



Chrysler photo: Darin Schabel ©2010 Courtesy of RM Auctions

RM Auctions Novi Classic Car Auction of Michigan

Rock Financial Showplace, Novi MI - Saturday-Sunday, April 24-25, 2010

We were in Tennessee already, on a Mercedes-Benz launch, so we were compelled to dash from there to Michigan to join our friend and colleague Kevin A. Wilson of *AutoWeek* at the Ypsilanti Automobile Heritage Museum (above, bottom), for a celebration of his new diploma from Eastern Michigan University, which also gave us the opportunity to check our RM Auctions' Classic Car Auction of Michigan, in Novi.

Taking place in America's automotive heartland, the auction had a casual feel and truly offered something for everybody. Held at Rock Financial Showplace, a convention facility along I-96 in Detroit's western suburbs, and regarded as the Midwest's largest indoor auction, the two-day sale presented top-quality classics and Detroit muscle, attracting strong interest from bidders in the room, on the phone and over the internet.

A featured highlight of the sale was the offering of 25 heritage vehicles from the Walter P. Chrysler Museum—generating a high level of curiosity and interest on the floor, with several rare models dating back to the Brass Era. Headlining the offering was an early 1904 Rambler Model L Tonneau, which sold for an impressive \$71,500. Additional highlights included a 1904 Overland Runabout for \$41,250, and a 1918 Nash Quad Truck for \$24,200 (above, middle left). With its bare-bones utility and pulley-operated dump bed, this one fascinated us—and perfect for Arizona's freeways, but we weren't registered to bid. Funds raised from the sale of the Chrysler collection will support the museum's exhibitions, education programs, vehicle preservation and special enthusiast and community programs and events.

Bidder registrations were up substantially on 2009—over 45 percent—with interest received from across the continent and as far away as Ireland, Norway and the UK. The event posted \$2.5 million in total sales, with the top seller a Canadian-built 1958 Pontiac Parisienne Convertible, at \$104,500, closely followed by a stunning 1960 Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz Convertible for \$82,500.

As one of two RM Auctions events held in Michigan each year, the Classic Car Auction in Novi also works as a warm-up to the prestigious Meadow Brook Auction and Concours d'Elegance in July. ■

RM Auctions Meadow Brook and Meadow Brook Concours

Rochester Hills MI - Auction Saturday, Concours Sunday, July 24-25, 2010

Wild weather across southeast Michigan failed to dampen the enthusiasm at RM Auctions' Vintage Motor Cars of Meadow Brook event on July 24, as spirited bidding in person, by phone and online brought total sales of over \$10 million for the 98-car offering, with an 85% sell-through rate. The well-attended single-day sale was highlighted by American classics as it celebrated the Midwest's impact on the automobile. Once again, the auction launched the renowned Meadow Brook vintage car weekend, culminating with the Concours d'Elegance of America at Meadow Brook.

Headlining the sale was a unique 1953 Chrysler "Thomas Special" Coupe with coachwork by Ghia—a Virgil Exner design masterpiece—which sparked lively bidding to well exceed its pre-sale estimate, selling for \$858,000 (above, middle left). A trio of vintage Duesenbergs also garnered significant attention from collectors, headlined by a majestic 1929 Duesenberg Model J Convertible Sedan with coachwork by Murphy, which sold for \$825,000. A one-off 1932 Duesenberg Model J Torpedo bodied by Rollston also joined the top-sellers list, achieving \$726,000, while a very rare 1929 Duesenberg Model A Speedster, the precursor to the Mighty Model J, brought \$258,500.

Other notable highlights included: a handsome 1931 Chrysler CG Imperial Roadster Convertible, considered one of the best driving and finest open cars of the period, for \$363,000; and a supercharged 1935 Auburn 851SC Boattail Speedster for \$385,000. Interest ran high for Brass Era cars, with an early 1906 Cadillac Model K Light Runabout almost doubling its pre-sale high estimate, achieving \$110,000, while a highly original 1910 Chalmers-Detroit Thirty Touring also exceeded its estimate, selling for \$60,500.

RM also had a strong presence on the show field at the Concours d'Elegance of America at Meadow Brook, with a number of winning entries having passed through the doors of RM's restoration division in recent years, including the 1938 Talbot Lago 150-C Teardrop Coupe, which claimed top honors and was judged "Best of Show—European"; the 1933 Duesenberg Beverly Sedan by Murphy, which was awarded "Most Elegant Car Award"; and the 1930 Stutz SV-16 by Weyman, which received "The Art that Moves Us" Award. ■



RM Auctions Classic Muscle and Modern Performance San Diego

Town and Country Resort & Convention Center - Saturday, June 19, 2010

This one really got our attention, we must admit. In fact, we signed on as a bidder. The motivation? The red-over-parchment '65 Pontiac GTO tripower convertible (above, middle left, and just one of 17 GTOs in the sale) is a dead ringer for the one that got away after a dozen years of ownership. We all have one of those. We were equally enchanted with two Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG roadsters for sale at the same auction. An odd pairing? Sort of. And that was the nature of this auction.

