

collectible & classic

June 2016 #57

RETROAUTOS

Scoop ! How the Solaris Became the HD/HR Holden



Toyota
Corolla
50th
Anniversary



1941 Chrysler Thunderbolt



1954 Vauxhall Velox



You're invited to the

NSW COUNCIL OF MOTOR CLUBS CENTRAL COAST

HERITAGE DAY

HOSTED BY THE CENTRAL COAST HISTORIC CAR CLUB INC.

Sunday 15th May, 2016 9am - 3pm
Memorial Park, The Entrance, NSW



*Displays of Vintage, Historic & Classic cars
from up to 15 local and Sydney Car Clubs
plus many more private owners*

From a 1911 model "T" Ford to immaculate Jaguar "E" Types, vintage Rolls Royce, nostalgic 1930's to 1950's Chevrolets, Buicks, Chryslers, Fords, MG's, Austin 7's, all the British classics plus Holdens and Falcons of all ages from 1948 to mid 1980's and just about everything in-between.

All in perfect working condition

ALSO: Vintage & Classic Motorcycles, Farm Machinery and Fire Engines. PLUS: Charity Sausage Sizzle, Food Stalls, Kid's Rides, Face Painting etc, live entertainment



Enquiries: Allan Mead, 4369 4667
or Doug Sawyer, 4344 5648. E: cchistoriccc@gmail.com

In This Issue

About Us

Managing Editor: David Burrell

Website:
www.retroautos.com.au

Postal Address
PO Box 243
Jannali
NSW 2226

Email:
david@retroautos.com.au

Would you like your car profiled?

Keen to have your car profiled in Retroautos? Please contact us at david@retroautos.com.au

Club Publicity

We encourage all classic car clubs to let us know what they are doing. If you want publicity for a major event, then simply email us.

Special Features

- 10 Solaris and the HD/HR
- 28 Solaris HD/HR Designers
- 30 1954 Vauxhall Velox
- 44 Corolla at 50
- 48 1941 Chrysler Thunderbolt
Influential Dream Car

Regular Features

- 5 RetroVoice
- 6 RetroNews
- 62 RetroAuctions
- 74 RetroRacing
- 90 RetroAdvertisements
- 102 RearView

Front Cover: GM's Solaris ideas car.



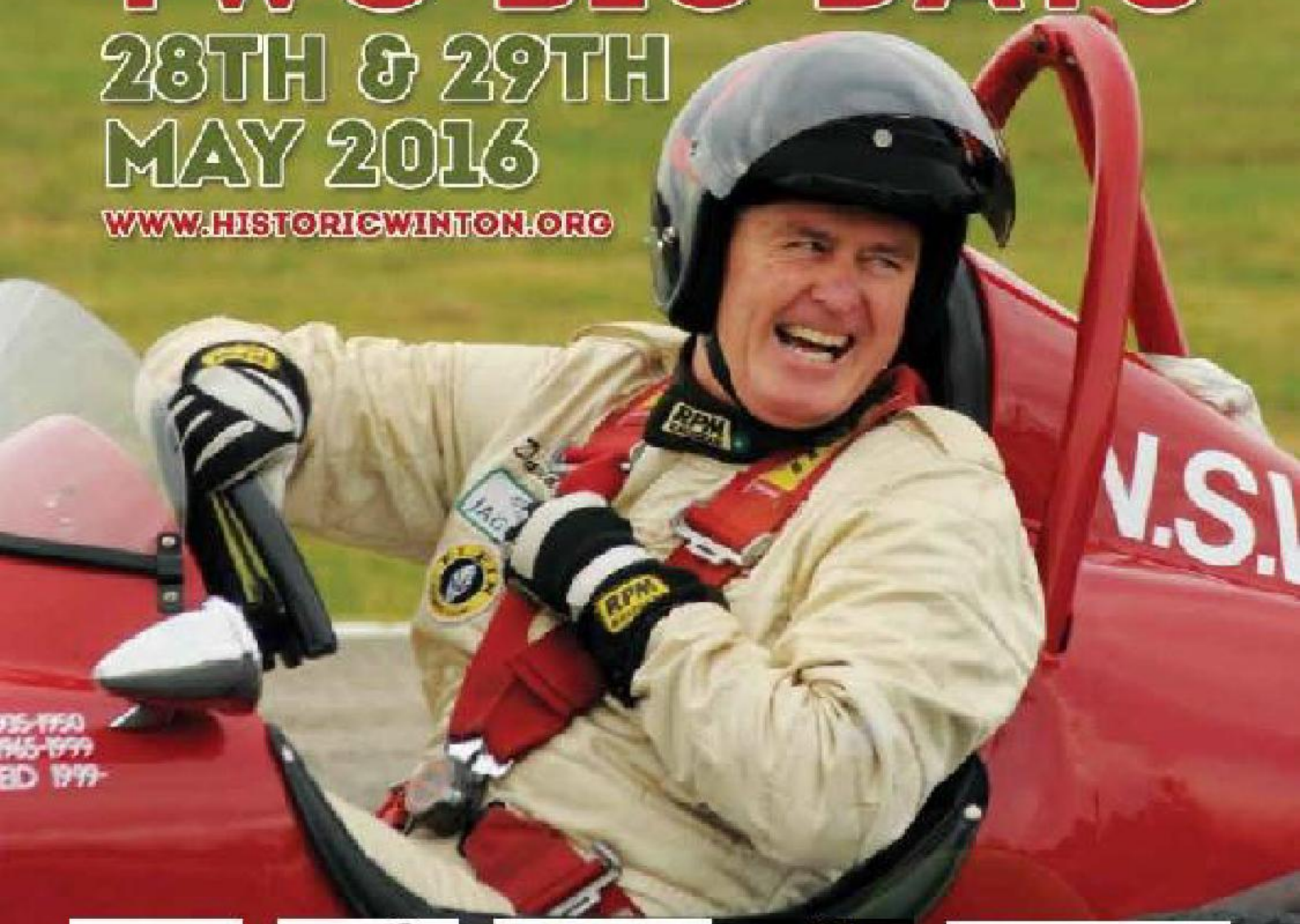
40TH HISTORIC WINTON

PRESENTED BY THE AUSTIN SEVEN CLUB & HMRAY

TWO BIG DAYS

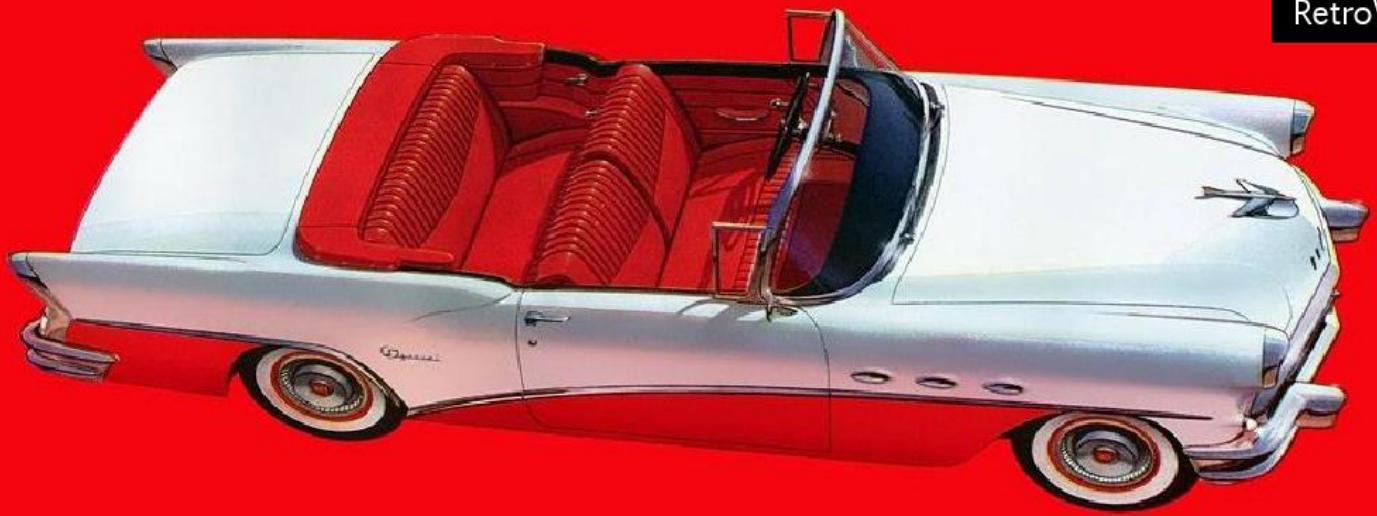
28TH & 29TH
MAY 2016

WWW.HISTORICWINTON.ORG



1935-1950
1945-1979
ED 1999





Welcome to the June 2016 edition of Retroautos.

Back in 1954 Peter Sara's grandparents bought a Vauxhall Velox. Peter now owns that car and talks to us about its restoration and history.

All-metal retractable convertible roofs are not a new idea. Come back to 1941 with us and see the ground breaking Chrysler Thunderbolt dream car.

Solaris Legacy

Our front cover shouts out this month's main story. Solaris!

What's the Solaris? It was a GM concept car designed in late 1961 which never went on public display.

The legacy of the Solaris is that it directly influenced the styling of the HD and HR Holden, and the 1964 Opel Kapitän, Admiral and Diplomat (KAD) range.

Had it not been for the Solaris, the HD/HR and Opel KAD would most likely have been clones of the 1962 Chevrolet Nova, because

that's what the original styling proposals were based on. It is a wonderful retro yarn and you will only read it in Retroautos.

And it just so happens that 2015 and 2016 are the 50th anniversaries of the HD and HR.

So we've decided to celebrate the two Holden models with a three part series. (Yes! Three parts.)

This month's issue concentrates on the influence of the Solaris.

In July we look at the design development of the HD sedan, wagon and interior.

August sees us move to the HR, with many never before published images of what the HR could have looked like, including an idea for even *longer* front fender blades!

And there's more anniversaries to celebrate. It's 50 years since Toyota released the Corolla, the world's most successful car brand.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Retroautos. It is published with passion and with pride.

Retro News



Market Sees Price Drops, Or Does It ???

After a slight increase last month, the Hagerty Market Rating fell 0.44 points to 69.34.

Though the rating still indicates an expanding market situation in the USA, this marks the ninth time over the past 12 months that the rating has dropped.

While auction activity increased slightly for March's rating, it significantly dropped in April as both the number of cars sold and the median sale price at auction decreased.

Private sales activity in the USA decreased and is at an 18-month low.

Over in the UK, the Classic Sports Finance (CSF) company is a little less pessimistic about 2016.

CSF believe buyer confidence remains high and report that speculators have largely left the market and now the enthusiasts remain and their the appetite to buy cars remains strong and appears to be growing.

The company goes on to say that too much focus has been placed on price and investment potential over the last 18 months and that most enthusiasts still want to own and enjoy classics and the hobby has grown enormously in the last few years.



CSF also believe that there will be a lot of choice in 2016. "Buyers will be focused on the best cars and those vehicles will retain or grow in value. Sellers who were asking too much for their cars will have to reconsider the asking price or decide to keep and enjoy them," they say.

CSF sum up the UK situation with an astute observation: "The right stock at the right price is moving fast. On the other hand, many cars are languishing for extended periods."

In Australia there is very little information made public, but a recent newspaper story quoting a couple of classic car dealers said that prices had increased in the high end part of the market.

No predictions were made about what will happen with prices as this year progresses nor about prices below the "high end".

Let's see what happens over the next 3-4 months.

Motor Museum of Western Australia

Opened in 1994, this is one of WA's premier museum attractions.

There are over 130 restored cars, bikes, competition, unusual and performance vehicles. Located in the heart of picturesque Whiteman Park, the Museum has ample parking, is on the park's tramline and only an 18 minute drive from the centre of Perth.

The curator is John McLean. The Museum is operated by the Motor Museum of WA Trust and is manned by volunteers drawn from over one hundred member clubs.

www.motormuseumofwa.asn.au



Opening Hours

10.00am-4.00pm: Monday – Friday
10.00am-5.00pm: Weekends and public holidays

Trafalgar Holden Museum

This Holden museum, located in the Victorian town of Trafalgar, is more than just a collection of cars. Museum founder Neil Joiner is keen to tell the story of the Holden company starting from when it made saddles to right through to its involvement in car assembly and manufacturing, making aero engines and even building pedal cars.

When Neil established the Museum in October 2014 he already had a sizeable Holden collection. Rather than hide it away in a shed he bought Trafalgar's old butter factory and converted it into the Museum.

The Museum has many unique features and displays including some of Neil's prized possessions; his 1965 Holden HD Premier with 13,000 miles (21,000km) on it, a 1968 Holden HK also with 13,000 miles (pictured below) and an 1963 EJ Holden with just 7500 miles (12,000km).

www.trafalgarholdenmuseum.com.au

**TRAFALGAR
HOLDEN
MUSEUM**

Open weekends
and public
holidays 10am
to 5pm



Retroautos Roadshow

Every so often I am asked to make a presentation at a classic car club meeting about Retroautos and the weekly newspaper column I write.

The most recent request came from the Rover Owners Club of NSW & ACT

I shared with club members the ups and downs of publishing a 100 page classic cars magazine twelve times a year and at the same time, writing a weekly classic cars column which appears in 50+ newspapers across Australia.

I also talked about why Retroautos transitioned from print to fully online.

Thanks to Ian Shearman, Richard Dalziel and Paul Anley and all of the Rover club members who made me feel most welcome and asked many questions.



The Gosford Classic Car Museum is set to open on May 28th, 2016. It houses a collection of over 400 cars from vintage to modern classics and everything in between.

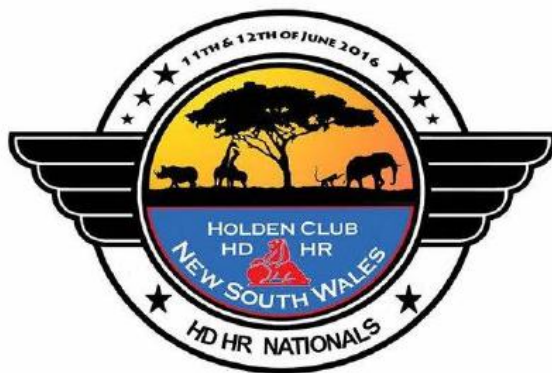
July 2016 in Retroautos

Continuing our celebration of the 50th anniversary of the HD/HR Holden, the next edition of Retroautos showcases part two of our behind-the-scenes feature story revealing how these Holdens were designed.

We have 40+ photos of the sedan and wagon, many of which have never been published before, and of the styling proposals based on the Chevrolet Nova and Solaris

Davin Cole writes about his 1952 DeSoto truck, which took him over six years to restore. We have the photos from start to finish. It is a wonderful retro yarn.

