

Delays can't hold back Luftgekühlt

15/10/2020 Celebration of air-cooled Porsche sports cars continues on smaller scale until next year

It was supposed to be the start of a new era. Like so many things in 2020, however, the world had other plans.

The seventh edition of Luftgekühlt, the hotly anticipated annual gathering of all things air-cooled in the Porsche world, was scheduled to move to the east coast for the first time after originating in southern California, and even expanding to global meet-ups. Instead of drawing enthusiasts to Durham, North Carolina, however, the once-delayed festival had to postpone Luft 7 until 2021.

"It was a city and a venue that we were really excited about. 2020 had different plans," said Patrick Long, one of Luft's original founders along with Howie Idelson.

While car shows are among the many large scale events to go on hiatus, Long, the only North American Porsche Motorsport Factory Driver, has stayed busy behind the wheel as the racing season has resumed, albeit often times without an audience. He and the Luft team have also stayed occupied.

"We still have the ambition to be back there as soon as the proverbial dust settles, but right now we're just sort of watching and waiting, and working really hard in the background," said Long. "We'll be visible before the end of the year, just in different formats."

An average Luft in the States regularly attracts attendees from more than 40 states and 20 countries. Each edition features highly curated sets of rare Porsche sports cars on display, as well as a unique location announced just prior to the opening day. In 2019, Luft 6 took over a Universal Studios backlot for the occasion.

Without being able to stage the gathering they had planned, the Luft team has been reevaluating its options. That includes looking back to the original Luft vibe, which functioned more like a pop-up.

"They'll be some of those type of events, revisiting our past and just trying to look for ways to maybe come to our followers versus asking them to get on a plane," said Long.

In the meantime, classic Porsche fans will have plenty to look forward to. Long said the team finished up and published its second hardbound coffee table book, this version covering the fourth, fifth and sixth Luft. It also is anticipating the release of an officially-licensed Luftgekühlt line of Mattel Hot Wheels.

"It's really special because it reaches such a worldly demographic," said Long. "Mattel told me that more kids put their hands on Hot Wheels than have internet connection around the world. Luft has always

been about capturing a new audience and celebrating the legends, and I think Hot Wheels does something very similar with their designers and their heritage.”

As for grown-up toys on display, Luft will have a small pop-up at the 2020 Petit Le Mans at Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta in honor of a recently-announced racing series. Earlier in the year, Luft also made a trip to Zell, Austria, to one of the home towns of the Porsche family, for a collaboration with the GP Ice Race.

Along with the camaraderie, the return of frantic hours before an event also bring back something Long continues to miss. After months of preparation, there's always a moment of reflection before the gatherings open.

Set-up: Luft in Munich

“It's very sacred somewhat emotional. It's quiet and you're alone in a non-museum setting with some really special road and race cars. The diversity of what we end up with on our hands – we usually have about 50 feature cars under our responsibility for that 24 hours before – a lot of cars that I've not driven or even seen,” said Long. “That's kind of our happy hour, usually about three in the morning on the eve of the show when we have everything in place. We just have a beer and relax for one split second.”

Luft will continue to connect the present with the past, and do its best to captivate today's youth and future generations as it plans its comeback in the coming years.

“If I had my wish it would be right back where we had laid everything out,” said Long of the cancelled November gathering. “We're watching and waiting, and being responsible. It's just not quite time for the big show.”

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