I went and got it and installed it, but not without difficulty. All these dashes crack—as the plastic ages it gets frightfully brittle. We had it in most of the way and... *Snap*. Out of frustration I gave it a little extra bump, and cracked it again. A home-

grown repair job later, and eventually we got the new dash in.

All that being said, this little gem (still a diamond in the rough) has done so many amazing things. She's driven from California up into Kamloops in Canada, across the TC1 to Calgary, and then back home through the states. She's been autocrossed, slid around skidpads, careened through canyons... and she's been crashed, stolen, and recovered, thank goodness. She has been around in my life so long that I have countless small stories to tell.

When my wife and I drove to Canada we didn't have cell service, so our last contact point prior to our hotel in Cache Creek was from somewhere just south of the border. It was a nice day to start, but as the sun set it got quite cold. We couldn't stop. If we pulled over to put the roof up, we would get stuck behind a convoy of trucks and likely miss our check-in time. We cranked up the heater

and bared down. It was pitch black with switch-back roads and I began to smell fire, thankfully not the car but the remains of a forest fire were all around us. It was straight up out of an end-of-the-world action movie. Nothing was ablaze but there were bits of fire and debris, and smoldering trees surrounding the road. We came around a bend and I saw the road had a bunch of red dust. It was the overspray from flame retardant spread throughout the forest. We couldn't avoid it. So I told my wife to close her eyes and hold her breath as we went through. Granted, now I know it's not toxic, but in the split-second moment you have no idea.

There is an old episode of *Top Gear*, Richard Hammond is interviewing disabled service men competing in the Dakar race, they are working on the vehicle, and at one moment one of the guys breaks down crying. I related hard to that scene. In 2019 my wife and I split up, off and on, and we eventually divorced. Working on the car became like therapy to me. That emotional attachment is real. When my car was stolen that same year, I felt a piece of my heart had been torn out, and when CHP called saying they found it, I can't describe the relief. I mean, you see cars stolen and chopped and destroyed, and mine came back, washed and full of oil.

Having this Miata has changed me. I'm much more eager to work on this car than I was with any others, and I find myself wanting to help others with their cars before they give up. If a problem comes up I'll always say, "Let's see if we can fix it." Knowing how components work on a simple car like a Miata has helped me help friends with more modern cars because the fundamentals are the same. Their cars just have more wires. Raven is getting older and with age comes issues. With older cars you have choices: get a new car and avoid those issues, you can ignore the issues and roll the dice, or you can maintain an older car and learn a

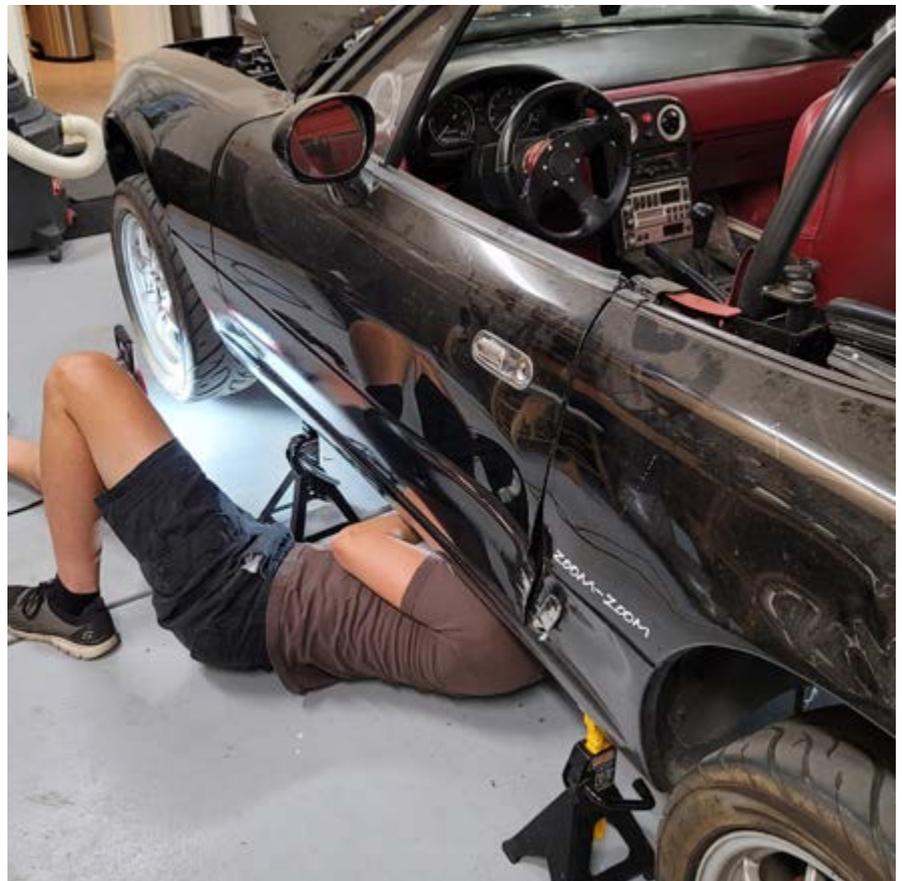
thing or two along the way, about the car, about yourself.