Scale models of classic cars are big business, with local and overseas producers vying for a share of the lucrative Australian market. John Pisani of *Models56* takes us behind the scenes and shares his experiences with us.



The HD/HR Nationals are in Dubbo this year, on 11th and 12th June.

From small beginnings this annual event has grown as the interest in the HD and HR has rekindled collector awareness that good quality HD and HR Holdens are now becoming hard to find.



Life Saving Classic

This 1960 Land Rover continues to have a working role saving lives and property.

Originally built as a water pumper, it went into service in the Wagga area in 1960. After a traffic accident it was bought by the Annangrove Bush Fire Brigade (for \$1,100) and used in their rural fire fighting efforts.

The original four cylinder engine had to be replaced by a Holden 186 as the weight of the Land Rover, 2.4 tonnes, tended to overwhelm the vehicle at times.

It was repainted and re-trimmed by Ultimo TAFE students in 1994.

The Land Rover is still in active service with the Baulkham Hills Rural Fire Service in NSW, though not as first responder truck.



OLD WORLD LAMPS & TYRES

OWL - *"the wise choice for your old car"*

Tyres, tubes, rustbands & lamps for Vintage, Veteran, Classic & Hot Rods

Specialising in Australian Tread Patterns

- 475/500 x 19, Dunlop Super 90 Pattern
- 440/450 x 21, Olympic Pattern
- 31 x 4, Olympic Pattern
- 32 x 4, Olympic Pattern
- 33 x 4 Olympic Pattern
- 34 x 4 Olympic Pattern
- Wards Riverside 30 x 3 1/2, the original T Model tread
- All other sizes and brands available

Suppliers of all Lucas tyres products:



Introducing Restoration Supply Downunder - Agents for Restoration Supply California
Regular containers from USA, parcels and vehicles welcome.

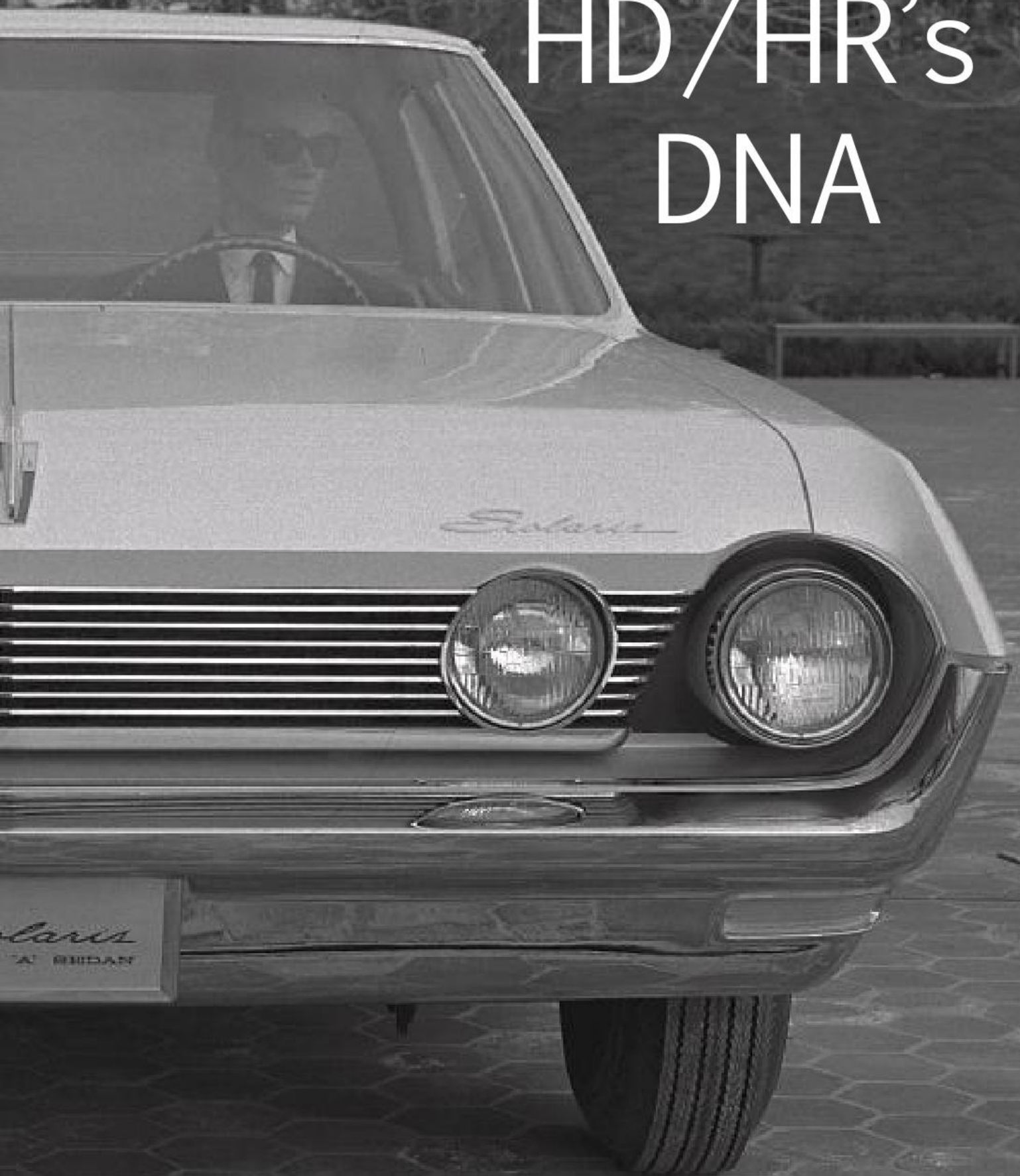
Russell & Christine Helden, Mudgee NSW, Ph. 04 222 10011

Solaris

A black and white photograph showing the front of a silver Holden Solaris. The car is parked on a cobblestone surface. The image focuses on the front grille, which features horizontal slats, and the dual round headlights. The hood and front bumper are also visible. In the background, there are trees and a fence. The word 'Solaris' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font in the upper left corner.

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the HD and HR Holden we are proud to bring you this three part feature revealing for the first time the full story behind the styling of the HD and HR.

HD/HR's DNA



All images copyright GM media 2016



17th October 1961 and the Solaris concept is seen outdoors for the first time.

For every car that has made it into production, the path from the drawing board to driveway has not been an easy one.

The sheer level of complexity of combining the styling, engineering, financial and customer requirements means compromises and changes have to be made all along the route.

It is a simple fact of automotive corporate life that more styling and engineering ideas end up in the waste paper basket than end up in our driveways.

There is one common element, however, that applies to every car and every manufacturer. It is this: every car design has to start somewhere, with someone.

And it is not necessarily a drawing on a piece of paper.

Take the Ford Mustang, for example.

It was concept that evolved from market research and product planning identifying that America's baby boomers were coming into their first jobs in the early 1960s.



They had money to spend and aspired to a sporty car that gave them independence and was definitely not something their parents would buy.

Quite simply, the Mustang was a set of numbers around which Lee Iacocca, Don Frey and Hal Sperlich underpinned with the Falcon's engineering and a new, shapely body.

Same goes for the FX Holden. It was first a package of specifications that just happened to be given a shape by GM stylist Frank Hershey, while he was between assignments at Cadillac.

Very few cars have started out as design drawings on paper. The most famous example just has to be David North's rendering which ended up as the Oldsmobile Toronado.

North drew a car, in red ink and black paper, as part of an internal competition, in 1962, at GM's Styling Centre. Designers were asked to style a car they'd like to drive. With very few changes, and a little bit of upsizing, what North drew appeared in driveways in 1966.

From quite some time we here at Retroautos have pondered about



By 31st October, 1961, the clay is finished and covered in DiNoc ,which resembles paint. Note that this is a two sided model. Right side has a kick-up along the rear door. That's Don Lasky in the photo below.



MADLER
10-31-61

37212



the styling genesis of many automobiles, including the HD Holden

The HD's styling was a significant departure from the soft, rounded shapes which had characterised Holden styling since day one.

The HD was sharp and crisp. Nothing was taken from the past (except its EH engineering underpinnings).

This car was firmly aimed at the future and demanded to be looked at. It boasted curved side windows, which most cars of the day did not have.

The rear window was visually compelling, being convex in plan view and concave in side view.

As with all Holdens before and after it, the HD was first a package of specifications.

We know that the HD was styled by Leo Pruneau and Don Lasky in 1962 in tandem with their work on the Opel Kapitän, Admiral and Diplomat range (known as KAD).

But where did the styling inspiration come from? What was the initial spark of the idea? What was the HD/HR DNA?



The Solaris was a big car, sitting on a 115 inch wheelbase. Grille comprises painted sections. Inboard parking/turn indicator lights idea was used on the HR.





So we went to see Leo Pruneau to ask him the question.

And the answer he gave us was one word: "Solaris".

Eh? Solaris? What's a Solaris?

Leo told us that the Solaris was a concept car developed by Carl Renner, Don Lasky and himself in 1961.

The Solaris was never intended for production. It was more of a ideas car for GM's design executives to consider a number of styling ideas.

Leo picks up the story.

"I had just been hired by GM in February 1961 and after an induction period was put into the Advanced Design 4 styling studio, which was managed by Carl Renner. Well, Carl was a legend in GM styling. He'd worked on every Chevrolet between 1952 and 1957, had helped style the original Corvette and had done the Nomad, so I was really lucky to be working for him."

"The Advanced Design 4 studio was related to Chevrolet's design efforts. It had a wide ranging



MADLER
11-29-61

37891

By the end of November 1961, the fibreglass model is completed and ready for evaluation.



MADLER
11-29-61

37893



The link to the HD Holden is quite obvious in this overhead photo.

brief to look into the future and come up with ideas that might be used on production cars," Leo remembers.

"Anyway, one day, in mid-1961, Bill Mitchell, the boss of GM styling, devised an internal competition. His request was for the Oldsmobile, Chevrolet, Buick and the Advanced 4 studio, to come up with a general design concept for the 1964 "A" body cars. The A body cars are the intermediate size cars (Chev Chevelle, Pontiac Tempest, Buick Skylark etc) and they shared many common inner panels across the GM range."

"What was unusual about it all was that Advanced studios did not generally become involved in these kind of styling 'shootouts'. I found out later that Bill Mitchell had a reason."

"He had been trying to convince GM's senior management to use curved side glass and doors and to move away from straight up-and-down doors and door frames. But he could not get anyone to listen to him."

"So, part of Carl Renner's job was to incorporate curved side glass and doors into his competition car."



Grille on fibreglass model is now fine chromed blades.

"Anyway, all the studios were given the specifications for the car—height, width, weight, passenger capacity, wheel base, track—and asked to come back with a finished clay concept in a couple of months."

"Ours was finished by late October as a painted clay model, and we had a fibreglass model done by the end of November 1961. Carl named it the 'Solaris', Leo said.

Along with the other studio concepts the Solaris was evaluated by GM senior management and to everyone's

surprise the Solaris won the competition.

Says Leo: "The Solaris came back from the evaluation and almost immediately all the chief designers came to have a look at it and then it was taken away to the Chevrolet studio."

In late 1961 Don Lasky and Leo were transferred to the International Styling studio where they were given two assignments by Bill Mitchell.

The first was to design the 1964 Opel Kapitän/Admiral/Diplomat and the second was to do the HD Holden.



Concave/convex rear window is a major styling feature.



Rejected early, the Nova-like proposal for the HD Holden (above) and Opel (below)



Some preliminary work had already started on the Opel and the Holden in late 1961. The proposals were little more than variations on the recently released Chevy Nova. (see photos at left)

Neither proposal satisfied Bill Mitchell and, after seeing the Solaris, he gave the Opel and Holden tasks to Lasky and Pruneau.

This was an easy decision for Mitchell to make because, in early in 1961, after seeing and not liking the Australian developed EJ proposal, he decided to relieve Holden of its overall styling responsibilities and transfer it all



MADLER
11-29-61

Solaris

Curved body sides and windows/doors is clearly evident in these images.



MADLER 3-13-62

40043

Opel



MADLER
8-22-62

43710

Note the HD prototype's reversing lights under the bumper bar and triple lens tail lights.

to Detroit. During June and July of 1961 Mitchell directed a quick re-make of the EJ and the EH into something he thought was more in keeping with his design philosophy. And, of course, no one argued with Bill Mitchell.

It is against this background that Don Lasky and Leo Pruneau found themselves with two important cars to design and Bill Mitchell looking over their shoulders. So it was only natural that they turned to the Solaris for design for inspiration, as the photos show.

All of the Solaris's styling motifs are used—the jutting front fender blades, the curved side glass, the concave/convex rear window, the fine chrome bars of the grille, the up-turned front bumper bars, the leading edge of the bonnet which is notched to enclose the head lights, parking lights embedded in the grille and the crisp side profile with the well defined crease line running from front to back.

(story continues on page 27).



Solaris



Holden

The Solaris DNA is obvious when the Opel and Holden are compared. The Opel, with a 112 inch wheelbase, is the closest in size to the Solaris, which sat on a 115 inch wheel base. The Opel was five inches wider, fifteen inches longer and two inches lower than the HD. Holden's planners also insisted on a tight wheelbase of just 106 inches, as a cost saving measure, so the car lost some of the Solaris's styling embellishments that Opel's longer premium product would carry. The production Opel featured large single rectangular headlights.



Opel



MADLER 3-13-62

40047



Solaris

MADLER 3-13-62

40042



MADLER
11-29-61

37000

Opel



Although Holden demanded the HD (still coded EF) conform to strict dimensions, which included an SUV-like 9 inches of ground clearance, 13 inch diameter wheels and re-use of the dated, narrow EH track, Don Lasky and Leo Pruneau were able to transfer the main Solaris design elements to meet the penny pinching Australian requirements. This photo was taken on 22nd August 1962 when Holden senior managers were in Detroit to view the proposal.

It's all there on the HD and Opel, just a little less extreme than what was on the Solaris.

Indeed, in May 1962, when Leo was evaluating an early clay model of the HD, the Solaris was placed alongside as a reference point.

Part two of our HD/HR design story continues in the July 2016

edition with a focus on the development of the sedan and wagon, including never seen before images of the proposed Chevrolet Nova-based HD and the wagon.

Part three, in the August 2016, covers the interiors, commercials the HR sedan and the prototype HR coupe.

Solaris Designers



Carl Renner

LA RUE
1-16-57

Carl Renner, who directed the Solaris project, was diagnosed with having a growth on his spinal cord not long after it was finished. He lost the use of his legs.

