

SALT FEVER:

AAA RACING'S
CRF100F



The tale of four enterprising backyard mechanics from Byron Bay, who took an 8hp bog-stock CRF100 child's toy all the way to 94mph along the Lake Gairdner salt plains...

ALEX HORVATH SIMON DAVIDSON

When Benjamin Bonneville, a United States Army Officer, first crested that craggy Utah peak and spotted the stark expanse of the Bonneville Salt Flats back in the early 1830s, it's unlikely that he could have envisaged the legacy that his namesake would impart on the world of land-speed motorsport for years to come. "Salt Fever" is what drives the sport, a common affliction that's been known to drive tough men to despair, and tougher men to tears. Born from man's desire to push our machines to the very edge of engineering capability, the sport of land-speed racing has become a true-to-life representation of the kind of hard-nosed passion that's best illustrated in the well-known motion picture *World's Fastest Indian*. This "need for speed" and love of high-octane two-wheeled machines is precisely what drove *Transmoto's* very own salt-crust lensman, Simon Davidson, to South Australia's Lake Gairdner for yet another year

of the home-grown, dinky-die, true-blue version of Bonneville: Speedweek.

While Simon expected he'd be seeing the usual blend of hot-rodged Trumpys, Streamliners and other twin-engined speed demons, what he didn't expect to see was the tattoo-covered Afflick brothers from Byron Bay with their blown-fuel CRF100. This bike began its life as a dead-stock CRF100F rescued from the scrap-heap, and the Afflicks successfully converted it into a record-breaking, blown-fuel, supercharged weapon that pulls all the way to 94mph under 16psi of salt-eating, forced-induction boost. The bike puts out 21hp at the rear wheel and is on its way to smashing not only the Australian, but also both the Bonneville and World, 100cc land-speed records.

Off the back of their super-successful six-run, six-record Speedweek in Lake Gairdner, we sat down with AAA Racing's JP Afflick to chat about how this unlikely dirt bike went from concept to the record books...





Can you start out by running us through exactly what AAA Racing is all about?

JPA: Back in 2010, my old man Warren, my brother Mitch, and I were over in Bonneville for the first time ever. We were blown away by the bikes that we spotted over there, and one night when we were sitting back at our tents, out there on the salt, we all just kind of looked at each other and said, 'We have to get involved. We need to build something when we get home'. We came back later that year and just fell back into our regular routines and nothing came of it. But in 2012, the three of us packed up again and went back to Bonneville; I guess you'd say that after that trip, the motivation hit us. We originally went looking

for a little CB100, which is a twin-engine bike they made back in the '70s. Thanks to the hipster bike-mod revival those things are getting really expensive, so we made the call to pick up a single-cylinder CRF100F. That's when this project was born.

What's AAA stand for?
Afflick, Afflick and Afflick.

That makes sense. So when did the project really start to take shape? When were you thinking, 'Right, this is really happening'?

Well, we bought the bike about December 2012, but after Christmas and all that got in the way, we didn't really start working on the thing until about mid-January, 2013. That was only a bit over twelve months before Speedweek. We started slowly, but as the year



Above: From 8hp backyard runabout to salt-eating monster; a transformation made possible by three backyard mechanics from the NSW township of Byron Bay.

went on, we realised ... shit, we really have a lot to do!

How'd you and your brother get involved in land-speed racing?

Our old man, Warren, was into drag racing up on the Gold Coast right through the '70s. He had the first ever 500cc H1 Mach III Kawasaki – this two-stroke three-cylinder beast that they called "The triple with the ripple" – that landed in Australia and he used to race the thing up the drag strip. It used to blow off all the Honda 750 fours with no worries at all. Then he saw that movie, *On Any Sunday*. I think it only had about 15 seconds of drag racing in an hour-and-a-half, but it had plenty of off-road riding – he was hooked for life.

Were bikes always a big part of your lives while growing up?

Yeah, they were for sure. I had a little air-cooled YZ80 that I used to rip around the family property on. Mitch lived with Dad, so he was always around bikes. He is really into downhill mountain bike riding, so naturally he's been around dirt bikes, too. The old man didn't really have a street bike after the '80s, but he's stayed involved in drag racing for a while. I guess that's where the idea to get into salt racing came from.

So having this project must bring the family together a lot more now, right?

Yeah, that's a really important aspect of the whole thing, I guess. You know, as you get older you start seeing your family less and less, so this bike's been a great catalyst to bring us together for a few beers every week.

We work on the bike and talk about life – or just whatever, really.

Why a CRF100?

We really wanted to keep the bike simple from the get-go. After we gave up the idea of the CB100, we thought about what other bikes would work. We knew we could take a two-stroke YZ85 – or something like that – and get 18hp or so out of it straight away, but that was going to take the fun out of it. Plus, you can't supercharge a two-stroke. Then we came across this CRF100 for sale and looked into the engine in a bit more detail. It's a simple enough single-cylinder donk; we knew that a blown single would be a good base, plus they sound great with that "pop" note you get out of them. The Hondas have always been known to have a strong bottom-end

From left: Paul Macleod, Warren Afflick, Mitchell Afflick, Joanne Fysh and JP Afflick ... and their record-breaking, salt fever-inducing 94mph labour of love.