On a road trip to Yosemite I noticed the temp gauge climbing quickly, so I kept having to pull over. I stopped for lunch and some bikers noticed my hood up. They came over and said, "Hey is that your Miata? What's going on?" After I explained he said, "if you turn on the AC the radiator fan will kick on and that may help." Drawing in motoring enthusiasts in a time of crisis is something cars like Miatas just do. Fun cars are relatable, they start conversations you actually want to have. And when they're fun to work on, too, that opens up a whole new world of opportunities.

Raven now has her own little following on my YouTube MiataDIYguy channel. I have learned so much owning this car, not only about DIY projects, but also car control and exploring handling limits while

running hot laps on epic tracks like Sears Point and Laguna Seca with other Miata enthusiasts. These life experiences are all thanks to this amazing little car. It is hard to believe I have owned her for ten years. I hope I can finish my vision for her one day, but in the meantime, I plan to keep fixing her up and having fun. **mm**

Check out Chris' YouTube channel "MiataDIYguy" for tips on Miata maintenance and repair projects.



# Live & Learn

by Cash Pac



**M**y love for everything about cars started at a young age. Long before I could legally drive. I knew I wanted a fun, sporty car that was a blast to drive. I also wanted something that I could learn with, not just driving skills but the mechanics, too. At 17, when most guys my age were pointlessly drooling over Ferraris, Porsches, and other expensive and exotic cars, I was making my dream car a reality. I bought my 1993 Miata with around 200k miles—and a few rust holes—for just \$1000. Since then, I learned how to weld, paint, perform maintenance work, and modify the car extensively. I'm now 24, and I love this car even more than the day I got it. I guess that'll happen when you spend countless hours on it, and quite a bit of money. It's not exactly a \$1000 Miata anymore.

I built the car to fit me. I've touched almost every part of it and enjoyed (almost) every project. Of course, there have been some frustrations along the way and challenges to overcome. One of the first was the rust holes that are so commonly described in for-sale ads as "typical New England Rust." Being a well-loved, but not-so-well-cared-for Connecticut car, it needed attention. It was this that enabled me to make my first ever attempt to cut, shape, and weld metal. My dad showed me what he learned over the years,

and together we worked our way through this car's issues. We cut out the driver's side rocker that had the massive hole, only to reveal more rust underneath, on the more structural layer of metal. So we hacked, wire brushed, and sanded away until there was nothing left but clean metal. This internal rust turned out to be a blessing in disguise because it meant that my first attempts at welding wouldn't be seen by anyone. Ever. After cutting new metal, shaping and welding on the inside of the rocker, which went well and was plenty strong, just not pretty, we tackled the outside. At this point my welds were improving, but far from perfect. Let's just say it didn't look great. Then, my dad said something that I think about every time I weld, even though my welds have improved LOTS since this first project. "You don't need to be a great welder if you can do good work with a grinder." So that's what I did. After grinding the rocker area smooth, it was good to go. It actually looked really good if I do say so myself! From there it was relatively smooth sailing. After some epoxy primer, red spray paint and bedliner to match the bottom black stripe, you'd hardly know this car ever had "typical New England Rust"!

Project after project, my confidence and skill set has grown, and I've built something I'm truly proud of. The car now has a full

custom interior with race seats and hand-stitched accents. My father is an automotive upholsterer, so working on this together was a very special and enjoyable part about this build. Beyond that, every suspension bushing has been replaced, and adjustable coilovers added. As of 2020, it has a turbo kit that I put together on a budget, while I had an excess of time at home. I had no experience with engine modifications this extensive, but I knew it would be rewarding. I wanted to challenge and entertain myself, and to see what I could learn along the way.

The first start up after my custom turbo kit was installed was a big moment. After months of research, ordering parts, making custom ones, and installing them to the best of my ability, the time had come. This was the first true test of many hours of work. I was nervous, and as if out of a movie, it was about to thunderstorm right as I pushed the car out of the garage to give it a shot. I turned the key and as the engine cranked, I got nothing but a puff of smoke out of the comical (and thankfully temporary) hood stack exhaust. So I tried again. It sputtered to life, and continued running on its own. With a few taps of the throttle, I got a bit more smoke, as it was poorly tuned at this point. But it didn't stall out. My car was alive, and it was turbocharged! I'll never forget hearing the turbo spool



for the first time, and the feeling of excitement my brother and I shared over this moment.