The inventory was split—as the auction's name implies—between American muscle cars and prior-year-but-showroom-new German performance cars. Both groups attracted enthusiastic bidders. In fact, we were surprised to see some of the most competitive bidding on such things as a BMW X5. You could buy these at any dealer—but not at lower-than-sticker prices with near-zero miles on the odometer, as these were. The muscle cars, as well as Mercedes-Benz AMG and BMW M models, were from a private Southern California collection. Muscle was augmented by Trans Ams from the personal collection of Jim Wangers, Pontiac's chief marketing manager at the dawn of the GTO, and the Germans were rounded out with additional performance inventory.

A total of 102 automobiles brought \$6.9 million in sales with a 100 percent sell-through rate. Detroit muscle was led by Corvette's solid showing, including the top-seller of the day: a super-rare, tire-shredding 1969 Chevrolet Corvette L88 at \$401,500. The late-model BMWs and Mercedes-Benz also enjoyed a strong performance.

The bidder to our left was specifically after a 1970 Chevelle LS6 convertible, but backed out when it hit \$210,000. We can imagine that the next weekend's top seller at Barrett-Jackson, up the coast (see next item), may have given him non-buyer's remorse.

The ones we wanted, four 1965 Pontiac GTO convertibles and two early 2000s Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMGs, went for about \$47,000-60,000 each (with one GTO just over \$90,000). Our theory was that one of the GTOs could be fun for six months, then be resold at the Arizona auctions in January. The AMGs? Not so likely to be resold. For that matter, nor the GTOs. So, we sat on our hands and watched them pass by. But it was fun to have a paddle. Let's see if the bug bites again. ■

Barrett-Jackson Auction Company Inaugural Orange County Event

Orange County Fair & Events Center - Friday-Sunday, June 25-27, 2010

Barrett-Jackson reported more than \$15 million in sales during its inaugural Southern California event in Costa Mesa. Nearly 400 customs, classics, hot rods, restomods and original collector cars were sold at No Reserve. SPEED TV captured the action live for 18 hours. The auction, which attracted over 58,000 people, included ride'n'drives by Ford and GM, Meguiar's seminars, Ford Drifting and other activities.

A Road Rally kicked off a week of activities on Saturday, June 19, with more than a hundred cars roaring down Bristol Street, ending with a mini car show at the OC Fair & Event Center, the auction venue. A Father's Day Cruise-In at Connell Chevrolet hosted 164 vehicles. First-time owners and serious collectors mingled to rock music and BBQ. Barrett-Jackson president Steve Davis and VP of consignments Gary Bennett presented three Barrett-Jackson Choice Awards. The Opening Night Party on Thursday, June 24, featured high-fashion models during the South Coast Plaza fashion show.

Barrett-Jackson helped raise more than \$1 million for charity at the event. A special reception for the Barrett-Jackson Cancer Research Fund in Memory of Russ and Brian Jackson and the Childhelp Drive the Dream Charity Gala raised \$150,000 to help abused, neglected and at-risk children. The Darrell Gwynn Foundation raised \$280,000, through the sale of a 1990 Darrell Gwynn Coors Extra Gold Top Fuel Dragster replica (\$150,000) and a limited edition 2008 Barrett-Jackson Edition Ford Shelby GT (above, lower right, \$130,000). The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation received over \$100,000 with the sale of a 2011 Ford Mustang two-door custom coupe DUB wide body. And a 1970 "Project American Heroes" Chevelle SS custom coupe sold for \$250,000 with all proceeds benefiting the Armed Forces Foundation.

Cars selling at top dollar included a Fathom Blue 1970 Chevrolet Chevelle SS 454 convertible with matching numbers (above, middle left) for \$253,000. A 1970 Plymouth Road Runner custom two-door hardtop seen in two of *The Fast and the Furious* films sold for \$187,000. A 1967 Chevrolet Corvette convertible sold for \$181,500 and a 1940 Willys custom coupe fetched \$181,500. Jesse James' personal 1936 Ford custom five-window coupe, built at West Coast Choppers, went to a new home for \$165,000. ■