Above: Back in the '70s and '80s, Warren Afflick raced his machines down the Brisbane drag strip. With a rad-dad like that, and a mum willing to give him a push-back in satin pants like those, it's no wonder they spawned sons like they did.



among the drag race community. Brands like Tagawa and Kitaco from Japan make some pretty cool after-market bore kits for these things, so we knew that down the track we could look into something like that.

Can you explain to us what 'Blown Fuel' means?

Blown refers to the induction type. In our case, it's supercharged, so the fuel is 'blown'. In land-speed racing, you can either run 'gas' or the 'fuel' class. 'Fuel' means we can run any type of fuel that we like. Whether that's nitrous, methanol or Avgas, it doesn't matter. The 'gas' class only allows regular 98 octane petrol (gasoline).

And what about the two different classes you guys race in?

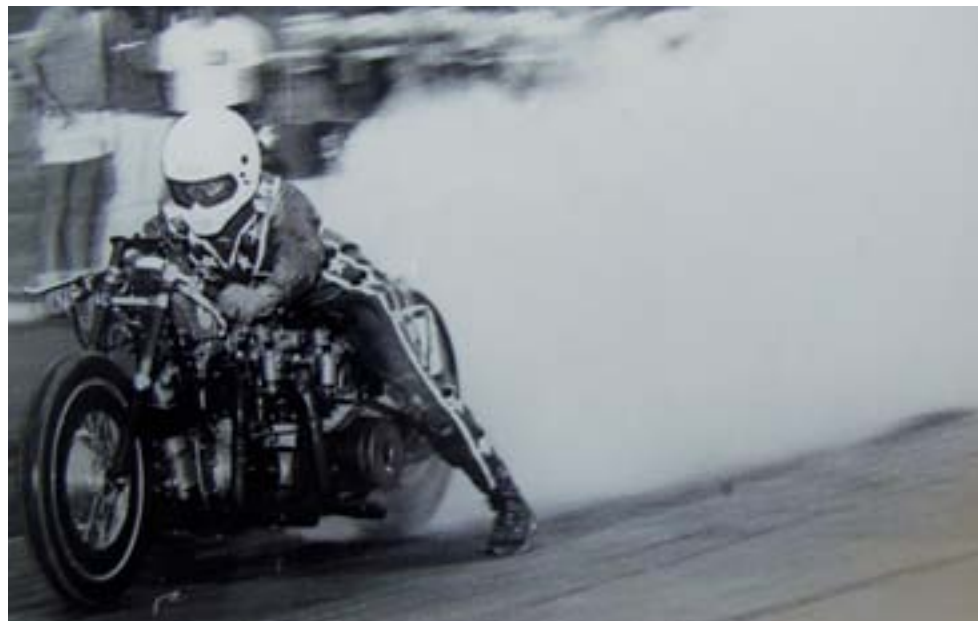
Well, there are two classes that we

ran in at Speedweek. The first is the ABF-100, which is the Special Construction Blown-Fuel 100cc class. Special construction just refers to what you do to the frame. If you buy a bike like a CR, and customise the thing, then it's modified. So in Bonneville, we'd run the modified class because we are running a stock frame that's been slightly changed. Special construction refers to something that you actually build yourself, as opposed to modify from stock. At Lake Gairdner, we ran the bike up a class (in Special Construction) because we didn't quite comply with any of the requirements for the modified class. But in Bonneville, we'll be in the modified class as per usual. ↘

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BEATING RECORDS

The AAA Racing CRF100F contested two separate classes at Speedweek 2014. Mitch Afflick raced the bike to 93.8mph in the ABF (Special Construction Blown-Fuel) class, breaking the Australian record and ending up only 0.5mph off the World Record. JP Afflick reached 94.853mph, which was 3.2mph faster than the standing Bonneville record. Of course, this is a 'bragging rights only' record until he completes the same run on the Bonneville salt in 2015.



Without getting overly technical, can you run us through the mods you guys made to the bike?

Sure. The motor is mostly stock. We thought the crank might be an issue because of the 18psi boost we get from the supercharger, but it was fine. At stock on the dyno, it puts out 8hp. Now we have 21hp at the rear wheel. We've modded the manifolds to accommodate the supercharger, and we've fitted an aftermarket rev-box, plus we've also put in heavier valve springs to help the valves hold closed when they need to. It's got the stock cylinder head on it for now, and if we put one of those aftermarket options on, it will really crank! In terms of suspension and controls, we removed the mono-shock and made it fully rigid – we dropped it down as

far as it would go. The front wheel is a narrow profile 1.4-inch rim taken from a drag bike. On the rear, it just runs the stock rim. We also changed the footpeg positions to make the riding position more aerodynamic. The fork had the triple clamps lowered, and we put a steering dampener on it. That's it.

