Shelby American: The Venice Years

By Dave Friedman

This is the latest offering for Cobra fans, of books by official Shelby American photographer Dave Friedman and, like all the others, takes the reader inside the operation courtesy of both Friedman's classic photographs and the insights and recollections provided by others who were there—as well as his own. Oh the stories we could tell....

The focus of this book, as its title suggests, is the period of time that was the genesis of the company that would not only create the Cobra, but also the GT350 Mustangs and victory for Ford's massive Le Mans effort. The shop, soon to be shops, in Venice, California, was where everything took root and grew, the foundation for the construction of the Cobra legend, and Friedman's photo show us exactly what it looked like as all that was happening. Make no mistake, however, the photos are not from the shop alone, but also include images of Cobras in competition around the world and several other projects as well.

If you have any interest at all in things Cobra, this is a book for you. Available for US$50/£35/CDN$65 from enthusiast bookstores or direct from publisher Motorbooks at www.quarto.com

★★★★

Reviewed by John Zimmermann

Mario Andretti: A Life in Pictures

By Mario Donnini

The latest in author Donnini's series of "Life in Pictures" reflections on prominent racers and events is devoted to the 1978 F1 World Champion and four-time U.S. National Indycar Champion Mario Andretti. Mario's story should be familiar to most readers, and here it's told exquisitely in photographs accompanied by many of his own words as he offers illuminating insights from his career.

The text, presented in both English and Italian, takes the form of brief interviews about certain aspects of Mario's life, career accomplishments and relationships, a format that works very well, as each chapter is liberally illustrated with relevant photos.

Among the most interesting is his description of his victory for Lotus in the inaugural Japanese Grand Prix in 1976, an event widely celebrated in other contexts, that led him to commit to tackling the full F1 schedule in pursuit of the World Championship, which he secured two seasons later.

Many books have been written about Mario Andretti, but even if you have them all, you should make further space available on your shelves for this one. Available for €40/£40/US$75 from enthusiast bookstores or direct from publisher Giorgio Nada Editore at www.giorgionadaeditore.it

★★★★

Reviewed by John Zimmermann

RATING SYSTEM ★ Not Recommended | ★★ Moderately Useful | ★★★ Recommended | ★★★★ Excellent