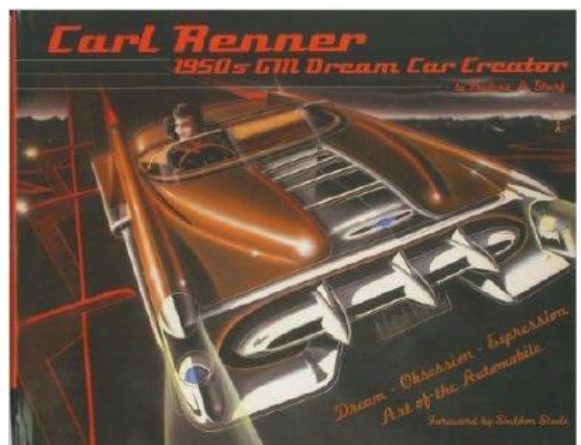
For the next 28 years until he retired he undertook styling consultancy and teaching roles within GM.

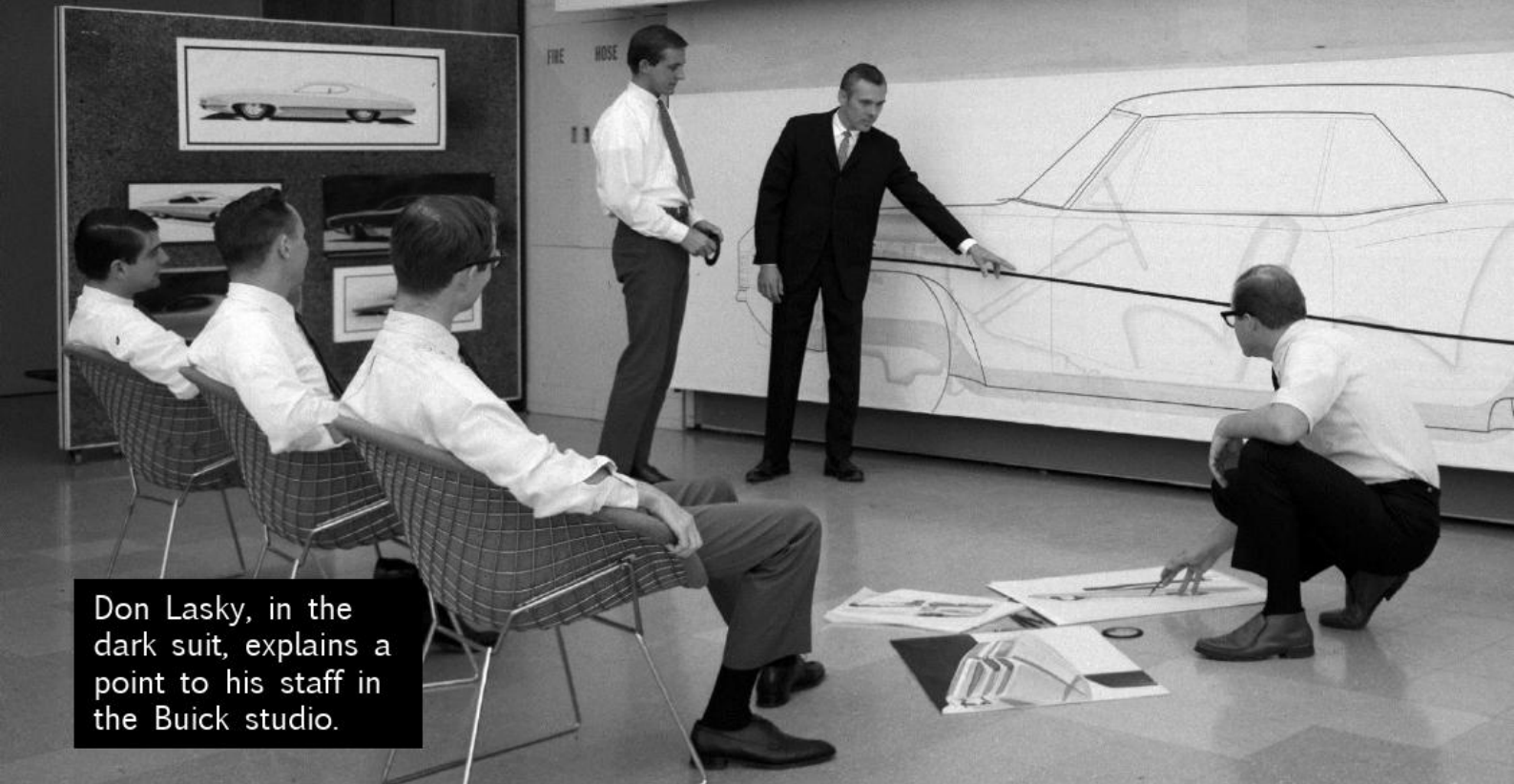
Renner was responsible for many of GM's mid-fifties dream cars, including the Nomad, La Salle II convertible, the Chevrolet Impala and the Cadillac Cyclone.

There's a great book written about the cars Renner designed, authored by Fred Sharf. It's available on Amazon. (cover image below).

The careers of both Don and Leo diverged after they did the Solaris, HD and Opel

Don would go on the head up styling for Buick and then Chevrolet, while Leo went to Chevrolet, then to Vauxhall and finally to Holden as its styling boss.





Don Lasky, in the dark suit, explains a point to his staff in the Buick studio.



Leo Pruneau at his drawing board in the Advance Studio, circa 1961.

1954 Vauxhall



Always In

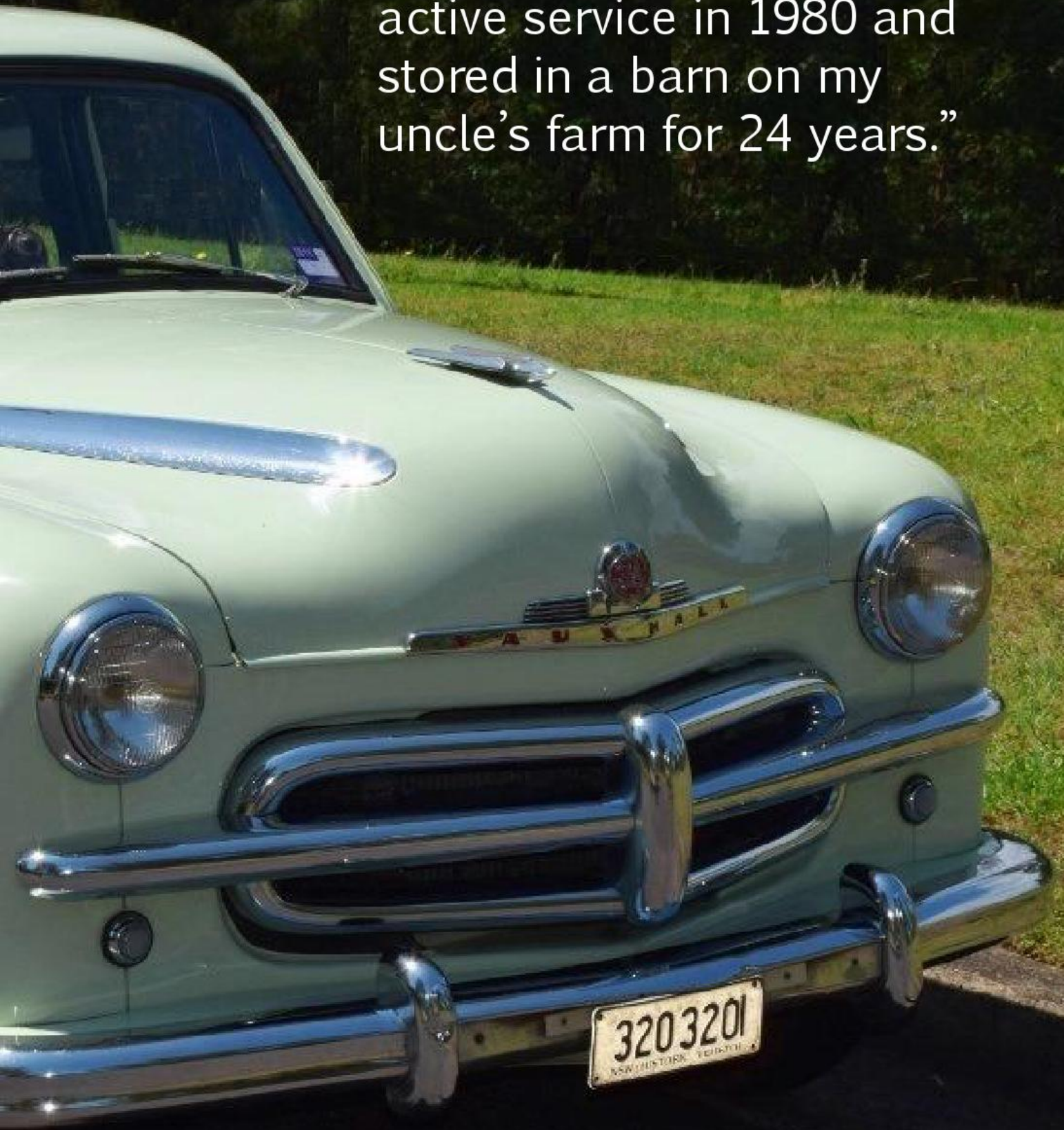
Velox



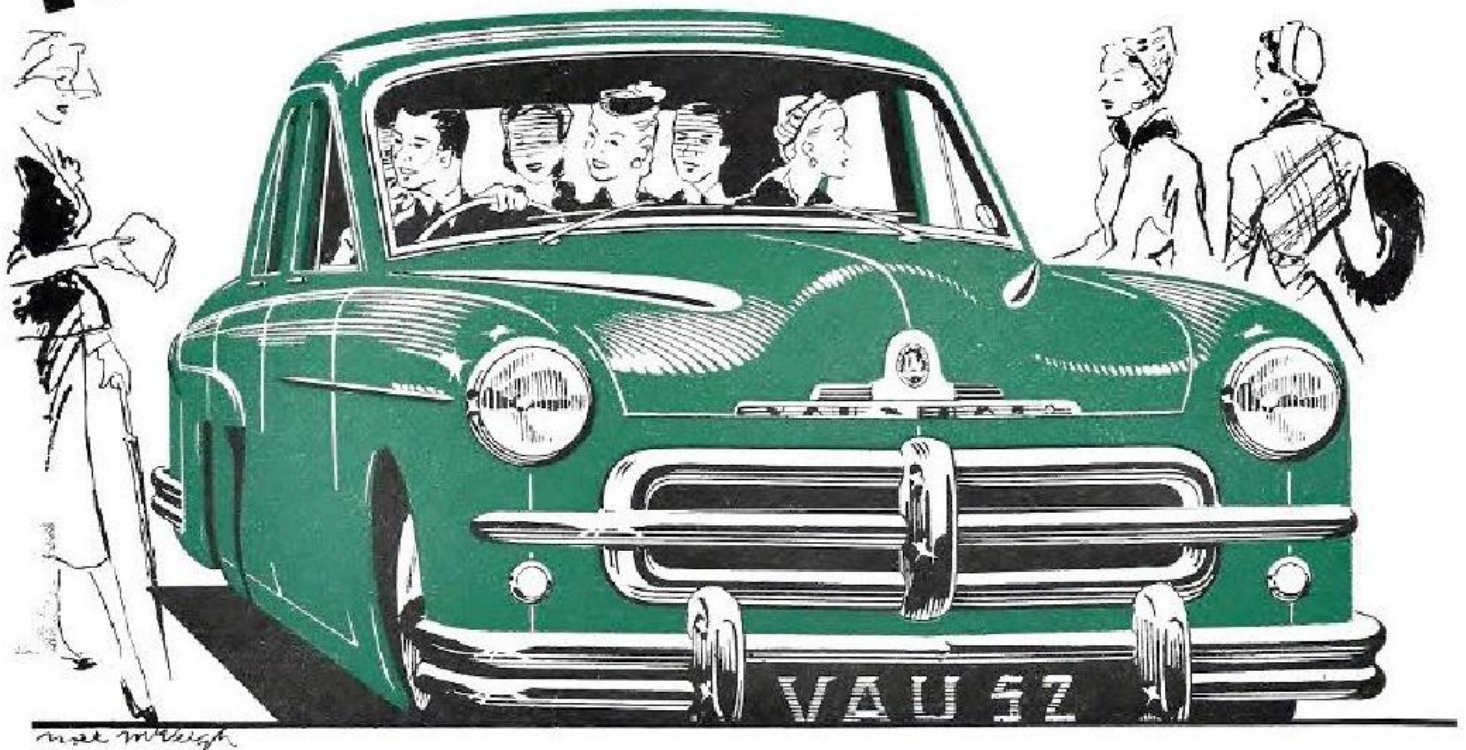
The Family



“It had been retired from active service in 1980 and stored in a barn on my uncle’s farm for 24 years.”



PRESENTING THE
Big
NEW VAUXHALLS



Entirely new Velox and Wyvern models

Years ahead in engineering leadership

Vauxhall advertisements kindly provided by David Booker of the Vauxpedia website.
It is the best Vauxhall website in the world. Go to: www.vauxpedianet.uk2sitebuilder.com



Peter Sara's Vauxhall Velox has been in his family since new.

"My grandparents ordered and bought it in July 1954 from the Boyded dealership in Castlereagh St in Sydney", he told us recently.

"They had decided to buy an FJ Holden but the waiting list was very long, so they chose the more up market Velox instead, as it had a shorter wait time". Peter explains.

"The deposit was paid by my father, as neither of my grandparents drove".

The car was assembled at Holden's Pagewood factory in Sydney and Peter's grandparents waited until December 1954 before it was delivered. It came with two accessories: a dashboard fan and chromed wheel dress rings.

Both items are still with the car today.

Home From Hospital

The "E" series Velox spent most of its time in Sydney's eastern suburbs being driven by Peter's uncle.

It was the car in which Peter and his mother were driven home from hospital after Peter was born.

Peter acquired the Vauxhall in 2004.

"It had been retired from active service in 1980 and stored in a barn on my uncle's farm for those 24 years", he says.

The years it had remained stationary caused a few headaches.





Peter explains that "When I got it back to my garage I discovered that the motor had seized so that required some work to get going."

"The radiator and brakes also needed some work. In fact when I first got the car started it blew a complete rat's nest out the exhaust, splitting the muffler wide open. At that point I also decided to replace the exhaust system as well. Other than that, not much has been done to it."

The old paint was fading so Peter stripped it back and redid it in the original green.

The upholstery has been replaced.

Elsewhere the patina of age gives the car a unique charm.



