

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

WHEELS

SECTION F

GENERAL MOTORS

Can marketers make hip happen?:

General Motors Corp. wants a hip replacement. So the automaker infiltrated YouTube and put pop star Gwen Stefani in an SUV. It let rapper Jay-Z create a paint color and got a bunch of college students to live for a week inside a compact car. It's all part of a campaign dreamed up by the marketing minds at GM to create an aura of cool around the vehicle lineup they're working to reinvent. GM, which managed an image turnaround before with the Cadillac Escalade, now hopes to duplicate that success with other products.

TOYOTA

Vehicle production rises in 2006:

Toyota's global production last year surged 10 percent to more than 9 million vehicles, narrowing the gap with General Motors Corp. Toyota Motor Corp. said recently that it produced 9.018 million vehicles, including its Japanese subsidiaries that make trucks and smaller models. It was its fifth straight year of growth. GM and its group of automakers produced 9.18 million vehicles worldwide in 2006 – about 162,000 vehicles more than its Japanese rival. That gap has narrowed from about 819,000 vehicles at the end of 2005.

INSIDE THIS SECTION

So where and what do Seattle's top chefs like to eat? Our food crew gets them to spill the beans.



Hey, turn radio back on while filling up

TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI

CAR TALK



Dear Tom and Ray: Am I right, or does my husband know what he's talking about? When my husband fills up his car with gas, he always turns the car off and removes the key from the ignition, which turns the radio off – even if I'm busy listening to "Car Talk" on NPR! It drives me crazy, but he insists that having current passing through the vehicle is a disaster waiting to happen while filling up the gas tank. I'm sure he's being a little – well, maybe a lot – too cautious, because I often hear radios playing in other people's cars while they're filling up, yet I have never seen a car blow up from an electric short during that process. Would you two please tell him that I can safely listen to the radio while he's filling up! – Cathy

Ray: He probably just doesn't want you listening to us, Cathy. And can you blame him?

Tom: There are several reasons why gas stations tell you to turn off your ignition while refueling. No. 1 is that if you accidentally leave your car in drive, or if it slips out of park or your dog knocks it out of park, the car could possibly run somebody over. Or, worse, bash into the station's new Mountain Dew machine.

Ray: Reason No. 2 is that they want to lessen the chances that you'll drive off without removing the nozzle, yanking their hose out of its socket.

Tom: No. 3 is that they don't want anybody to be tempted to hop in your running car and steal it. It happens.

Ray: Reason No. 4 is that, with modern cars, running the engine with the gas cap off will cause the "check engine" light to come on.

Tom: And reason No. 5 is that there are various sources of ignition in a running automobile. Aside from the ignition system itself, there are relays, fan motors and other electrical devices that could, theoretically, provide a spark if a bunch of fuel were spilled and gasoline vapor enveloped the car.

Ray: In reality, most gas stations now have vapor-recovery systems, so vapors would come only from a fuel spill. It would have to be a pretty sizable spill to create enough vapor to cause a problem. So the exploding-car scenario is pretty unlikely. After all, how many knucklehead gas-station attendants have you seen pumping gas with a Tipparillo dangling from their lips, with a 3-inch-long, glowing ash hanging off the end of it?

Tom: And the odds get even slimmer of having any kind of problem if the engine is off and the key is only in the accessory position – where it would be if you were listening to the radio. In fact, I can't really imagine a scenario in which you could ignite anything that way.

Ray: So tell your husband he can rest easy, Cathy. There's no problem with you listening to the radio while he refuels, as long as the key is in the accessory position. And if you want to turn the tables on him, tell him a greater spark danger comes from the static electricity he's building up because he's still wearing those sky-blue polyester leisure suits.

Write to Car Talk, c/o the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, P.O. Box 1909, Seattle, 98111. "Car Talk" is heard at 9 a.m. Saturdays on KUOW radio, 94.9 FM, and at 11 a.m. Saturdays on KPLU radio, 88.5 FM. The "Car Talk" Web site is www.cartalk.com.

COLLECTOR CAR EVENTS

The well-heeled are driven

Neither weather nor economics keep collectors off the road

BY EVAN McMULLEN
Special to the P-I

For Northwest car collectors, January is usually the month to pack your bags and hit Scottsdale for some collector car fun in the sun.

But not in this weird weather year. Instead, thousands of car nuts had to deal with record low temperatures and flash-flooding from massive downpours that washed over the Arizona landscape. But the biggest question about the climate for 2007 was whether the economy, as well as the weather, might put a chill on the Arizona auctions' impressive annual growth.

