

# MICKEY THOMPSON PERFORMANCE TIRES & WHEELS CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

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Founded by the legendary Mickey Thompson and friend Gene McMannis in 1963, Mickey Thompson Performance Tires & Wheels (Mickey Thompson) today announced it is celebrating 50 years of innovation and product excellence in 2013. Thompson and McMannis started with a visionary way to design, manufacture and test high performance tires – a legacy that remains the backbone of the company today.

“This is an incredible milestone for our company,” stated Ken Warner, VP Sales & Marketing, Mickey Thompson. “We want to celebrate this achievement and commemorate this anniversary by honoring both our history and the future of our company.”

## **A Brief History of Innovation**

In 1963, the company began with the development of a new open-wheel racing tire that had a softer compound and a lower profile giving racers a lower center of gravity and greater stability, and then offered a 12-inch wheel to complement the tire. The following year, a 15-inch tire and wheel combination was added and Mickey Thompson became the first tire company to offer 50-, 60- and 70-series “Indy Profile” tires.

In the ‘70s, the legendary ET Drag tires for the strip were introduced and the company

expanded research and development efforts to include tires for the Thompson-founded SCORE off-road and Mickey Thompson stadium short-course racing series. Thompson used the specially designed truck tires in 1982 to win the Baja 1000 and set a new record time for the event.

The company introduced the Sportsman tire in 1982, the widest high-performance street legal tire ever made, and in 1991, the Sportsman Pro tire was launched. With its specially designed tread, unique “hot and sticky” drag tire compound and flexible wrinkle wall construction, the Sportsman Pro provided Pro Street racers with a street legal tire that could be used for drag racing. The tire was inducted into the Hot Rod Magazine Speed Parts Hall of Fame in 2011.



In the early 2000s, product development continued with the introduction of a diverse

group of truck and off-road radial tires, as well as a full range of wheels. In 2008, the company introduced the Pro-5 Drag wheel offering the lightest practical weight and the greatest strength available from any aluminum wheel today. In the past several years alone, Mickey Thompson has introduced numerous new tires and wheels for street, strip, truck, off-road and motorcycle including several award winners. (See <http://www.mickeythompsonstires.com/about.php>)

## **Mickey Thompson Today and in The Future**

A recognized leader in high performance tires and wheels, Mickey Thompson has product distributors in more than 60 countries and thousands of dealer locations worldwide. The company also supports dozens of racing sanctioning bodies representing drag racing, short-course off-road racing, vintage funny car and motorcycle drag racing categories. The Mickey Thompson brand is known in every sportsman drag racing class for helping racers earn countless records and world championships. Cooper Tire & Rubber Company's purchase of the company in 2003 has enhanced product innovation and growth opportunities.

Today, Mickey Thompson innovation is reflected in products like the new Baja Pro short-course racing tire, as well as award-winning products like the new Street Comp ultra-high performance street tire and the all-terrain and off-road Baja ATZP3 Radial. The company's vision for the future extends to the development of complete solutions like the new Enhanced Stance System (ESS), combining tires and wheels for specific applications.

“Our company continues to focus on product development to meet the changing needs of the vehicle and racing landscape,” stated Ken Warner, VP Sales & Marketing, Mickey Thompson. “Today's drag racing vehicles are faster, higher horsepower and lighter weight than ever before, and short-course, off-road vehicles are custom built for unique track conditions and course demands. Every vehicle and racing application requires specialized tire and wheel designs, and we remain dedicated to providing excellent products to meet those needs.”

## **About Mickey Thompson the Man**

Mickey Thompson was born Dec. 7, 1928. He bought his first car at age 14, and rebuilt several cars before he was old enough to drive. Thompson's racing experience began on the streets, but he quickly took his love of racing to the dry lakebeds nearby, and later to the Bonneville Salt Flats. In 1954, Thompson was the first to develop what is now known as a "sling-shot" dragster - a racing chassis that placed the driver behind the rear axle and coupled the engine and transmission directly to the differential of the vehicle.

In the 1960s, Thompson focused his racing and vehicle design on open-wheel racing. He also built the Challenger I Streamliner and was the first American to go over 400 miles per hour earning him a new nickname – The Speed King. In 1968, Thompson and a team of fabricators built the Challenger II with the goal of exceeding the existing land speed record.

Thompson devoted himself to building and racing funny cars and expanded to off-road racing in the 1970s. He later founded SCORE International and began building his own versions of off-road sprint cars for his indoor stadium off-road racing series.

Tragically, in 1988, Mickey Thompson and his wife Trudy were killed. An innovative racecar driver, designer and promoter, Mickey Thompson held 485 national and international speed and endurance records at the time of his passing. Today, his son Danny Thompson is rebuilding the Challenger 2 to create the Challenger 2.5 in hopes of exceeding his father's existing land speed record. His family and the company he founded remain dedicated to his legacy.