1951 UK Debut

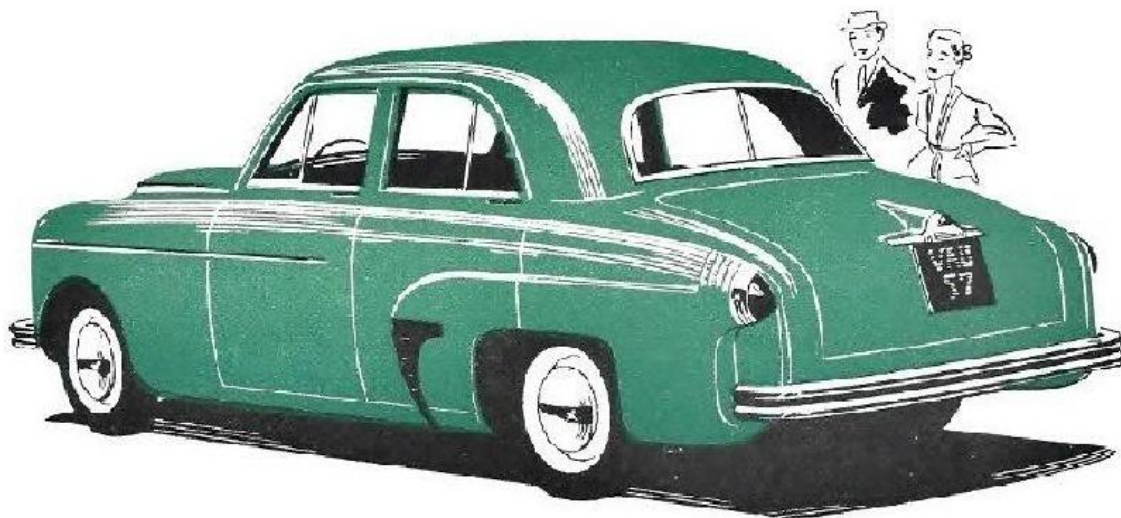
The six cylinder E series Velox and its cheaper four cylinder Wyvern sibling debuted in the UK in October 1951.

The model's styling, based on the 1949 Chevrolet .

The range was updated in October 1954 with a new grille, revised rear



THE BIG NEW VAUXHALLS



Great lead in design and engineering features

Means more for the motorist



lights, dashboard and trim. The more up market Cresta model also appeared at this time.

In Australia the E series Vauxhall was released in 1952, by Holden. It was assembled from CKD (completely knocked down) packs.

Vauxhalls were advertised and priced as being a cut above the ordinary FJ Holden. The Velox had

better interior appointments such as a centre armrest in the back seat, a more modern dashboard.

The engine was the 2.26 litre six cylinder unit fitted to the UK cars.

The Vauxhall's styling put it way ahead in the visual department when compared to FJ Holden, the shape of which was firmly anchored in the early 1940s.







The Velox looks longer than the FJ Holden but that's an optical illusion caused by its 10mm lower height.

Everywhere else its dimensions match the Holden.

Two endearing features of the early E series range was the camshell bonnet, which opened from either side, and the door windows which slide up and down on counter weights.

The Velox was the top of the Vauxhall "E" series range in Australia. The Wyvern was the entry level offering.

Also in the local range was an Australian-only convertible called the Vagabond and a utility.

The 1954 Velox is not Peter's only Vauxhall. He has a couple of others in his fleet, including a rare 1940 Caleche, which was seen in the February 2016 edition of Retroautos.

And keeping it well within the family, Peter's brother owns a 1955 Wyvern.

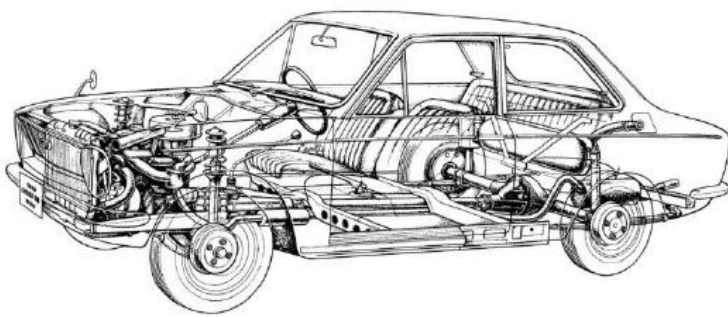
Peter is also very much involved in the Vauxhall Club at a state and national level.







50 YEARS



Can it be true? Yes, it is!

The Toyota Corolla has been with us for 50 years.

Australia was its first export market, with the initial boatload of cars landing in November 1966 at very attractive prices.

Potential buyers immediately saw the value proposition.

For here was a small car, exceptionally well built, with a 1.1 litre engine, reclining bucket seats, radio and heater and all at around the same price as everyone else's bare bones offering.

But wait, there's more.

You could have it with a snappy, all synchromesh four speed manual or an optional automatic transmission. Remember, this was at a time when most local manufacturers made buyers pay extra if they wanted an all-synco manual and an automatic was still a "luxury".





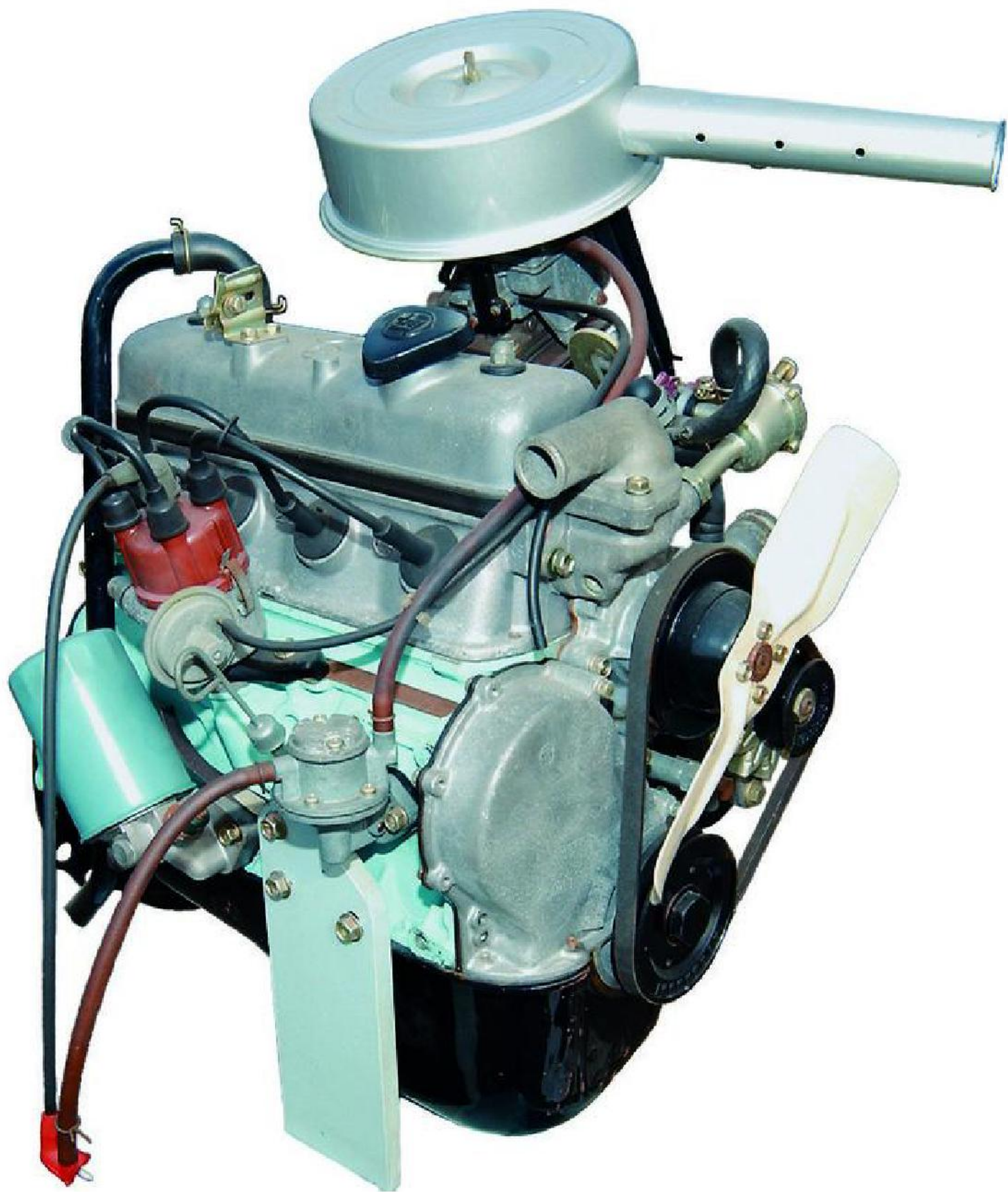
The Corolla also carried Toyota's new K series engine, which many engine tuners now consider to be the four cylinder equivalent of Chevrolet's legendary small block V8.

Toyota's timing was perfect for Australia. The Corolla came just as the baby boomer generation were looking for their first new car and an increasing number of families could afford a second, new car.

Sales jumped right from the get-go and prompted Toyota Australia to manufacture it locally from 1968.

That the Corolla met with world-wide consumer success is no accident. Its Chief Engineer, Tatsuo Hasegawa, sought to exceed consumer's expectations of what a small car ought to be. He believed smallness did not equate to being cheap and low quality. He pushed his team to meet rigorous global quality standards





And the hard work paid off.

By 1974, the Corolla was the best-selling car in the world.

Toyota claims the Corolla name is a Latin derivation of the term “crown of flowers”.

The first generation Corolla is an ideal choice for those wanting their first classic car. It's simple to work on and parts are plentiful.

We saw good one on Carsguide recently for \$9,000.



Below: Corolla at the Japanese Motor Show.



The Chrysler Thunderbolt

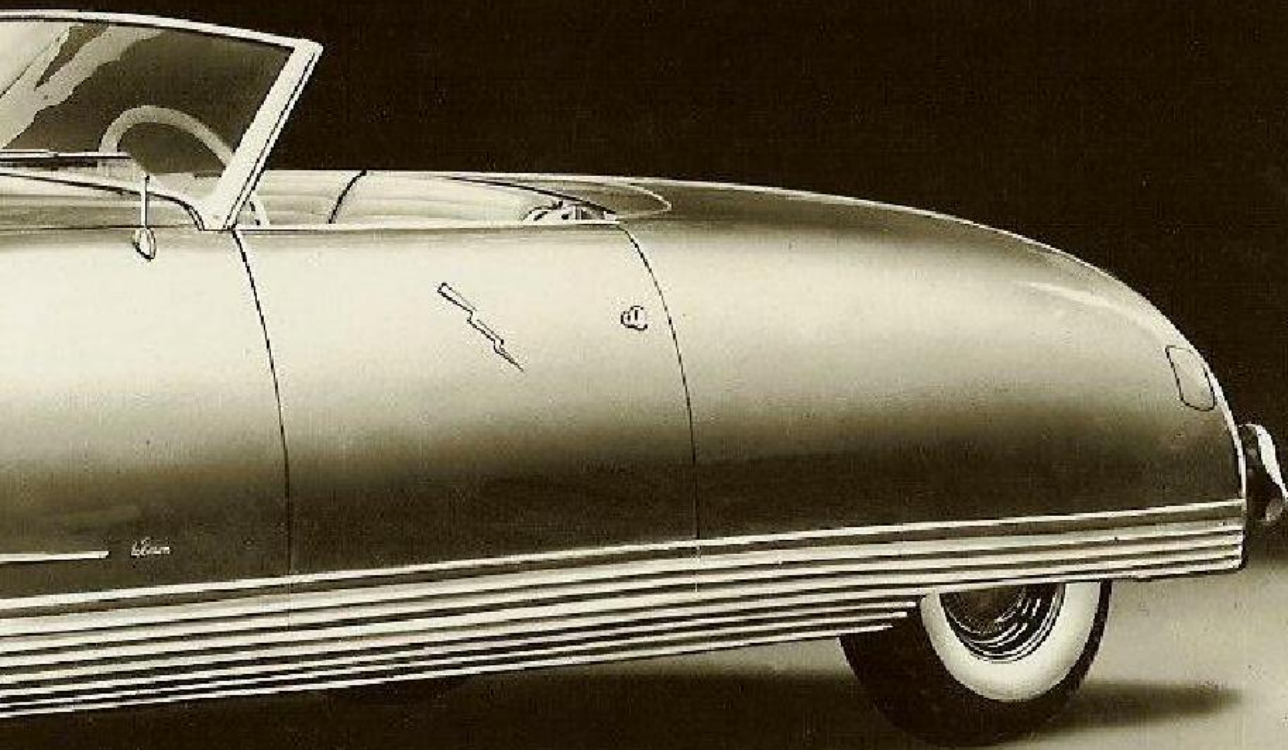
1941

*"...the very first convertible with a
fully-retractable hard top..."*



Photos from RM Sotheby, the Henry Ford Museum, Chrysler Museum, Chicago
Vintage Motor Carriage museum and Retroautos files.

*75th Anniversary
of Chrysler's First
Dream Car*







The green Thunderbolt is known as the “Copper Car”, due to its copper trim and roof.

This year marks the 75th Anniversary of Chrysler’s first dream car, the Thunderbolt.

It was named after the land speed record-holding car that Captain George Eyston drove at 357.53 mph over the measured mile at the Bonneville Salt Flats 1938.

In 1940, the business of building dream or concept cars was still in its infancy. The showcasing of potential future styling and innovations was effectively pioneered just two years earlier by Harley Earl with his groundbreaking Buick Y-Job.

The Thunderbolt arose from a desire by Chrysler’s President K.T. Keller to draw more new customers to his dealerships and create increased awareness of Chrysler as a serious player in the automotive industry.

At the same time, over at the LeBaron coach building company, a young stylist Alex Tremulis, had persuaded his boss, Ralph Richards, to make a pitch to Chrysler to design two dream cars, largely as a way to help LeBaron’s custom car building business, which had suffered badly during the Great Depression.

The outcome was the styling and building of two quite different dream cars, the Chrysler Newport and the Thunderbolt.

The Newport (pictured below), styled by Richards, was a dual phaeton design, and five were built. One paced the 1941 Indianapolis 500, the only non-production car to ever be bestowed that honour.





The 1941 Chrysler Newport.

The Newport was modern-looking, with flowing styling, but it did not depart from the design language of the late 1930s.

The Thunderbolt, on the other hand, was way out there in the future. This was the stuff that dreams were made of. Five were built.

Tremulis styled a full-envelope body with retractable headlights.

And if that was not futuristic enough, he asked for and got the very first convertible with a fully-retractable hard top, which was designed, developed and patented by Ralph Roberts.

