

CONCOURS, DRIVERS, PROJECT CARS

In the last article, we discussed different venues of where to search and purchase that collector car of one's dream. One must ask, what condition of collector car fits my needs and abilities to maintain.

Whatever car we choose, one must understand that many cars in our club are 50 years old and older, there will be maintenance and repair issues. Looking on-line and reading news letters, the retro –birds of 2002 to 2005 are experiencing some maintenance issues because of their advancing age.

In my humble opinion, there are 3 categories of condition of collector cars:

- Concours or mint condition cars; are cars with every system in excellent operating condition, along with mint condition paint, body work and chrome. These cars are most often purchased for resale if the price is right. For a true enthusiast, with limited mechanical skills, this is the car most often purchased. However, the initial cost is expensive, worries about use, and the constant worry about resale and return on investment.
- Driver quality cars and original cars are the most popular purchased in the collector car market. These cars are not in the concours category. Often they have wear from being driven and usually rate somewhere between condition 3 and 4 on the old cars weekly condition scale, with 1 being a trailer queen and 6 being a parts car. Often they have worn or substandard paint and chrome, wrong equipment, and worn or cracked upholstery. The main advantage of purchase is a lower initial price that one can drive without much worry, and a better chance of profit than a concours car. With a driver quality car, more scrutiny has to be made with the cars mechanical condition. Nobody wants to pay market value for a car and then discover it needs an expensive engine, transmission, or suspension overhaul. These expenditures will quickly put one in the category "upside down" financially with your purchase. Another advantage of purchasing cars in this category is improving the condition of the car while owning it. One can look for good purchases on parts that will improve the overall condition, and return on investment. One year one can budget for new carpet and seat covers, and next year new chrome. The list goes on and on. One must evaluate their mechanical ability and motivation when purchasing this category of car. With mechanics charging \$70 to \$100 per hour, costs can get out of hand when working on these cars.

- This is my personal favorite category of collector cars. Project cars and restoration projects are not for the faint of heart. When one considers a purchase of one of these cars, much soul searching and commitment must occur. These cars are more often than not passed over for nicer condition cars. For the fast back flipper, forget it. When purchasing these cars, assume the worst, and realize that from headlight to taillight, every part and system will have to be restored or rebuilt. I have restored 3 cars in this condition to driver quality after many hours of restoration. These cars are my 58 T-bird found on the back of a car lot and also spent time in a junk yard. My 64 Ford Convertible found behind a chicken coop, with no top. My 71 Lincoln MK III found behind an apartment complex with a broken window. The major advantage to purchasing project cars is price. I purchased these cars for less than \$400.00 each in the 90's. With 3 kids, mortgage, and a love of cars, these factors made these purchases feasible. One must have advanced mechanical abilities, tools and equipment and a large space to restore a project car. I enjoy shopping for parts on e-bay and salvage yards. When I purchased the afore-mentioned cars, these cars were seen in salvage yards, not true today. Along with low prices on the initial purchase of project cars, one can amass a small collection of automobile treasures for future projects. I find solace and freedom working on my old cars in my man cave, drinking a coke, and watching an old rerun of Route 66, 77 Sunset Strip or Perry Mason on my old VCR. Happy Motoring!!!!

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