



## Road runners

The Great American Run organized by Cannonball Run World Events **will unite car enthusiasts and racing fanatics** from around the world. Team **Bespoke** is taking part on behalf of its Middle Eastern readers and to be part of history in the making.

**The Cannonball Run is the stuff of motoring legend.** Popular culture would have it that you think of the 1980s movie extravaganza with its fast cars, lovely ladies and madcap races across the United States with stars like Burt Reynolds racing for keeps. The latest run is in fact a product spawned by three distinctly different yet adrenaline prone rally lovers who would put Reynolds' onscreen driving skills to shame.

In 1933, 51-year-old Erwin 'Cannon Ball' Baker set a stunning record in the United States. The first commissioner of the NASCAR managed to race across the country several times, setting not only one but 143 American distance records, including

a 53.5 hour coast-to-coast solo drive averaging over 80km/h.

Another idea for the race was inspired by the rebellious journalist Brock Yates, executive editor of *Car and Driver*, who launched the Cannonball Baker Sea-to-Shining-Sea Memorial Trophy Dash, an illegal cross-continent road race introduced as a means of protesting against the 88km/h speed limit.

The dash was suspended until October 2002, when Tim 'Maverick' Porter breathed air into its lungs. A long-time, masterful driver and car aficionado, Porter is known throughout Europe as one of the driving world's most notorious 'bad boys'

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– a persona fitting a man with the reputation for never being caught during a race. After hosting seven successful rallies in Europe, Porter is now bringing the infamous event back to its true homeland: the United States – where it will become the largest car rally in North American history.


But any which way you look at it, the race has a Hollywood stamp of recognition on it. Though panned by the critics, *Cannonball*, *Cannonball Run* and *Cannonball Run II*, were a magnet for audiences and speed fanatics who just couldn't get enough of the simple plot. Get from A to Z while skirting the law for a just as thrilling one million USD – a huge sum for the early 1980s. The cast for all three films was packed with big names including Farrah Fawcett appearing alongside Dean Martin and Sammy Davis, Jr. who dressed as priests whilst driving a red Ferrari. Tongue-in-cheek to the extreme, Aston Martin DB5-driving Roger Moore made an appearance as a character whose fantasies have made him believe that he is James Bond. Intriguingly, the only character to appear in all three of the *Cannonball* movie continuum is Jamie Farr who played Sheik Abdul ben Falafel, a wealthy Arab determined to win the race even if he has to buy it.

Back to reality, pilots and co-pilots should be ready on July 29th this year, when 400 cars will rev up their engines from four different US cities: Atlanta, Miami, New York and Washington DC, and drive 4,800km across the country. Each route will cover the same distance. The goal is to maintain an average speed of 98km/h over the entire journey. “Safety is paramount to this event. Our previous races in Europe didn't see a single accident due to the way we police them with very strict rules,”



says Porter. No easy task when you have cars in the hundreds negotiating 16 different checkpoints along routes culminating with one winning team and a two-day celebration for participants and guests in Los Angeles.

Exotic Ferraris and Lamborghinis will be pitted against American muscle and high horsepower customized Japanese cars. The prize this time is number 25 of 25 limited edition 600bhp Saleen Mustangs capable of sprinting from 0 to 100 km/h in just 3.7 seconds. The other 24 will be for sale solely to entrants of the race. Each is numbered via an 18 carat gold chassis plate. “This event is based on the success of our European Cannonball Run Europe events which embody the spirit of the original U.S Cannonball Run event and the movies,” says Porter.

Back again to the movies. If past viewing or experience is anything to go by, then you can be guaranteed a bundle of fun and frolicking but most of all you'll have the pleasure of the road – and possibly the indelibly attractive Lamborghini Countach cruising Jill and Marcy to keep you company. That is if your desire to win can carry you as far as the City of Angels and as fast as your chosen wheels. 

*Participation costs 10,000 USD, which covers entry for a car as well as two entrants along with hotels, food, parties and a track day in California.*