The Thunderbolt was shorter than the Newport, with seating for three on a wide bench seat.

Another unique design feature was the lack of recognisable grille.

The air intakes were cleverly located below the front bumper.

The car sat on a 127.5-inch New Yorker chassis and had a 323.5-cubic inch, "Spitfire" L-head inline eight-cylinder engine rated at 140 HP.

The Thunderbolt also used a prototype version of the three-speed Fluid Drive transmission that was not to go into production until after WWII.

More out-of-this-world features for 1941 included push-button door switches both inside and out. The interior was lavishly appointed in leather and Bedford cord. It was also the first modern car to use back-lit, Lucite-edged illuminated dashboard gauges.

And let's not forget it boasted the first one-piece curved windscreen.



But without a shadow of a doubt, the single feature which brought an incredible 10,000 people a day whenever it appeared at a dealership, was the electrically operated, retractable hardtop.

One switch activated three separate synchronized operations that caused the top to retract into a space behind the bench seat.

Access to the boot was provided by a fully automatic sliding rear boot lid. Make no mistake, for 1941 this was a significant automotive engineering feat, and one that was not seen again on a production car until the 1957 Ford Fairlane 500 Skyliner.

Chrysler trailed and showed both cars around the USA during the summer of 1941.



Below: Alex Tremulis working on the 1948 Tucker.





After they had done the show circuit Chrysler sold all the Newports and four of the five Thunderbolts. Automotive legend has it that Chrysler put a price on each car of \$A10,000, at a time when a basic Plymouth was \$A900.

All of the Newports and four of the five Thunderbolts still exist.

The existing Thunderbolts are green (known as the *Copper Car*), red, black and silver.

Chrysler retained the silver one, which is now in the Chrysler Museum in Detroit. The Retroautos team saw it there a couple of years ago. It is truly awesome in real life.

The red car has gone across the auction blocks a few times. According to Hemmings it was originally sold to the Vice President of Mexico and then made it way back to the USA. It sold at auction in 2008 for \$A1.6 million.

The black car is currently in the hands of American collector Richard Driehaus of Chicago, and is displayed at the Chicago Vintage Motor Carriage museum. It is pictured above.

Go here: www.chicagovintage.com

The Copper Car was sold at auction in 2011 for \$A1.2 million. The story of the original owner is on the next page.



No one knows what happened to the fifth car.

The legacy of the Thunderbolt cannot be underestimated. Alex Tremulis' slab sided styling was copied and recopied by all manufacturers in the late forties.

Tremulis went on to style many classics, including the '48 Tucker (right). For a decade up to 1963 he led Ford's advanced styling efforts. The 1961 TBird "bullet bird" was a Tremulis car. While at Ford he championed a three wheels car called the Gyron. (below)

In 1963 he set up his own design consultancy. His last design was the 1977 Subaru Brat. (bottom.)



Movie actor Bruce Cabot (below) bought the "Copper" Thunderbolt in 1942. Cabot was never a big star but he was mates with Errol Flynn and John Wayne, so he often appeared in their movies. He made and lost a couple of financial fortunes during his career. His last role was as the Bert Saxby character in the James Bond film *Diamonds Are Forever*.











Thunderbolt on display at the Chrysler Museum in Detroit






Close up of the Thunderbolt



RetroAuctions



How is this for cute! It's a 1958 Autobianchi and is yours if you bid high enough at RM Sotheby's event in Monaco on May 14th. It is a no reserve car.

RM Sotheby and Bonhams have auctions in Monaco on 13th and 14th May to coincide with the Formula 1 Grand Prix.

There's all manner of Ferrari, Porsche and Mercedes up for a hammering with million dollar price guides.

But we like the Autobianchi the best of them all.

www.rmsothebys.com

1975 Lincoln Continental Mark V at Auctions America







Auctions America, which is owned by RM Sothebys, have their spring extravaganza in Auburn, Indiana, on May 5th. Now, why would you want a 1968 Monaro when you can cruise the highways in this 1975 Lincoln Continental Mark V, at a no reserve price guide of around \$13,000? It's a steal at that money! These big Lincolns are gaining favour as one of THE 1970s classics to have. Photos courtesy of Auctions America. www.auctionsamerica.com



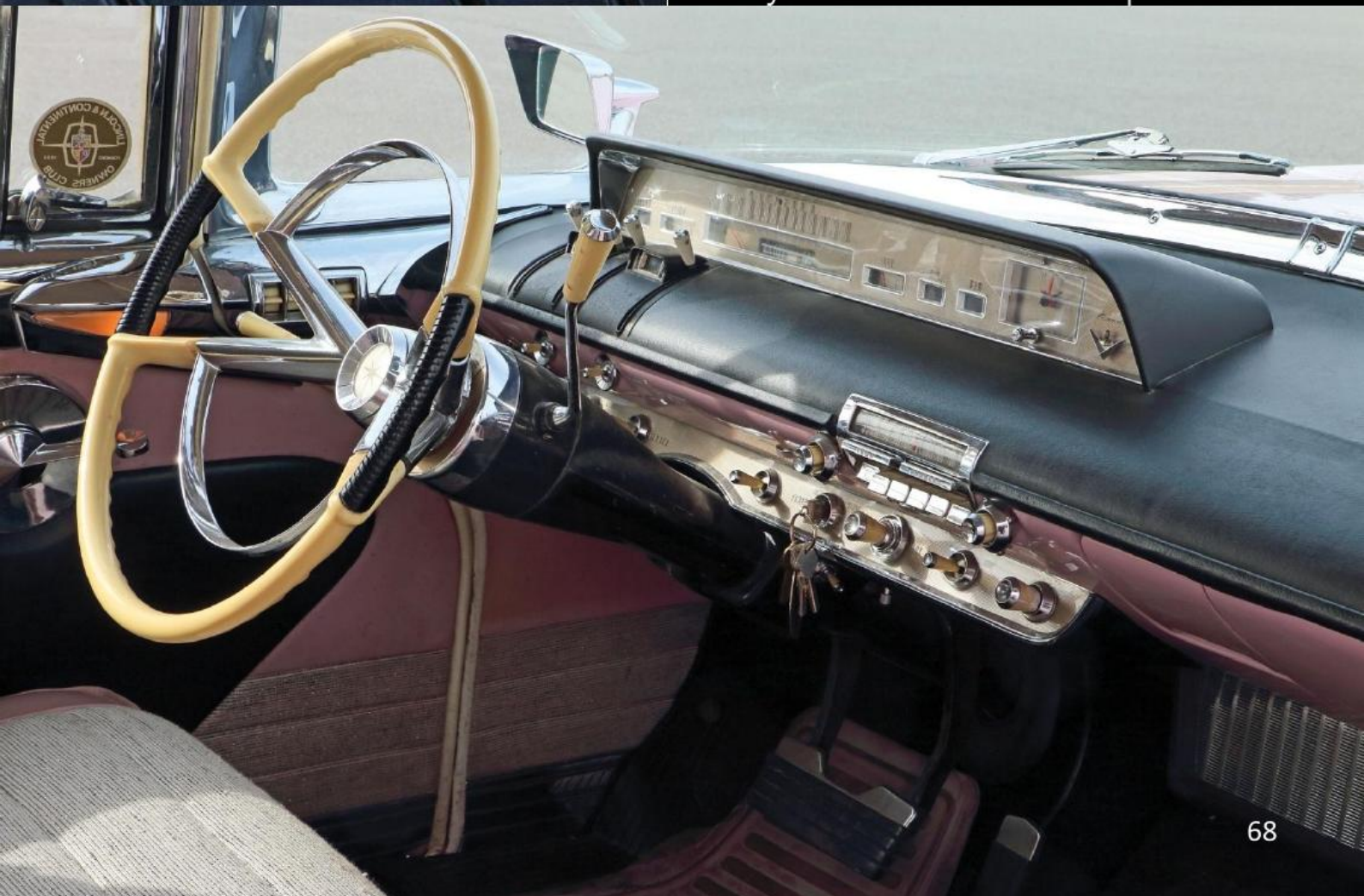


Above: A 1909 Brush at Auctions America. No reserve price guide of \$A33,000.
Below: 1950 Chevrolet coupe. \$A24,000 price guide with no reserve. Photos courtesy of Auctions America. www.auctionsamerica.com





1956 Lincoln Premiere Sedan at Auctions America. Try as they might in the 1950s the guys and gals at Lincoln could not find just the right styling to match Cadillac. But they tried very hard. Take a look at the dashboard. There are all manner of levers and dials, knobs and buttons. And check out the two brake pedal levers, no doubt for strength when you had to clamp both feet on the brake pedal in order to provoke the drum brakes into some form of action. This is another no reserve car, with a mere \$A37,000 price guide. The colour is Amethyst and the interior is pink and white.





We think this one is almost being given away! It is a 1977 Chrysler Cordoba, with T-Tops. Auctions America have a price guide on it of just \$A8,000. And no reserve, too. So it could go for much less. Photos courtesy of Auctions America. www.auctionsamerica.com





Above: Bonhams Monaco show on 13th May has a 1952 Jaguar C type sports racing looking for a new owner. Price guide here is around \$A7,000,000.

Below: Meanwhile on 21st May, Bonhams are also hammering the Aston Marin Works Sale in the UK. Here's a 1954 DB 2-4 drophead coupe. It is expected to fetch \$470,000





Above: 1950 Tatra T87 on offer at a Bonhams event on 6th June in Connecticut, USA. Nice to see all three headlights work on this rare, rear engined sedan.

Below: A 1965 DB5. at Bonhams Aston Martin works sale. They suggest around \$A1,000,000 will get this one in your garage.

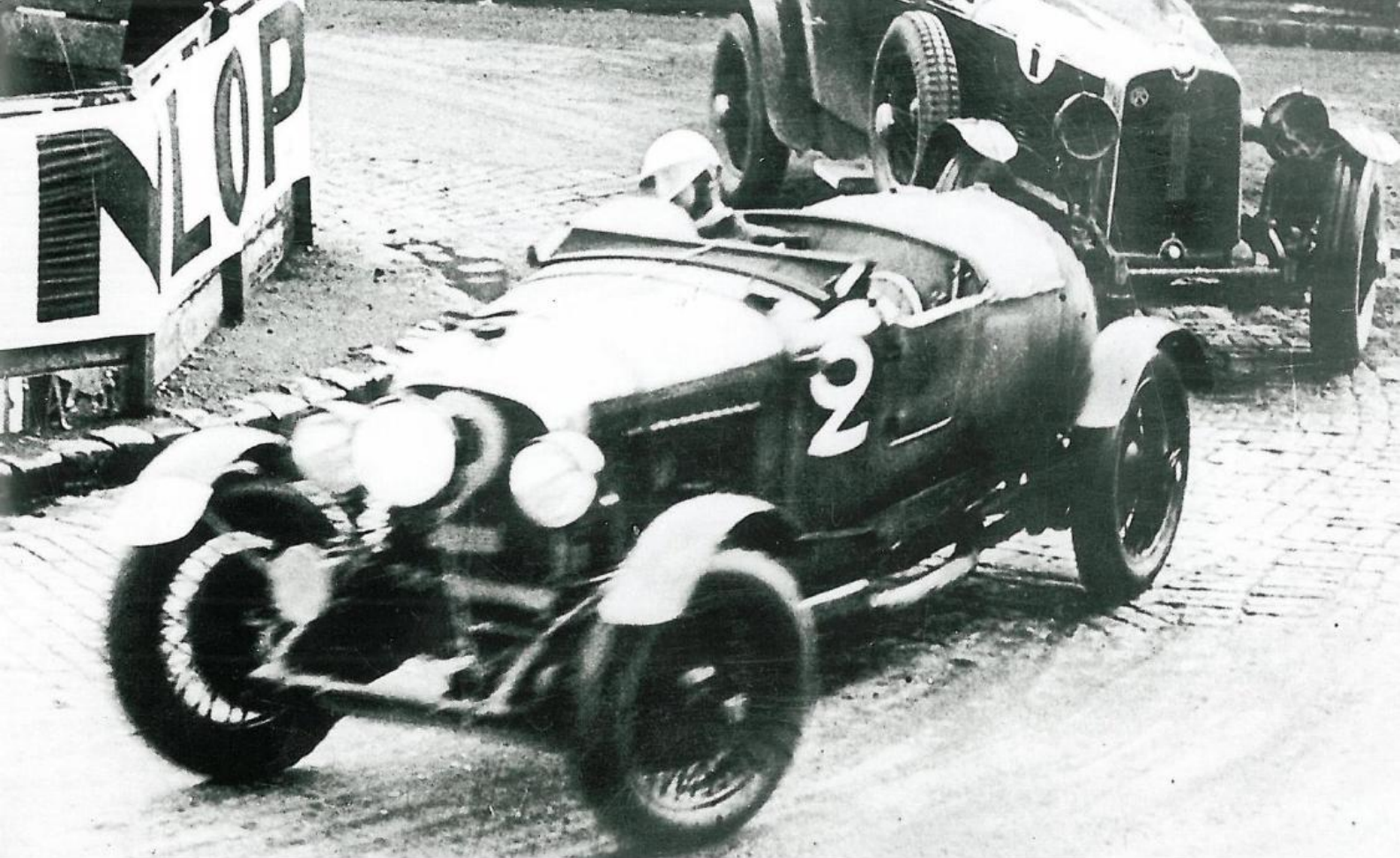


Barons in the UK have this nice 1958 6-90 Wolseley with a price guide of around \$A12,000.





We are back with RM Sothebys at Monaco. Yes, it is a Tucker. One of 51 built. This is number 48 and the only one in Europe. So, what will it go for? Above one million (AUD) is our guess.
Photo credits and copyright go to Tom Gidden. www.rmsothebys.com



RetroRacing

Above: 1928 at Le Mans, with Bentley running one and two.

Below: July 4th, 1914, the French Grand Prix, held near Lyon. That's Max Sailer in a Mercedes leading the race in the opening laps. Each lap was 38 kilometres on public roads. Sailer retired on lap five with a blown engine. Eight weeks later Germany and France would be at war.





U 10810

On 4 November 1962, after completing 4626 kilometres, Ewy Rosqvist and her co-driver Ursula Wirth emerged victorious in the Touring Car Grand Prix of Argentina rally in their Mercedes-Benz.





100th Running of the Indy 500

This year sees the 100th running of the Indy 500. The Retroautos crew has made the pilgrimage to the Indianapolis Racing Museum four times. Here are just a few of the cars from the fabulous roadster era, 1950 to 1964, which many believe were golden days of the Indianapolis 500.





