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All That's Good in Time

The Design Issue

Watch Journal

Look inside! The open-worked Jaquet Droz Grande Seconde Skelet-One is a clear choice.

**Plus: Nomos celebrates the Bauhaus. Hermès goes full Galop.
A New York design authority on creating powerful impressions.
The Chanel J12 ignites a revolution. Timex at 165.**



GENERATION NSX

RM Sotheby's is taking up the sale of a new kind of classic car, driven by enthusiasm from folks whose sites of nostalgia tend more toward *The Breakfast Club* than *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

By Ben Keeshin

COLLECTING

It's hard to believe, but prestigious auction house RM Sotheby's is taking over a job previously held nearly exclusively by used car dealerships located way out by airports.

(Will the esteemed house be keeping the polyblend suit industry in business? Installing gyrating balloon men to leer at passersby? Surely, it can't be hanging streamers from a chain-link fence to attract potential clientele.)

None of the above. Rather, with its "Youngtimer" Dream Garage series, in progress as of February in Paris and

ending in April in Essen, Germany, RM Sotheby's is selling a collection of European and Japanese luxury cars from the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. These include Generation X sports car icons like the Porsche 928 and Nissan 300ZX, bruisers like the Bentley Turbo R and Mercedes-AMG S-Class coupes, a near-complete collection of Alpina BMWs, plus scores of other Greed Era oddities like the Aston Martin Lagonda, Renault 5 Turbo and Lotus Esprit Turbo. (Turbochargers, like sleeves, were big in the eighties.)

BELOW: 1979 Mercedes-Benz 500TE AMG €60,000–€70,000

In addition to huge power from a 5-liter V-8 stolen from the S-Class, this modified Benz has custom Penta wheels, multi-directional Recaro seats and a Vader-esque body treatment. No warranty, but a guarantee you'll never seen anyone else with one.



RM SOTHEBY'S

FROM TOP: 1986 Mitsubishi Starion ESI-R : €10,000–€15,000

It doesn't get much more 1980s Japan than the Starion—check out the rucked leather, *Star Trek* steering wheel and aggressive wedge profile. With fewer than 9,000 miles, this diminutive icon might be the perfect accessible entry into Youngtimer ownership.

1986 BMW Alpina B7 Turbo/1: €75,000–€100,000

As BMW M-cars have soared in value the past 10 years, so have the lesser-known Alpinas—factory-approved, modified BMWs with killer graphics, iconic multi-spoke wheels and, more often than not, a honking turbocharger. This B7 Turbo makes a contemporary M5 look pedestrian.

COLLECTING

This is a motley crew of new age classics—collector items just in their adolescence—listed by an auction house better known for selling a \$50 million 1962 Ferrari GTO in August of last year. What's going on? Things in the steel-girded, spit-shined realm of classic cars aren't quite topsy-turvy, but they are undergoing a shift.

Because, while so-called “Blue Chip” cars like the aforementioned Ferrari, plus Mercedes Gullwings, Aston Martin DB5s and Shelby Cobras still command the highest prices, the energy of the moment is in cars with a whiff of accessibility—the so called “Young Classics” of the 1980s and 1990s.

The 1988 BMW M3, for example, is a sub-200-horsepower coupe that, especially next to a Mercedes Gullwing, looks like a taxicab. Yet Hagerty says top examples now trade for over \$140,000. Ten or fifteen years ago? Those M3s were \$15,000 used cars.

But the possibility of a lucrative sale

isn't the only reason RM Sotheby's is attracted to this new market. There's also, for example, Radwood, a network of car shows billed as “a celebration of '80s and '90s automotive lifestyle” whose entry guidelines dictate build dates between 1980 and 1999. Last year, it attracted thousands of ecstatic Gen X and Millennial fans, many dressed in period style. (Read: Members Only jackets, Air Force 1s and enough Spandex to swaddle a cardio-minded herd of elephants.) Does your uncle have an old Volvo 240 wagon and a Brooks Brothers “Fun Shirt” you can borrow?

Another factor in the young classics movement is the wryly named vintage car website BringATrailer.com. (The name refers to some of the early featured cars—i.e., they didn't run.) What started in 2007 as a loosely formatted blog built to surface interesting classifieds from Craigslist and Ebay now runs its own auctions. BaT, as it's called amongst regulars, asks just a \$99 listing fee plus 5% of the final bid price, and business is booming. Two of the most astonishing sales have come from exactly the type of “Youngtimer” cars in which Sotheby's is signalling interest. In January, an ultra-low-mileage 1994 Toyota Supra Targa sold for an astounding \$121,000. A month later, a 2002 Z3 M Coupe sold for \$92,000—this, a late-model BMW whose “Clownshoe” nickname refers to a profile that, for most of the car's life, marked it as an object of derision.

In truth, Sotheby's is not competing for market share with middling dealerships named LUXURY SALES or QUALITEE INVESTMENTS, LLC. While you might find a 1997 Rolls-Royce Silver Spur, a 1988 Mercedes-Benz 560SEC Cabriolet and a 1991 Jaguar XJS V-12 at both the Sotheby's auction and the airport-adjacent lots, the “Youngtimer” cars are the best examples of their type in the world: perfect condition, ultra-low mileage and, in some cases, one of only a handful ever made.

Many will sell without reserve, and records are expected. Afraid you'll miss out on an 1980s classic as it ascends to Blue Chip status? Maybe wait for something else to fall—like, say, a 1962 Ferrari GTO.



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