

The Big Three “No-No’s” of Muscle

If you rely on the “I bought it from an old guy who bought it new, so I know it is real” stories, shame on you

by Colin Comer



1967 Pontiac GTO

Unless you have been under a heavy rock for the last ten years, you know that nothing is hotter in the collector car market than vintage muscle cars. While certain cars are worthy of this impressive jump in value, others are guilty of riding the draft better than any NASCAR driver you’ve ever seen. Here are three key guidelines to protect the smart collector from buying the wrong car.

1 CARS WITH NO DOCUMENTATION

My pet peeve. We don’t spend big money on anything else without proof of authenticity, so why do it with cars? Rock solid, air-tight documentation is absolutely essential with collector cars. If you can’t document the car and instead rely on the

“I bought it from an old guy who bought it new, so I know it is real” stories, shame on you.

Owners of certain marques have a distinct advantage in this area: Shelby owners have the Shelby Registry; Pontiacs have original paperwork available from GM through Pontiac Historic Services; Fords have original shipping records available through Marti Auto works; and Mopar cars have full build data on fender tags and engine sizes encoded in the VIN. Plus, people like Galen Govier can confirm this information as genuine.

Some cars, like Chevrolets (including Corvettes), have no factory paperwork available at this time, and no VIN or data plate encoding as to the car’s original con-

figuration. It's a forger's paradise, and I liken the discovery that "you've been had" to finding out your beautiful wife was formerly a not-so-attractive guy. Documentation is key. Without it, chances are good you own a depreciating asset.

2 CARS WITH SUSPECT DOCUMENTATION

Unfortunately, there seems to be plenty of bogus documentation in the market today. This is perhaps even worse than no documentation at all. Not only is it fraud, but it tricks people who have done their due diligence and researched their purchase into getting caught with the short straw. Bogus paperwork was created for one purpose—to pass off fake cars and get more money for them. Before you store your investment car, make sure it is really the car you think it is. If you have even the slightest doubt, have an expert verify it—it's worth the money. Corvette guys, read the previous sentence again. Out loud. Twice.

3 CARS THAT HAVE BEEN CAUGHT IN THE MARKET DRAFT AND SHOULDN'T BE HERE

Just because an orange 1970 GTO Judge

Ram Air IV car is worth \$175k doesn't mean your green 1972 GTO with a column shift automatic is worth \$75k—or that it ever will be. About five percent of all muscle cars ever built are truly blue-chip, ultra-desirable cars, and eighty percent of buyers want cars from this group. But the remaining twenty percent who think they know the next best thing or can somehow build a better mouse trap simply can't. No matter how hard they try to convince you, their "tribute" is nothing but a 'Cuda crammed with a crate motor and slathered in Panther Pink paint. Don't outsmart yourself, because it's a good way to lose money.

Buy the car you have always lusted after, and make sure it's legitimate. Don't be fooled by "almost" cars or feel you have to buy something or the market will get away. Patience and persistence pays, whether your budget is \$25k or \$500k. Buy the best example you can, pay the premium, and sit back in confidence knowing that you not only have a great car, but a sound investment that will continue to pay dividends on every level.♦



1967 Shelby GT350