Johnnie Parsons won the 1950 Indy in this Kurtis Kraft built Offenhauser powered roadster that had seen track time across the USA before it made its way to "the big left turn". The Indy race was the third round of the World Championship in 1950, and the win allowed Parsons to share the championship point lead with Juan Manuel Fangio at the time. Parsons started the race in 5th and went to the lead on lap 23. The event was shortened by rain, finishing at lap 138 rather than the regulation 200 laps. Hollywood movie actors Clark Gable and Barbara Stanwyck were at the track filming their movie "To Please A Lady", which was all about midget, sprint car and Indy car racing. It is a realistic portrayal of oval track racing in the 1950s, when roll cages were non-existent and deadly accidents common.



Jim Rathmann won the 1960 Indy 500 in this AJ Watson built, Offenhauser engined Ken-Paul Special roadster after a race long duel with Roger Ward in another Watson car. Rathmann became a successful GM dealer in Florida and supplied all of the NASA astronauts with cars, including their signature Corvettes. Celebrated oval track author Joe Scalzo, in his book *Indianapolis Roadsters*, observes that this car is not the actual original winning car, rather a composite of Watson cars. The original race car had holes drilled everywhere to save weight.

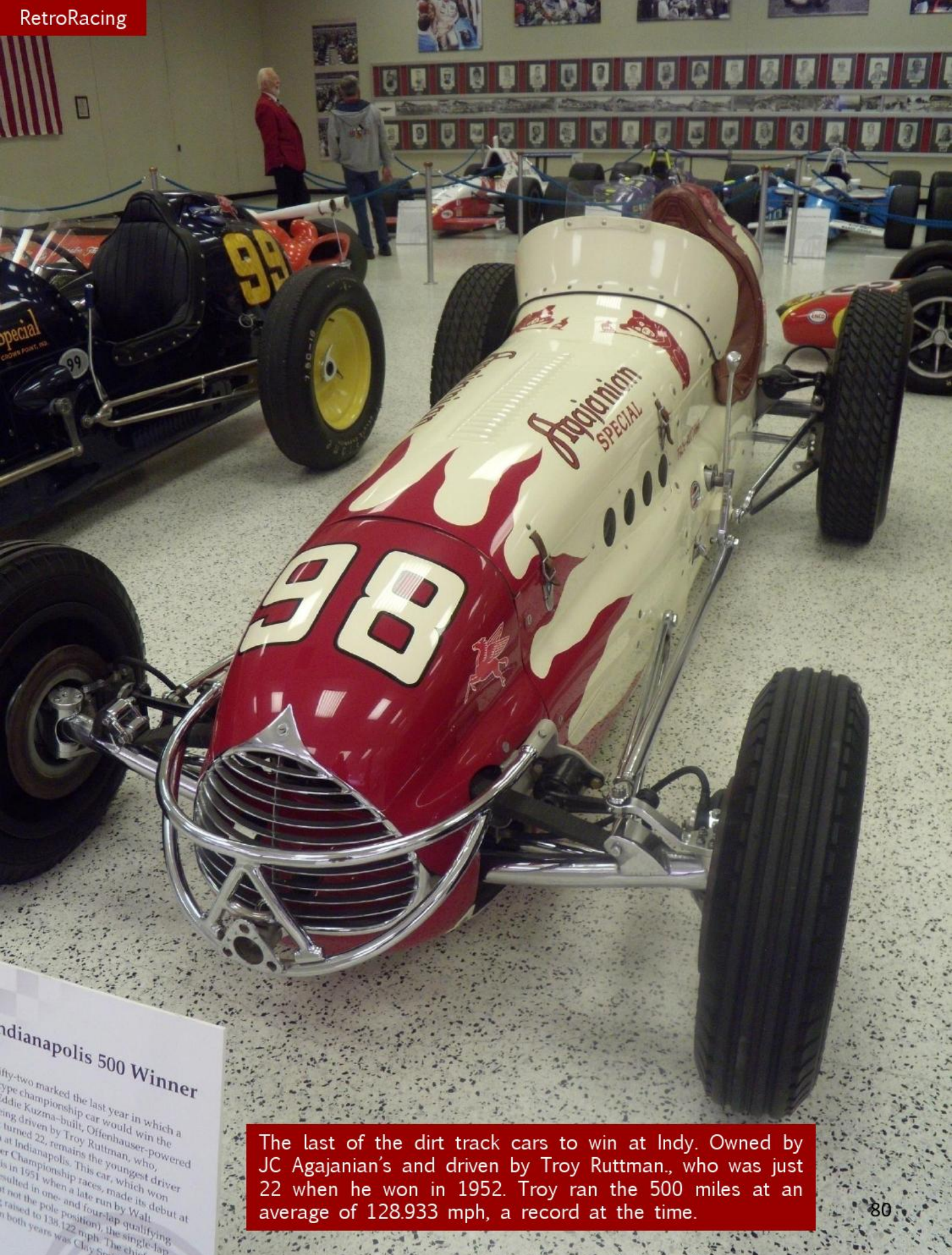




Above: AJ Foyt's first win came in 1961 in this George Bignotti wrenched car. Built by Floyd Trevis, it was a Watson copy.

Below: Larry Shinoda, then a GM stylist, had a hand in the styling of the Ken Paul Special, having given the Watson cars their trademark twin nostril front end in 1959. Shinoda also was on the pit crew, holding the lap time board. He left GM, went to Ford and helped design Boss Mustangs.





Indianapolis 500 Winner

...fifty-two marked the last year in which a
...type championship car would win the
...ing Kuzma-built, Offenhauser-powered
...turned 22, remains the youngest driver
...at Indianapolis. This car, which won
...er Championship races, made its debut at
...is in 1951 when a late run by Walt
...resulted in one- and four-lap qualifying
...not the pole position, the single-lap
...raised to 138.122 mph. The chief-lap
...n both years was Clay Scott.

The last of the dirt track cars to win at Indy. Owned by JC Agajanian's and driven by Troy Ruttman., who was just 22 when he won in 1952. Troy ran the 500 miles at an average of 128.933 mph, a record at the time.



Above: Until the Ford V8 came to dominate Indy, about the only engine noise you heard was the characteristic bark of the four cylinder Offenhauser exiting unmuffled through four chrome pipes.

Below left: Another Agajanian winning car, this one was driven by Parnelli Jones in 1963.

Below right: 1964 winner. It made AJ Foyt a two time winner, and was the last Roadster to win. Fittingly, it is a Watson built car.



Of all the Indy Roadsters, the #8 Zink is the Retroautos favourite. Driven to the 1956 win by Pat Flaherty for car owner John Zink it was built by A.J. Watson, and is his very first roadster. The lightweight car used magnesium panels and weighed only about 1,700 pounds (670kg). Flaherty thrilled the spectators by hiking the left-front wheel several inches above the ground as he dirt-tracked the flexible chassis around the Speedway. He led 127 of the 200 laps and had the throttle linkage break just a few seconds after he had taken the chequered flag. The level of hand built craftsmanship on this race car is exceptional. Watson may have built faster cars, but none were as pretty as this one, styled by Larry Shinoda.



1956 Indianapolis 500 Winner

Although he had previously built cars for Indianapolis, it was his 1956 creation which is considered the first A.J. Watson "roadster," the tale being a rather confusing nickname given by the collaboration in a car that Frank Kurtis built by working with Frank Coon and Pat Flaherty. Flaherty drove in the 1955 Indianapolis 500 (1,700-pound) led by a competitor, but he qualified and led the race.







The 1956 Watson Roadster. The tube jutting from the grille is where the shaft for the external started motor was inserted.

“A couple of cars got upside down as I was passing them, and then I knew what the crowd wanted to see.”



Gary Patterson in Brisbane.
Photos from the Retroautos collection.



The Great Gary Patterson

On Memorial Day in the USA this year, a few of us will stop to remember that 33 years ago one of the most talent sprint car drivers in the world died.

No one knew Gary Patterson when he first stepped off the plane in Sydney from Los Angeles for the 1971/72 summer speedway season in Australia.

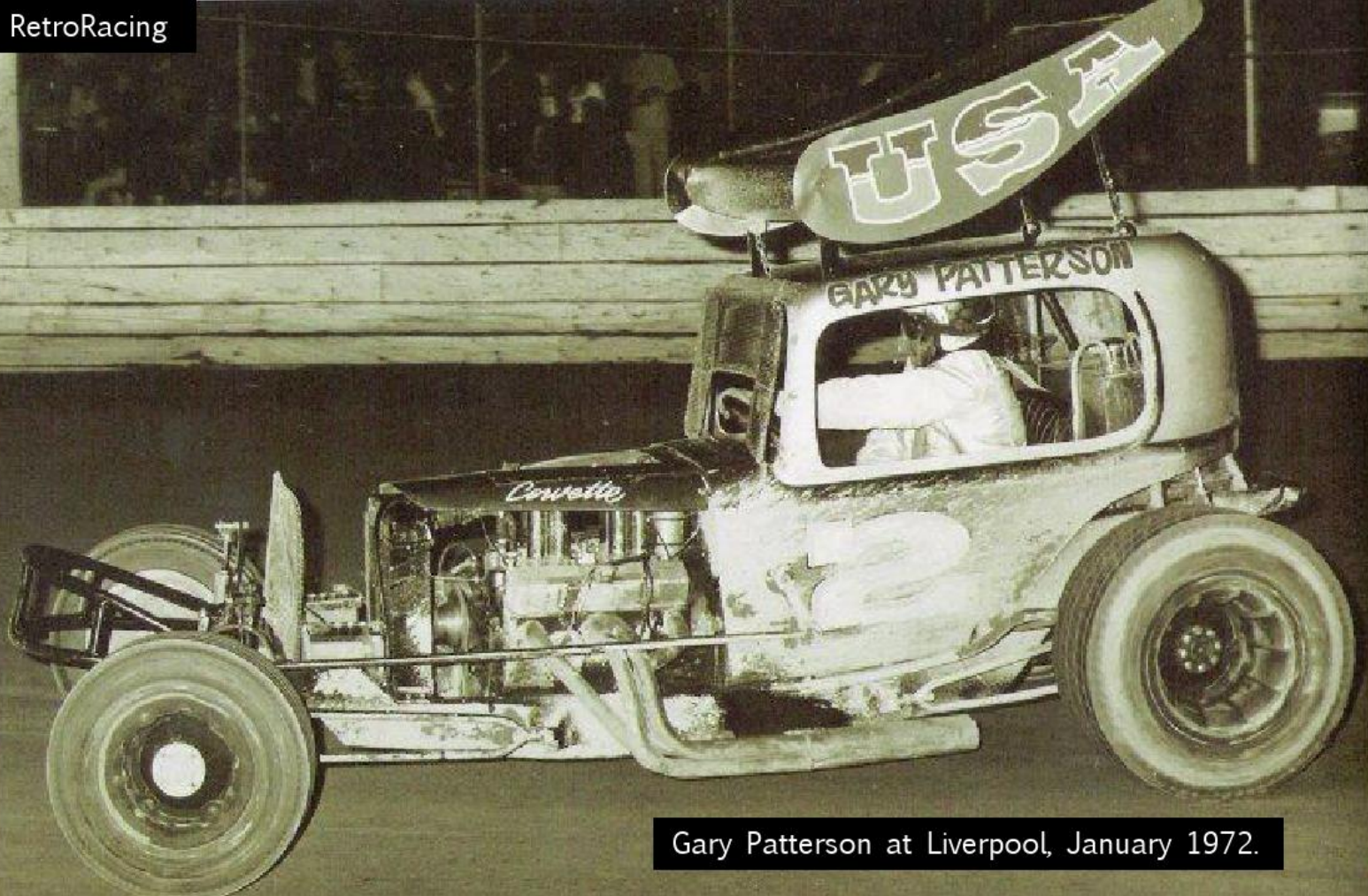
But when he left everyone knew about Gary Patterson—GP. Patto, the Hostile Hippy!

Strapping into a local race car he proceeded to intimidate the locals where ever he raced.

“A couple of cars got upside down as I was passing them, and then I knew what the crowd wanted to see”, he told motorsports journalist, Dennis Newlyn.

Mike Raymond, the then manager of Liverpool Speedway, upped the ante by labelling him the Hostile Hippy, because of his (then) long hair and peace signs on his racing suit and car.

Patterson willingly played it up big time. When introduced to fans he'd bag the local drivers, calling them a bunch of deported limeys and questioning their driving skills.



Gary Patterson at Liverpool, January 1972.

Then he's go out, start from the rear of the field and win the main event by a long margin.

He was the Yank the fans loved to hate. He drew sell out crowds. Speedway promoters loved him. He made them money.

By the time the '73/74 summer racing season rolled around, anticipation of another Patterson tour was high.

Ahead of the tour Patto sent word that he'd become an ordained minister of a small church in the USA.

"Cost me \$10 for the preachers licence" he told fans.

Mike Raymond, who always had a sharp eye for a great advertising line, billed him as "The Preacher."

In January 1974 he was a member of the USA team in one of those a classic USA

versus Australia sedan and sprintcar test series at Liverpool.

The then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was also there.

On being introduced to Patterson, in front of a standing room only crowd, the PM said "I've heard plenty about you, Gary"

Without missing a beat GP snapped back: "I've heard nothing about you". Gough roared with laughter as 25,000 race fans erupted. I know, I was there.

And when he teamed with Indianapolis champion Larry Rice, who was a school teacher by profession, Mike Raymond immediately advertised them as "The Teacher and the Preacher."

During subsequent seasons of racing, local drivers and fans began to appreciate and understand that Patto was the real deal, a totally professional race car driver of immense capability.



Patto at Liverpool, driving the Jeff Pickering owned sprintcar during one of the heats of the USA vs Australia test series in January 1974. That's Australian champion Garry Rush on the inside.

His observations and opinions helped the locals improve their equipment and he gave advice willingly on race car set ups.

January 1980 saw him return to Liverpool in one of Sid Moore's sprintcars.

On a balmy Saturday night (January 12th, to be exact) he put the car around the high banked track for a new one lap record of 12.55 seconds.

Patterson had toured the quarter mile facility a full half second faster than anyone else had ever done.

It was a breathtaking accomplishment

I was lucky to have been there to see it.

The record stood until 1985 when 20 times world sprintcar, Steve Kinser, cut

it down by another tenth to 12.45 seconds. I saw that one, too.

1980 was the last time Patto raced in Australia.

In May 1983, on the Memorial Day weekend in the USA he went up to Calistoga Speedway, in the middle of the Napa Valley wine country, to drive a sprintcar.

At the end of the day the news arrived that Garry had been killed in a grinding crash while avoiding a stalled car on the track.

