

“DO YOU DRIVE THAT CAR?”

Most of us who drive classic or exotic cars have been asked that question many times by appreciative people looking at our cars. It is actually a more profound question than it appears because it really cuts to the very core of who we are as the keepers and caretakers of these cars. The very nature of these cars that we call classic, or vintage, or exotic give credence to this question and at the same time dispel the apparent logic of it. The dichotomy is simple; do you actually risk something of this age or beauty or rarity and value by exposing it to road dirt, possible collision damage or wear and tear or, do you put it away behind wall and glass to be ogled from afar like a Rembrandt or Picasso? Do you treat this car as the piece of purpose built machinery to be used as its manufacturer intended or do you revere it like a beauty queen to be looked at but not touched? The answer to that question is what, to borrow a popular expression from a different venue of thought, is what separates the men from the boys and the girls from the women. The boy in us wants to possess something because of what it brings to us. The man or the women in us give ourselves to something because of what it is and what we can bring to it. What we bring to our cars is respect for what they are, dedication to preserving their heritage and history and a desire to share them with others. That all sounds very lofty, but to keep things in perspective, when the answer is yes, we do drive our cars, we are acknowledging that at the end of the day they are cars; four wheels, a motor and steering wheel. For those of us on this drive the answer to the question is apparent! We drive our cars. To broaden this understanding a bit, it is helpful to look at some definition. To garner a label like classic or exotic, the car is most likely old, rare or expensive. It might be just one of those things or it could be all three. It really doesn't matter, but whatever the situation; the original premise for the car is the driving factor. (Pardon the pun.) One of the prime factors in the definition comes from the concept of form following function. It is most likely that the Bugatti brothers, Enzo Ferrari, Donald Healey, Dr. Porsche or Henry Ford didn't give a lick of concern about whether their cars would be pampered, protected from harm or sequestered like a piece of art. (It is interesting to note, though, that one Bugatti brother's first name was Rembrandt.) They built them for function and the thing that we now think of as beauty, the form, only exists because it enhanced the function. They were built to drive, then and still to this day. With that understood, anyone lucky enough to have such a car also recognizes that these cars do have a rarity, a uniqueness or a value that does set them apart from an average car and that they need to be taken care of in a special way. While the DMV registration says that we own them, in reality we are more their caretakers for a period of time to preserve them and their unique history for others to enjoy. Our car(s) existed before us and will likely beyond our tenure as their owners. That's pretty heady stuff, but it doesn't change the answer to, “Do you drive that car?” You bet we do!

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