Since then, I wrapped up this phase of the build, and the results have been fantastic. With custom intercooler piping, a full 2.5-inch exhaust, and a standalone ECU, the car makes all the right noises. The Miata has always given me great driving experiences, and now they happen with more velocity.

It's amazing how a car can make me, and so many others, happy. Miatas are so simple, pure, and such fun. There's no end to the reasons we love these cars. I wanted to capture this passion and everything the Miata platform has to offer and share it with the community of enthusiasts. I started a YouTube channel called "CashedOutCars" to offer advice, experience, and hopefully inspire others to maintain or modify their own cars. Viewers can join me on track days or in the garage, with a range of Miata-based activities. I've had four Miatas so far, so I've got lots of material to share. One car I owned for less than 24 hours. It was a free parts car, but that still counts. My original 1993, however, I plan to keep forever. With it I've made tons of friends and great memories. It's truly a special thing. **mm**



You can find Cash's Miata project videos on his YouTube channel "CashedOutCars."

# Once upon a time in **Miatoland**

by Andrea Mancini



I fell in love in 1989, but I didn't have my own Miata until 1998. It was a black NA 1.6, my first roadster. Two years later I sold it for a limited edition NB 1.8. I found myself missing the beautiful pop-up lights and swore I would never again sell a Miata.

Now I have 49 Miatas. Some say it's the most important Miata collection in the world. I won't disagree.

I live in a special place. Central Italy and the Umbria region is a driver's paradise. Rolling hills and winding roads connect farmland and vineyards with quaint towns built of stone hundreds of years ago. The pace of life is slow, unless you're

driving spiritedly, and the people you meet are so friendly.

Seven years ago, I decided to follow a dream and created a resort destination that combined all the goodness of this location with the perfect vehicle with which to experience it. Miatoland was born.

I really don't like compromises, and I believe great attention to every detail is—like the Miata—always the answer. For me, Miatoland is more passion than business, and I don't want to follow normal business rules in its management.

I'm 53 years old and have been passionate about cars and motorbikes

To learn more about Andrea Mancini's Miata paradise, or to book a room for the ultimate retreat, visit [www.Miatoland.it](http://www.Miatoland.it)

for as long as I can remember. I raced go-karts and some Formula series cars, too. And I've always worked for automotive companies including Ford, Jaguar, and Land Rover. With Miataland, I wanted to share my passion for the Miata and the culture surrounding it with lots of enthusiasts. Every Miata has its own soul and character, and the driver can feel it. My unique collection takes this experience to the next level.

For every day of a guest's stay, a driving tour is included, and you will fall in love with this experience. Trust me, it's been tested thousands of times. Every car in the collection is special in its own way, however, not every car is available to drive on a tour. Some cars are very rare and really something to see, including three M2 models (1001, 1002, and 1028). These are hand built, full of gorgeous details, and the story behind each is one of passion, no compromises, and of the Japanese culture. And that's only the beginning.



The collection also includes the MegaMonster, the Mazdaspeed turbo, BBR turbo, Eunos Tokyo Limited, S-Limited, VR limited (A, B), R-Limited, Miata LE, turbo Flying Miata, M-Edition, Openrace NC, and a Yamamoto signature ND. Every roadster in the collection has its own story and I am happy to share it.

For your driving tours, you can explore on your own, or we will gladly offer suggestions of places to visit and roads to drive. For example, you should go to Montefalco, home of the famous Sagrantino red wine, and see almost all of Umbria from a mountaintop. And you can then visit Bevagna, a beautiful village with a small river and historic medieval houses, churches, and parks. You can have a great lunch there with typical Umbrian food—wild pork, fresh handmade pasta, vegetables and potatoes—in a local restaurant with tables outside in the square.

Then, the drive back to Miataland is incredible because you will pass



through the middle of a forest, followed by breathtaking views of colorful vineyards. It's a small road and the Miata is the perfect tool to take in the aroma of nature with the wind on your face.

Once back at the resort, you will find five unique rooms dedicated to the Miata, brimming with details: from the factory-matched room color accents to the driver's chair in the room, or even the very special bed built on top of a Miata PPF-inspired frame. And you'll also find an extensive library of Miata related books and magazines that you can flip through as you relax by the swimming pool under the Italian sun.

For me, the most important key to Miataland is that we keep our promises. There is a delightful and surprising effect when you are here in person. I think the care within the



details, the overall resort appearance, and the relationship we establish with guests is something special. We have lots of stories from our guests/friends at Miataland, and the Miata plays an important role in them. I think about how each enthusiast reacts after the tour with our car. It's really not important which one they're driving. The smile on their faces when they arrive back home says it all. The feeling is so great that almost everyone who doesn't already own a Miata starts to think about buying one of their own. We'll even help them shop for one; we know local clubs, Mazda retailers, and websites to search. Just don't ask to buy one of mine. They're not for sale. **mm**



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