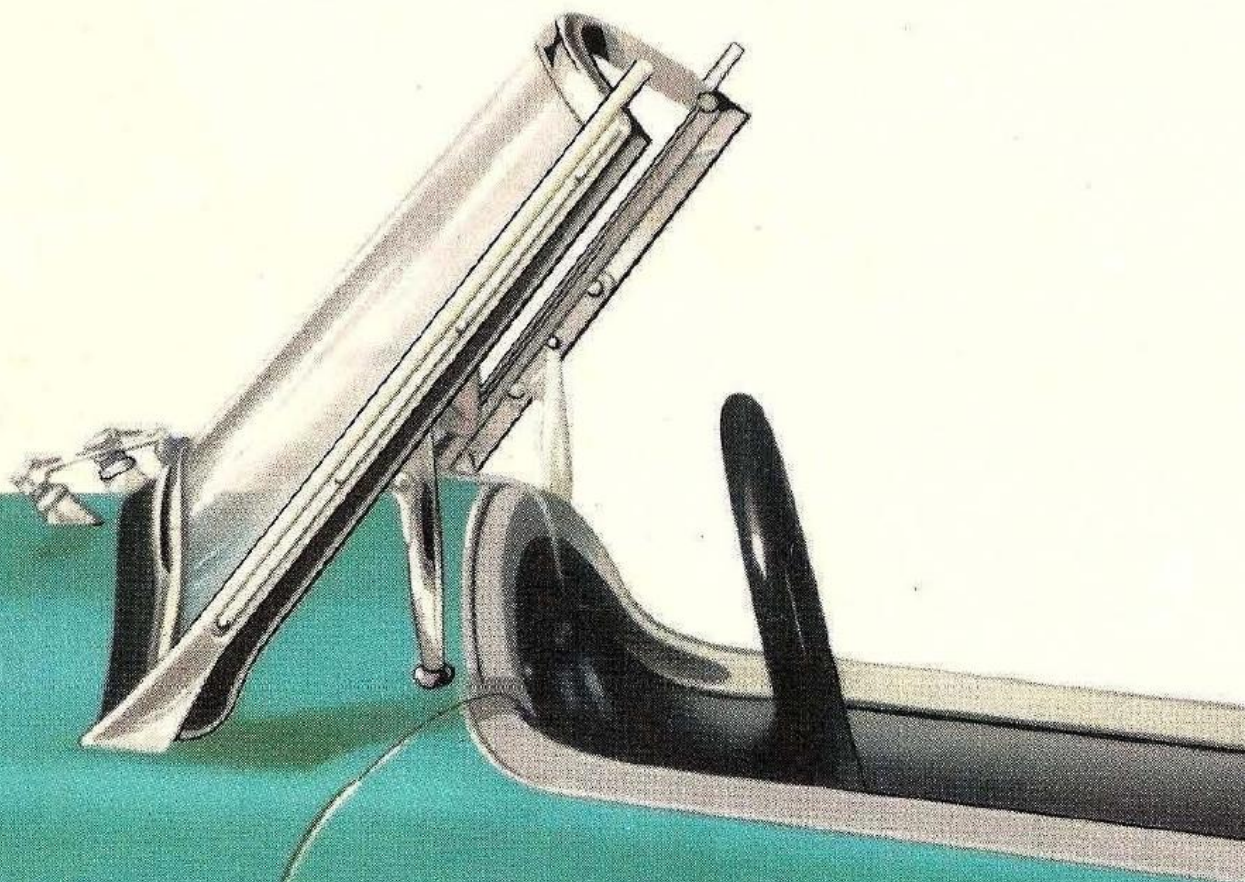
"I want to go in a race car" he once said in an interview.

There's never been anyone like him since.

He was inducted into the USA Sprintcar Hall of Fame in 1998.

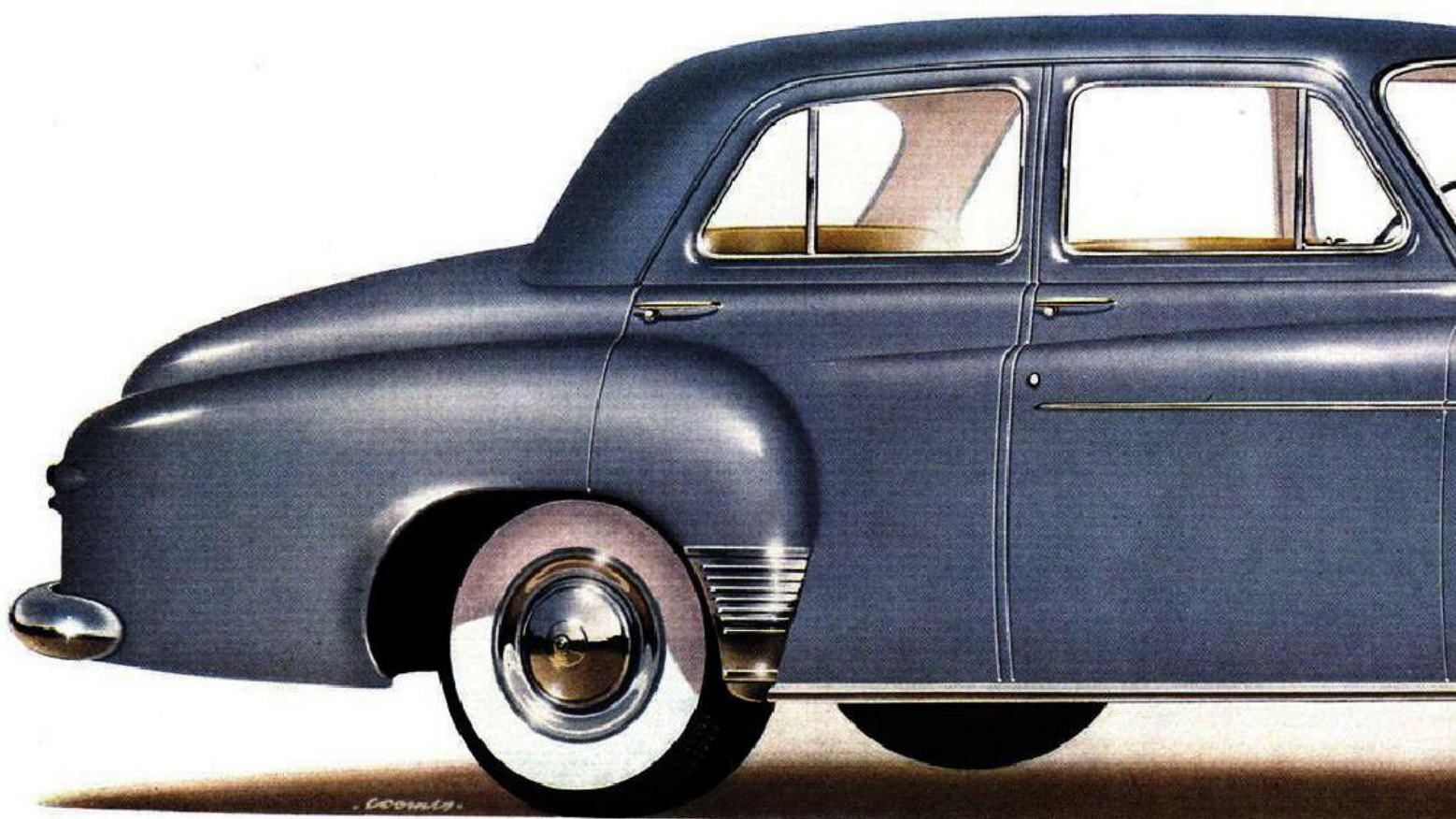
Retro Ads

*Celebrating the Art of
Automotive Advertising*





QUIETLY ELEGANT... YET STYLED FO



R TOMORROW



AN APPOINTMENT TO THE LUXURY OF THE FUTURE
HUMBER CAR MANUFACTURERS
HUMBER, 1947-1950

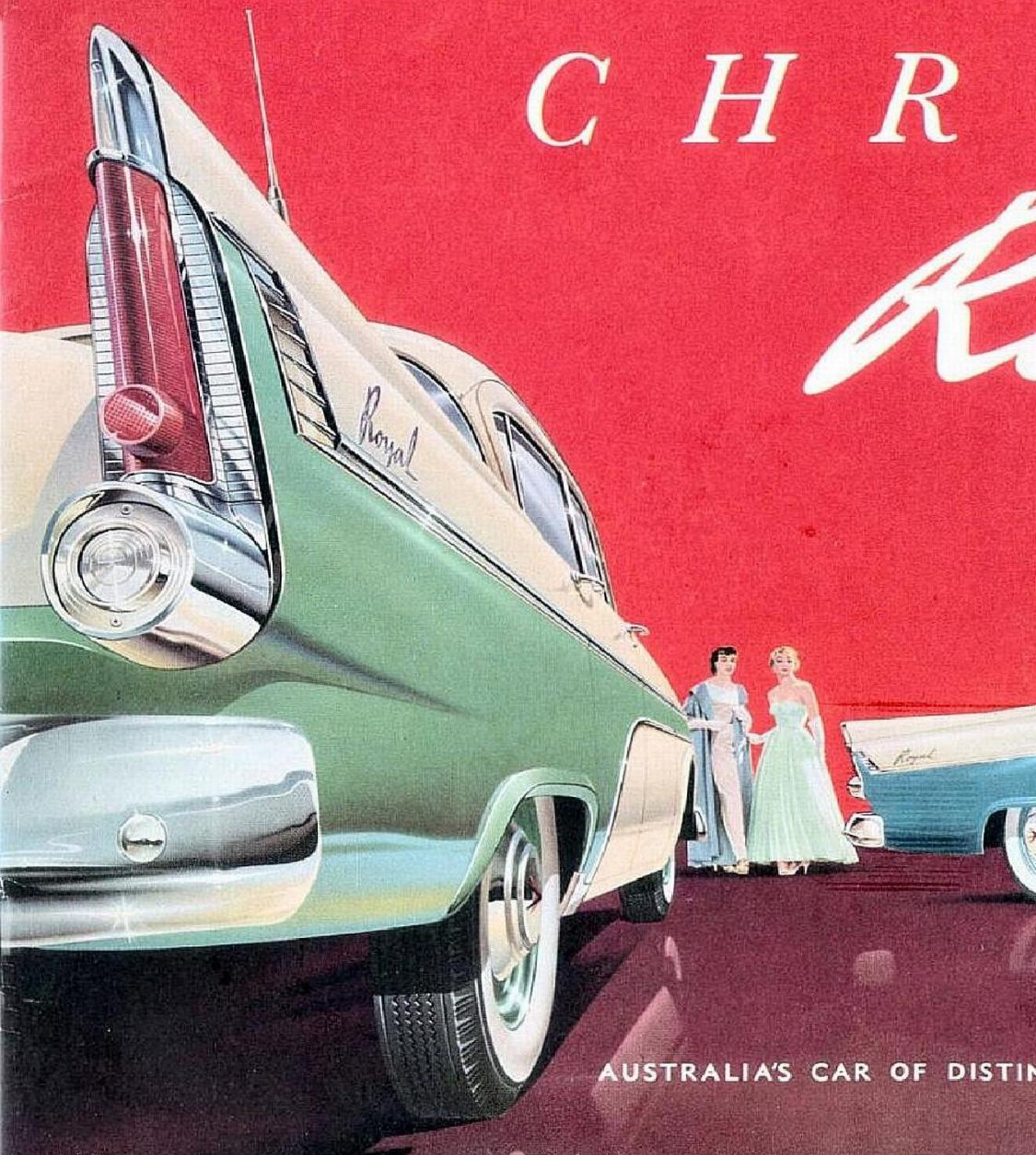
HUMBER *SUPER SNIPE*



The brilliant

C H R

R

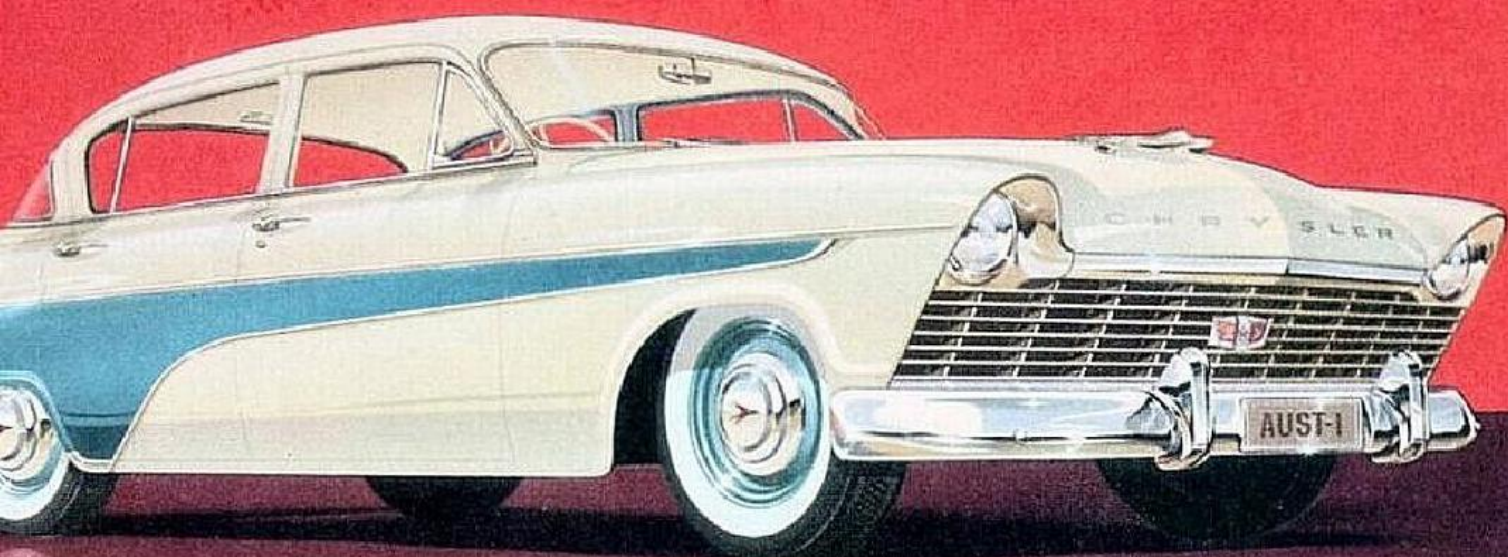


AUSTRALIA'S CAR OF DISTIN

t

CHRYSLER

Coronet



IN CONNECTION WITH **THE FORWARD LOOK**





GRAND PRIX

70-06









MERCEDES-BENZ



Copyright and Other Information

Published by LDKS Consulting Pty Ltd. Copyright Reserved. Retroautos used due care and diligence in the preparation of this publication. It is not responsible or liable for any mistake, misprint, omission, or typographical error. Retroautos gives no warranty and makes no representation as to the truth, accuracy, and sufficiency of any description, photograph or statement in any advertisement.