But when the last gavel fell, the world's largest group of collector car auctions was bigger and better than ever before. Nearly \$200 million worth of cars crossed the block.

The landmark Barrett-Jackson auction, now in its 36th year, served as the market indicator, leading the stampede of auctions that included RM Auctions, Russo & Steele, Silver Collector Car Auctions and Kruse International. The industry pacesetter boasted several remarkable multimillion-dollar sales, including a 1966 Shelby Cobra 427 – "Carroll Shelby's Personal Supersnake" – that broke the U.S. record by fetching \$5.5 million on national TV.

Barrett-Jackson's success dwarfs the competition, but the barriers to entry also make it difficult for the average man. Many seasoned pros voiced frustration this year, most notably Keith Martin, publisher of Sports Car Market, who was covering the event for The New York Times.

He was escorted off the premises by three large bouncers after purportedly being overheard discounting some of the results and practices of the sale.

Barrett-Jackson's sales numbers don't all reach the stratosphere, but if you are a newbie and want to be on TV, it is a great way to spend some excess millions.

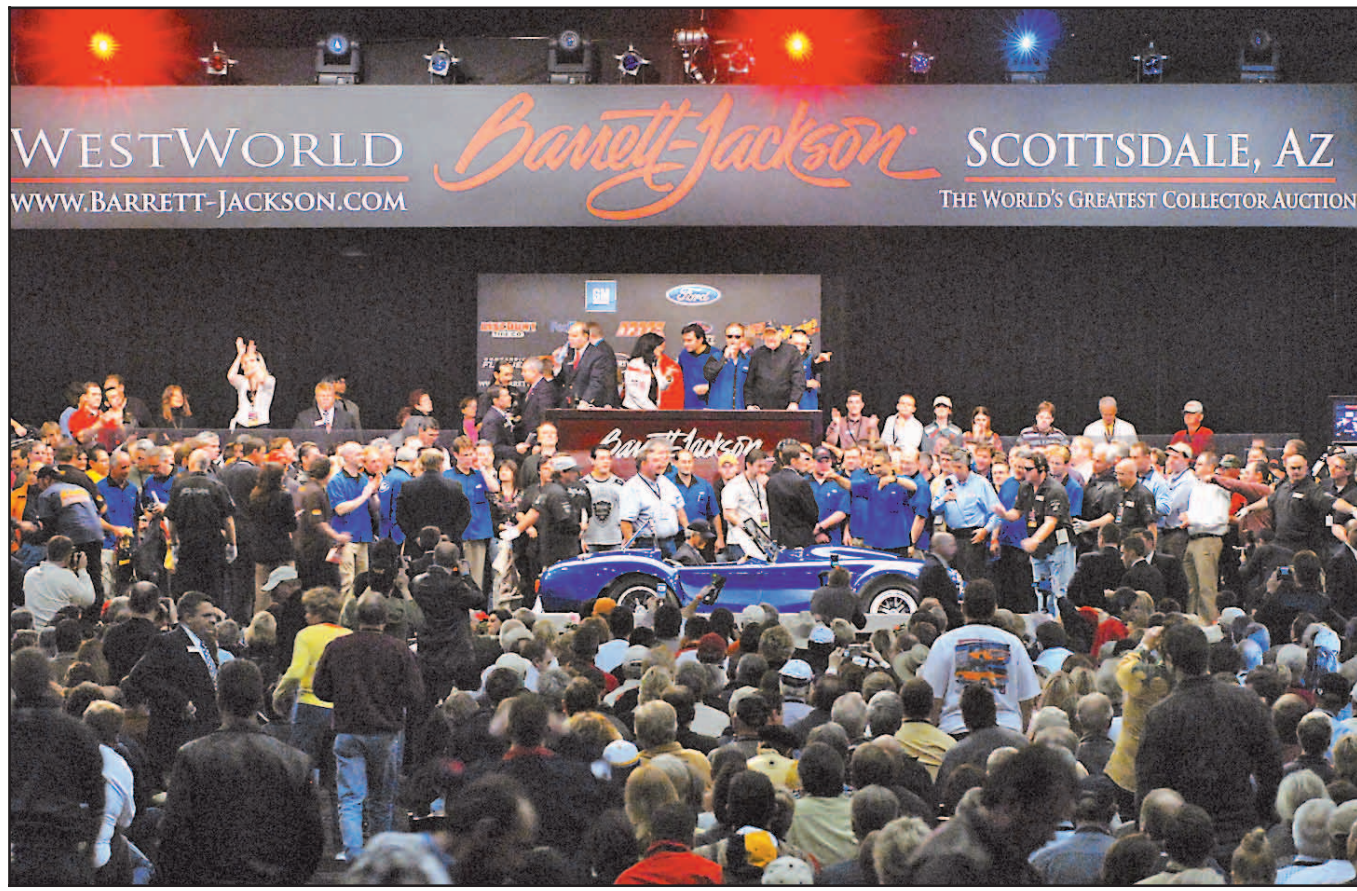
Barrett's highlights:

