

# BARRETT-JACKSON BONANZA

*The King of Collector Car Auctions Celebrates 45 Years*

By: Amber Gibson

To celebrate its 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Barrett-Jackson went all out, hosting the most elaborate car auction in the world, with more than 1,500 vehicles crossing the auction block over nine days. The opening night gala featured a surprise performance by Grammy-award winning Zac Brown Band and Saturday, the biggest day of sales, saw more than 50,000 car enthusiasts pass through the halls. The auction action was broadcast live in more than 100 countries internationally.

“Car collecting is a vast market,” says CEO Craig Jackson. “We started selling all pre-war classics. Muscle cars were sitting in the parking lot in the early 1970s but they’re now collector’s items. In the late ‘80s, the Japanese were the first outside of Europe to start collecting cars. I sold one of my favorite cars to Japan. After the Gulf War, Japan went into a decade of stagnation and they didn’t

buy any cars for quite a while but they slowly sold some of them off. Now, it’s a worldwide deal. We’re selling cars to the Middle East. Surprisingly what they like is American muscle cars, especially the cars of the late ‘70s – the era that the now ruling generation went to school in the U.S. When I went to ASU, they all drove TransAms. We are selling more cars to Asia, but not necessarily Japan, along with South America and Mexico.”

Jackson also sees a shift in the age of his bidders, with younger collectors getting in on the game. “A few years ago we were selling a lot of cars to frackers, oil men but now it’s developers, tech guys, Gen-Xers, young Millennials. It’s amazing how much money they have at their age.” Jackson equates the “blue chip” cars as safe investments, while the restored trick vehicles are to show off and have fun with.



1934 Rolls-Royce Phantom



1950 Ferrari 195 S



1956 VIN 001



1965 Shelby 289 Cobra





Burt Reynolds



1947 Talbot-Lago



2017 Acura NSX

### The Cars

Highlights in the salon collection included a 1934 Rolls-Royce Phantom, 1950 Ferrari 195 S, and Boyd Coddington's "The French Connection," a 1938 Coddington V12 HEMI, a custom-build that was Coddington's last build before he passed away. Tablets mounted by each car offered a closer look at detail shots and explained the history behind each vehicle. A series of 3 VIN 001 Corvette roadster and convertibles from 1955, 1956 and 1957 in a colorful array of cascade green, Venetian red and polo white were sold as one lot. A 1947 Talbot-Lago T-26 Worblaufen Cabriolet, one of only three in the world, was available for the first time in 24 years.

This year, the biggest pop culture cars were from the *Transformers* movie franchise and *Smoky and the Bandit*, with Burt Reynolds himself riding across the stage to sell the TransAm promotional car for a half million dollars. Paramount Pictures auctioned Optimus Prime from *Transformers* and Michael Bay sold his 1967 Chevrolet Camaro SS that was cast as Bumblebee in "*Transformers 4: Age of Extinction*."

New this year, experts' symposiums were held throughout the week to educate first-time buyers and veteran collectors alike. Barrett-Jackson is renowned for the meticulous scrutiny that its cars undergo before appearing on the auction block. Close relationships with third-party experts vetting each car make Barrett-Jackson

the best bet for first-time bidders to ensure the authenticity of their purchases.

Outside, Ford, Chevrolet and Dodge offered the chance to ride in and drive some of their latest models. Ford's Shelby GT350 and Focus RS were available at a public event for the first time. The former was so loud and so fast that I closed my eyes when we took off down the first straightaway.

The brand new 2017 Acura NSX – VIN #001 was purchased by Rick Hendrick for \$1.2 million, a record for an OEM VIN001 model auctioned for charity. One hundred percent of the hammer price went to charity – split between the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation and Camp Southern Ground.

### The Man

Charity has always been important to Barrett-Jackson. After all, the auction company started as a humble charity car show in the 1960s. Last year, a 1950 General Motors Futurliner bus sold for \$4 million.

"We had NASCAR team owners in the front row throwing in an extra \$100,000 each and we raised \$4.65 million net for charity in 5 minutes," CEO Craig Jackson says. Since taking over leadership of the family business in 1995, Jackson has grown Barrett-Jackson to venues across the country, although the Scottsdale auction is still the premier automotive lifestyle event in the world.



'55, '56 and '57 Corvette



1977 Trans Am



1967 Chevrolet Camaro SS - Bumblebee



Optimus Prime®

"I'm seven days into this, going on my eighth day," he says with a hearty laugh when I meet up with him Saturday morning. He looks remarkably nonchalant in jeans, a white collared shirt and black zip-up. "It's like Woodstock – it just doesn't end. It's going to be crazy today. It'll get really crazy once we go on Discovery. Five hours on Discovery today and this place will be packed."

Jackson's parents, Russ and Nellie, moved from Michigan to Scottsdale in 1960 and opened a full-service car wash. Jackson grew up around cars, restoring automobiles with his dad. Barrett-Jackson started in 1967 as the "Fiesta de los Autos Elegantes," founded by two friends who shared a passion for cars, to raise money for Scottsdale's art center and library.

"Getting auto manufacturers to donate VIN001's was the magic to really raising money for great charities," Jackson says. Barrett-Jackson is the only auction house that doesn't charge commission for charity auctions and Jackson is clearly proud of the impact he's been able to have with his car empire. "The docket this year is more diverse but I don't have a Ron Pratte collection [which sold for more than \$40.44 million] like last year."

Jackson has 40 cars in his collection already. "I'm a car addict and car junkie," he says. "I don't like to bid against my own customers but there's one that I will actively bid. I don't want to say it ahead of time. You'll see me in the front row letting my auctioneers having their way with me. That's 'cause it's a special car." To nobody's surprise, the special car was a 1934 Cadillac 370D V12 Fleetwood

Coupe, previously driven by Craig's mom, which he snapped up for \$300,000.

### The Lifestyle

Cars may be the main event, but Barrett-Jackson is also a showcase of Americana, with vendors selling everything from bronze wildlife sculptures to embellished leather cowgirl boots and beer bottle nightlights. Artists paint live automobile scenes and portraits on canvases as spectators stroll by with hot dogs and popcorn in hand.

American brands like Ford and Chrysler have prime real estate up front, showcasing brand new models, performance cars and retro builds, and visitors can even try a drag race simulation. Outside, the smells and scenes are reminiscent of a state fair, with notes of petrol thrown in. There's even an indoor bull-riding challenge right next to the ladies' lounge, where the wives of collectors can shop for furs or perfume and get makeup touchups when the auctioneer's incessant rapid chanting becomes too much.

Many of the high-rollers stay at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, which offers complimentary shuttle service to and from the auction. This summer, the vast property adds 102 new guest rooms for a total of 750. The resort's 33,000 square-foot Well & Being spa is the perfect antidote to a frenzied day at the auction. Relax with a zero-gravity therapeutic adult nap while the "SO" chord vibrates through your body, or try the 90-minute purification ritual with a coffee and black silt clay scrub, mini-facial and bergamot body lotion massage wrapped into one epic treatment. Fitness classes here, including aerial yoga, are varied and impressive as well. ✈