Retroautos accepts no responsibility or liability for any loss which may be suffered by any person who relies either in part or in whole upon any description, photograph or statement contained herein. Retroautos reserves the right to refuse or edit any advertisement for any reason. The Advertiser is absolutely responsible for ensuring advertisements conform with all legal requirements. Published sales dates may vary.

Copyright of this publication is held by LDKS Consulting Pty Ltd which owns the rights to the name Retroautos. All rights reserved. This publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part by any means what so ever without the written permission of LDKS Consulting Pty Ltd.

Contributions

Retroautos welcomes contributions accompanied by excellent quality images. Information supplied must be accurate and checked for accuracy before sending to us. We reserve the right to use any contributions at our discretion and to edit as we believe necessary and appropriate. All material submitted are at the contributor's and owners' own risk.

Whilst care is taken to avoid damage and/or loss of material supplied we do not accept liability for such damage or loss if it occurs. We do not return information or photos emailed to us. If contributions are mailed we will not be responsible for unsolicited contributions not accompanied by a stamped self addressed envelope. The publisher will not accept responsibility nor any liability for the accuracy and correctness of any information contained in the magazine or for any opinions expressed in the magazine.







RayTookThis Prints Available

Raytookthis.com is pleased to announce that prints of the pictures that appear in Retroautos are available for purchase via Redbubble.

You can choose from a variety of styles and products including prints, posters, greeting cards, phone covers and even a calendar.

Prints can be shipped anywhere in the world and their site is very easy to use. To browse the available products, go to:

<http://www.redbubble.com/people/raytookthis>

Thank you for your continued support of raytookthis.com

RACV



Benalla and District
**CLASSIC CAR AND
MOTORBIKE TOUR**
FRIDAY MAY 27th 2016
10.00 am. Benalla Art Gallery
(assembly and registration from 9am at Art Gallery)

Entry \$10 per vehicle. Includes RACV rally pack and RACV trophies for most interesting vehicles

For further details contact
VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE
03 5762 1749

*The Austin
Seven
CLUB*



In conjunction with
**HISTORIC
WINTON**

**SYDNEY
MACHINA**
SOCIAL CLUB
presents...

Machines & Macchiatos

Sunday 15th May
7am - 9am



Come join us at our Machines & Macchiatos event, **Sunday 15th May.**

Machines & Macchiatos is a very friendly, relaxed & fun event. It's where proud owners of all makes & models unite over their common interest - their Machines. With great food, coffee & a wonderful location on offer, there's all the more reason to come join the fun.

To book your spot  **sydnemachinasocialclub**

Everyone is Welcome

Our Machines & Macchiatos event is not only for motoring enthusiast, but it's open to all the general public too. It's a fun event for all types of people: young, old, families, kids, male & female, we welcome you all.

Location

**harbord
diggers**
mountiesgroup

We are very excited to be running our event at the Harbord Diggers Memorial Club at Freshwater.

Address: 80 Evans St, Freshwater.
Event will take place in the outdoor car park

Fund Raising

At each Machines & Macchiatos event, we run raffles to help fund raise for our 3 Charities.



Proudly supporting
beyondblue



**Cure Brain Cancer
FOUNDATION**



**Men's Shed
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Raffle Prizes are:

- Adam's Polishes \$50 online voucher
- Meat tray

Plus - Lucky Door prizes

A big
thanks
to our
wonderful
sponsors

Adam's
Premium Car Care
Discover Your Shine Potential.



Goodspanner



**SYDNEY
MACHINA**
SOCIAL CLUB

Sydney Machina Social Club is a brand new, modern motoring social club, dedicated to the motoring enthusiast community. It's where proud owners can unite over their common interest, their machines. We welcome all makes & models, everything from new to old, vintage, classic, custom, exotic, motorcycles & everything in between. For more information on the club or to join:

www.sydnemachinasocialclub.org Sam - M: 0438 060 821 E: sam@sydnemachinasocialclub.org

BUICK

The Australian Story

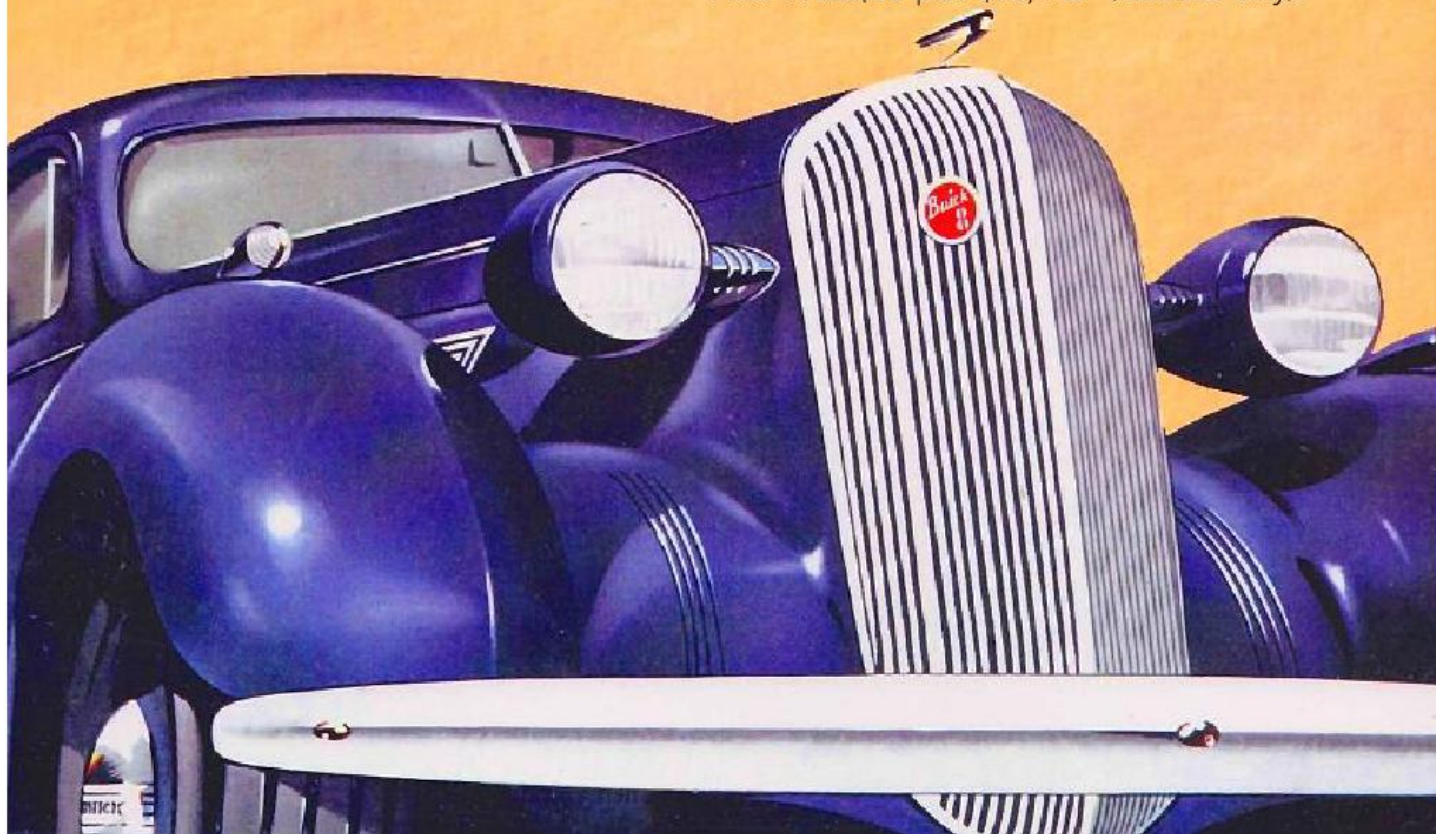
Eric North & John Gerdtz

Available only on direct purchase.

Email: mail@buickclub.org.au

Phone: (02) 6772 1555 or (02) 9629 7957,

Price : AUD\$65 plus \$15, P&P (Australia only).



Classic CAR SHOW

Featuring Pre 1975 vehicles
Trophies for Vehicles
of Special Interest

In conjunction with

HISTORIC WINTON

TWO BIG DAYS MAY 28th & 29th 2016

Winton Motor Raceway - Via Benalla

VETERAN, VINTAGE, SPORTS & CLASSICS, HOTRODS & CUSTOMS,
STREET MACHINES, COMMERCIALS & MOTORBIKES

www.historicwinton.org

enquiries: 03 5428 2689

Presented by the Austin Seven Club Inc. A0003290N

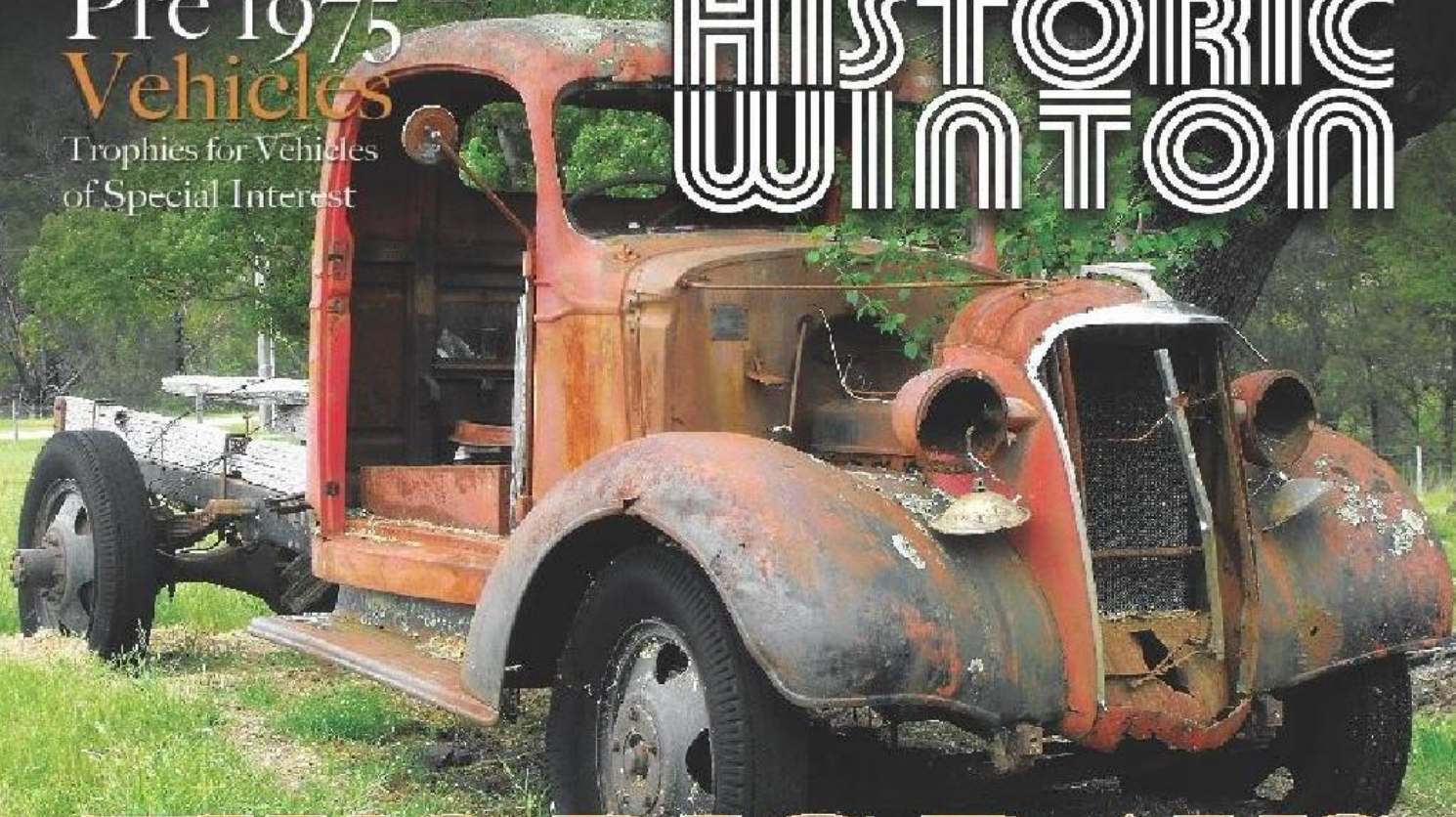
HISTORIC COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SHOW

Featuring
Pre 1975
Vehicles

Trophies for Vehicles
of Special Interest

In conjunction with

HISTORIC WINTON



TWO BIG DAYS

May 28th and 29th 2016

Winton Motor Raceway - Via Benalla

www.historicwinton.org

Enquiries 03 5428 2689 noelwilcox@rocketmail.com

Presented by the Austin Seven Club Inc. A0003290N



HD

**HOLDEN
PROTOTYPES**
RETROAUTOS EXCLUSIVE



EH



NEVER-SEEN
HK HOLDEN
PROTOTYPES

5 BIG THINGS
THE FALCON
DID FOR US!



collectible & classic

RETROAUTOS

AUSTRALIA

VOL 1, NUMBER 1

\$8.95 inc GST

#1



1966 Cadillac Coupe DeVille

RetroSpeedway Feature

Radio Star's Ford Galaxie

CHEVROLET, DE DION, VAUXHALL, BRISTOL,
AUSTIN HEALEY, BUICK, DATSUN, DIAMOND T & MORE!

WWW.RETROAUTOS.COM.AU

EJ & HQ HOLDEN PROTOTYPES

collectible & classic

RETROAUTOS

VOL 1, NUMBER 3

\$8.95 inc GST

#3



Falcon GT-XR & XA



Shelby



Rolls Royce



EJ Premier

PONTIAC GTO, AUSTIN, RIP, ROLLS ROYCE,
TECHNICAL: DRUMS TO DISCS, DEPT OF YOUTH

collectible & classic

RETROAUTOS

VOL 1, NUMBER 2

\$8.95 inc GST

#2



A9X



Telstra Kombi



Lotus Cortina



1948 F100



1957 Cadillac

VALIANT, RUST IN PEACE, MERCEDES, VAUXHALL, F100 TRUCKS,
LOTUS AND GT CORTINA, FORD CORSAIR AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!

Back issues of *first three, and only*, print editions now available.

A very limited number of the first three *printed* issues of Retroautos is now available.

\$18.00 (AUD) each or \$45.00 (AUD) for all three including postage and handling within Australia (overseas postage extra). All prices include GST.

Contact us at:
david@retroautos.com.au
for payment information.