- ▶ 1966 Shelby Cobra 427 "Carroll Shelby's Personal Supersnake," \$5.5 million.
 - ▶ 1954 Dodge Firearrow II Convertible Concept Car, \$1.1 million.
 - ▶ 1954 Dodge Firearrow IV Convertible Concept Car, \$1.1 million.
 - ▶ 1993 Hummer H1 "CNN's Warrior One," \$1 million.
 - ▶ 1966 Shelby Cobra 427, \$935,000.
 - ▶ 1969 Chevrolet Camaro, \$880,000.
- Sales at Barrett-Jackson totaled nearly \$120 million. Many great deals were had by bidders on the Sunday and early week sale. Seattle native and successful car collector/dealer Gordon Abler again gained great profits from his Mercedes-Benz 300 SL Roadster and a handful of other entries. Bellevue's Park Place Limited brought nearly 50 cars to Scottsdale, and though many cars sold cheap at the beginning of the sale, by the end of the weekend co-owners David Bingham and Butch Bockmeier were smiling ear to ear. For more results watch the reruns on Speed Vision or online, barrettjackson.com.

Silver Collector Car Auction

Silver Auctions held its 10th annual Arizona sale at the Fort McDowell Casino.

Portions were recorded and will be telecast in April on ESPN's "On the



A 1966 Shelby Cobra 427 – "Carroll Shelby's Personal Supersnake" – broke the U.S. record by selling for \$5.5 million.

Block."

Spokane favorite Mitch Silver continues to produce the easiest auction to attend and participate in. Affordable entries, commission and fees as well as an unbelievably friendly staff set this company apart. It'll be at the Western Washington Fairgrounds in Puyallup on Feb. 10-11. Contact: 800-255-4485 or silverrauctions.com.

Highlights:

- ▶ 1957 Chevrolet Nomad, \$113,400.
- ▶ 1959 Chevrolet Corvette Convertible, \$95,040.
- ▶ 1953 Packard Caribbean Convertible, \$91,800.
- ▶ 1956 Chevrolet Bel Air Convertible, \$71,280.
- ▶ 1969 Chevrolet Camaro Z-28, \$71,280.

RM Auctions

The most "all about business" of the auctions, owing much to the dry British flair brought by auctioneer Peter Bainbridge. The sale was on the grounds of the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Arizona Biltmore Hotel – a spectacular setting for the most stylish and elegant cars of the entire auction series. In nine hours, 110 lots crossed the block, bringing in nearly \$30 million. Highlights included the world's oldest Ford, a former presidential car, several fabulous French Grand Routieres such as Bugatti's and a Talbot Lago, as well as the following sales listed below.

The Canadian company is famous for its show-winning restorations as well. Contact: 519-351-4575 or rmauction.com.

Highlights:

- ▶ 1937 Duesenberg Model SJ Cabriolet, \$2.805 million.
- ▶ 1971 Plymouth Hemi 'Cuda Convertible, \$2.42 million.
- ▶ 1967 Shelby 427 S/C Cobra Roadster, \$1.43 million.
- ▶ 1936 Delahaye Type 135 Special, \$1.32 million.
- ▶ 1963 Aston Martin DB 4GT, \$1.265 million.

Russo and Steele

After many years of struggle, Drew Alcazar and his talented staff are certainly in the black by now. In their seventh year in Scottsdale, their tents were bigger than ever – and this year their sign was so big that the municipality made them hire a crane to remove it in the mid-



Two Dodge Firearrow II Convertibles from 1954 went for \$1.1 million each.

dle of the event.

Alcazar managed Barrett-Jackson for many years before branching out on his own, and the experience showed, along with the panache that his wife, Josephine, brings to the event.

Total sales were more than \$20 million. Contact: russoandsteele.com.