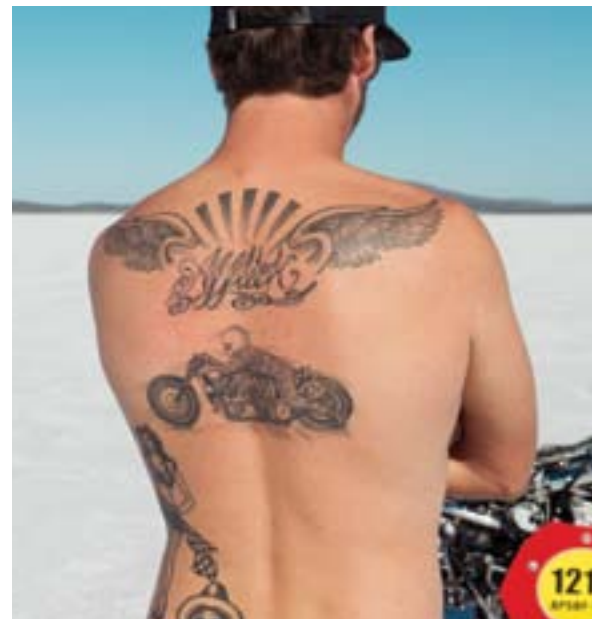
What is it about salt racing that made you guys pursue land-speed records, rather than just run it on a drag strip?

I think what it came down to was the fact that backyard innovation drives salt racing, rather than just the guy with the biggest bank account. If you think your Victor lawnmower is fast enough to beat the guy next to you, then you can roll up and have a go. If you look at V8 supercars these days,



Left: The bike had its shock removed in favour of a fully rigid subframe. The tanks in front of the seat hold a mixture of high-octane gasoline and ethanol. And yes, there's a steering dampener!

Right: Notice any similarities between the tattoo on Mitch's back and the black-and-white photo on the opposite page? It's a fitting way for Mitch to get inked in his old man's honour. -



they all look the same, and they all pretty well run the same, too. It's just so different to that in land-speed racing. As the saying goes, "You can run what ya brung!"

So it's that romantic notion that keeps you motivated?

Yeah, that's it. If you ever make it to Bonneville, you'll see that it's like a step back in time over there on the salt. The hot-rodding culture is alive and well. Southern California is where that whole culture really started, so it's almost like a pilgrimage to go back there. It's one thing to ride a quarter-mile flat-out, but on the salt you're running the bike for five miles flat-out. It's way better.

Do you and your brother get competitive with each other?

[Laughs] Yeah, we stick it to each other a little. I'm about 85kg and he's only about 74kg, so we were wondering if it would make much of a difference. He rides it naked, and I ride it in the partially streamlined class, so we don't race each other directly. We mostly just focus on having fun. We took it pretty easy for the bike at Speedweek, just working it through the revs without winding the engine up. We were focusing on records rather than racing each other. The bike didn't even burn a plug – it went really well.

Up in Byron, do you get much interest from the community?

Well, we've got a lot of really great support from some local businesses who sponsored our effort, which

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is awesome. But most people don’t know that much about it. A lot of people I talk to have seen *World’s Fastest Indian* and they know a little bit about it. But once you show them photos of the bike on the salt, they’re blown away. It’s a unique thing; people don’t get there themselves at all, so it’s a buzz to show them.

And you’re planning to take the bike to Bonneville?

We’ll be working on the bike till May, 2015, then we’ll have to put it into a shipping container and send it over to the USA. It takes about three months by sea. We have a few engine and aerodynamics mods we want to make, so hopefully they help us smash some more records over there. We have permission to use an 800m strip of bitumen at the Gold Coast airport occasionally – it’s useful because it’s really hard to test a land-speed bike. They’re geared so tall, so it takes a while to get it through the gears.

Is there anyone you’d like to thank?

Yeah, we couldn’t have pulled this off without the support of Outback Jacks, Sony Australia and Battery World.

It’s great to have people that believe in what we’re doing and offer support.

Would you say you guys are well and truly inflicted with Salt Fever?

Yeah, mate. I think once you go over to the salt flats – either here in Australia or even in Bonneville – you get a real buzz from it.

It’s the landscape, the people ... just everything about it is so cool. It’s like taking a step back in time. Another thing is that when you’re racing on the salt, you realise that it’s not very often in life you can hold a vehicle flat-out, as fast as you can go. The bike is going up 10rpm every tenth of a second; you’re desperately holding your elbows in, not worried about anything else but what it is you’re doing. It’s a hell of a buzz. 🍻



Forty years on from when this photo was taken, Warren Afflick has taken his love of black-top drag racing to the salt plains of South Australia, and found the perfect opportunity for some father-son bonding time in the process.

STANDING RECORDS...

AAA RACING RECORDS

- ★ ABF 100 - 93.8mph (A = Special Construction, BF=Blown Fuel)
- ★ APSBF 100 - 94.5mph (PS = Partial Streamlined)

BONNEVILLE RECORDS

- ★ ABF 100 - 94.934mph
- ★ APSBF 100 - 91.659mph

WORLD’S FASTEST MOTORCYCLE

- ★ Top 1 Oil - Ack Attack streamliner - 376.363mph