

THE EMPTYWHEEL FABULOUS CAR BLOG! FORMULA ONE AND CAR FLICKS

So, we shall take a brief respite from the fabulous music blog this weekend to bring you a fabulous car blog. Off to the races!

There has been a shake up in the F1 force. And man is it palpable. By the end of the last circus, it was quite clear that management at Ferrari had come to consider young Charles Leclerc as their number one driver, over four time World Champ and presumptive number one, Sebastian Vettel. It was no secret on the paddock from the people I still talk to. Vettel knew it, Leclerc knew it, everyone knew it. It has so come to pass. The 2020 season driver stables were already set, and they will continue as such. But for the 2021 season, which is now well less than a year away, big changes are afoot.

Vettel is out at Ferrari, and Carlos Sainz is in. Sainz is very, very good, and his family has a rich history in motorsports. He is commonly viewed as a very good pilot, but one hampered by less than first order equipment, and I think that is right. Sainz will have that kind of car now. He and Leclerc will make for a great, and energized young team. That is something Ferrari is not usually known for, but this is a great move, and one for the times at hand. Sainz is leaving McLaren, who is poised to replace him for 2021 with Daniel Ricciardo. This is also a great move for McLaren, who sign up a true number one driver, with numerous F1 wins and podiums, to pair with the still quite young, but promising, Lando Norris. Take note: for 2021, McLaren starts getting Mercedes engines to pair with their already ridiculously good chassis. Don't sleep on McLaren.

Where do the rest of the chips fall? Now there is the great unknown. Vettel is a four time champ, can he find a home at all? Sebastian can still drive, you would think so, but that is up in the air. Do Hamilton and Bottas stay as a team for 2021? My guess is yes, but that is also a question. The F1 season was supposed to kick off in March with the Australian, but the Covid thing put the kibosh on that. It is tentatively scheduled to start with Austria in seven weeks, maybe for two races, and then Silverstone with two races. They are desperate to get at least a fifteen race schedule in, if possible. And will there be fans in the stands? Initially, it looks like no, but stay tuned.

Okay, since not everybody knows F1 as well, we are tossing in car movies for this weekend. There are a litany of great ones. You know what you have seen and appreciated over the years. I am going to throw out a few of my favorites just to get the ball rolling. They are by no means exhaustive, and not necessarily in a perfectly ranked order.

Grand Prix _ John Frankenheimer's 1966 opus is the gold standard. It is a tad long, but the characters gritty and the performances beyond fantastic across the board. The driving scenes are some of the best ever, as well as John's innovative use of split screen, a legendary move.

Vanishing Point – From 1971, and calling it a cult classic is not giving it enough credit. Spectacular and haunting in a myriad of ways.

They Drive By Night – Directed by Raoul Walsh and starring George Raft, Humphrey Bogart, Ann Sheridan and Ida Lupino. It is both a driving movie and film noir, both at their best. Fantastic.

Two Lane Blacktop – This movie is great. The genius is obvious. Really, you have to see it, and while James Taylor is

surprisingly good, keep your eye on Warren Oates, in a legendary performance. Duel from the same year, generally considered to be Steven Spielberg's first full movie. is very good, but Two Lane Blacktop is better.

It Happened One Night – There has to be room for at least one comedy here, and this is it. Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert are simply perfect, as is the story. Capra and Cohn at their best. Walter Connolly darn near stole the show.

Some honorable mentions in no particular order: Dirty Mary, Crazy Larry, Thelma and Louise, Used Cars (Kurt Russell and Jack Warden were fantastic. A real sleeper, even if a low budget one), Baby Driver (seriously great and a must watch).

Okay folks, rip this joint with your thoughts!