Highlights:

- ▶ 1965 Shelby Daytona Coupe 427, \$1.32 million.
- ▶ 1969 Shelby GT500, \$451,000.
- ▶ 1965 Shelby Cobra 289, \$440,000.
- ▶ 1965 Shelby GT350, \$358,600.
- ▶ 1923 Ford T Bucket "Tweedy Pie," \$335,500.

Kruse International Auction:

Dean Kruse, the "Dean" of the collector car auctioneers, returned once again for the cleanup auction following the end of the first week's auctions. No need to beat or join them; just wait and see what's left when the dust settles. That strategy works, and so does the fact that Dean has many friends in high places, including Don Williams from the Black Hawk Collection and Ritchie Clyne of the Imperial Place Collection, who bring him truckloads of classics.

About 600 cars showed up at the Phoenix fairgrounds, and at the auction's peak, two lanes of cars were running at the same time through the big top. Kruse is quick to point out that he and Arizona natives Leo Gephart and Tom Barrett started the Scottsdale collector car auctions. Total sales were nearly \$18.5 million. Contact: kruseinternational.com.

Highlights:

- ▶ 1935 Auburn 851 Super Charged All Weather Phaeton 4 Door, \$230,000.
- ▶ 1952 Bentley Mark VI James Young, 2 Door Modified Street Rod, \$195,000.

▶ 1930 Stutz MA Cabriolet, \$94,000.

There's no question that Barrett-Jackson is a landmark, market-leading event that serves as a harbinger of the coming year. It's a marketing juggernaut that experiences phenomenal year-on-year growth as much because of superior marketing and management as the peculiarities and trends of the market.

The pulsating rhythm of the auctioneering cadence drives sales, the pounding pressure of the hammer and exhaust-filled air intoxicate. Barrett-Jackson has created the perfect world stage for deal fever. Under the filtered lights and surrounded by shiny steel, spectators and participants alike are hypnotized by the multiringed circus that these events have become. It's good television, a riveting event; as such it may profit from additional pressures and dynamics that go far beyond simple car trading.

For the new, affluent and unindoctrinated, the desire to be famous for the Warhol 15 minutes can be an expensive lesson.

For those who remember the 1989 market, the phenomenal results are less assuring than you might expect. Some automotive pundits are suspicious of the hoopla and record-setting results. One has even likened the recent success of muscle cars as akin to the Beanie Baby collector craze of the 1990s. If sales are any indication, Barrett-Jackson is ushering in a profitable and record-setting year. But this is a high-stakes, big-kids game. For the middle-class investor a bit of caution remains in order. The "real" market may be cooling. Don't let the accomplishments of this perfectly staged event and milestone determine the whole of your collection and collector sales plan for the coming year unless you are absolutely sure that this remarkable emperor is indeed wearing Prada.

Greater Seattle continues to play a pivotal role in the world stage for collector cars, their owners, movers and shakers.

We are blessed with some of the finest collections in the world right here in our backyard, and the trend is likely to continue.

Next week: How a Seattle buyer and a Seattle seller fared in Arizona.

Evan McMullen is the proprietor of Cosmopolitan Motors in Seattle.

AUTO BIOGRAPHY



OWNER'S NAME: Parl Guthrie

OCCUPATION: Postal manager

CAR'S YEAR, MAKE AND MODEL: 1975 Ford Granada Ghia

CAR'S NAME: Sluggo

"I LOVE MY CAR BECAUSE . . . it's a one of a kind that runs on either high-octane fuel or propane with just a flip of a switch under the dash. I'm not aware of anyone else in the country who has a classic first-year 1975 two-door Ford Granada Ghia as their hot rod. I purchased it new, and it now has a 351 Windsor engine, Keith & Black forged pistons, moly chrome piston rings, hardened exhaust valves, Edelbrock intake manifold, Carter four-barrel AFB carburetor . . . and 295-50-15 tires."

CONTACT US: E-mail a photo of you and your car (172-dpi, about 5 by 7 inches) plus all the basic information included above. Send it all to mycar@seattlepi.com, and we'll pick one to publish every Friday. That lucky car owner will receive a nifty insulated P-I mug.

COMING UP GETTING THERE

Want to know where the likely congestion will be on your commute next week?

The Transportation Trouble Spots map in Getting There tips commuters to road work throughout the region.

And P-I writers Kery Murakami and Larry Lange find the answers to reader questions about traffic and transportation.

You'll find it all every Monday in the P-I's Seattle section.