

## “Youngtimers”

# The New Generation of Car Collectors



A 1988 Mercedes Benz 560 SEL captured in its natural habitat at the boat yard in Gibson Island, MD. Owner: Will Finney, New York, NY.

By John Farrall

**D**emographics and life experiences influence business, politics and definitely the collector car world. Most of us favor music from our teenage years and early 20's. That has always been the case, no matter what year you were born. The same is often true of automobiles.

The oldest Baby Boomers are now in their early 70's and beginning to “age out” of the car collecting hobby. This is reflected in the prices for cars from the 1950's and 60's. Unique and rare cars from this era are still coveted, like an Aston Martin DB5 or a Jaguar XKE but the MG Midget or '57 Chevy values have dropped, regardless of condition. The law of supply and demand, like gravity and taxes, will always prevail.

This brings us to the new tide of car collectors dubbed, “Youngtimers”. The term was reportedly first used in Germany to describe the kinds of cars Generation X (born 1961-1981) and Millennials (born 1981-1996) are attracted to as they began to build car collections. Like earlier generations, many of these cars were aspirational vehicles that have experienced significant depreciation and are now, “Affordable Classics”.

One significant feature of the cars from the 1980's and 90's is they are the last of the “Analog” cars. Computer chips and “drive by wire” features had not yet taken over automobiles. Analog cars are said to be more “honest”. They have character and exhibit craftsmanship. The cars are more “visceral”. You use a clutch and shift gears, you may not have power brakes or steering. You have to know what you are doing and pay attention 100% of the time.

We see this trend in the explosion of craft breweries, farm to table and renewed interest in vinyl records. Make it real, make it a special unique experience. Modern cars are reliable, safe and offer incredible performance now, but blindfold someone and let them ride in a modern car and I bet they can't tell one car from another's ride, sound or feel.

RM Sotheby's held “Youngtimers Dream Garage” auctions in 4 cities and 3 countries earlier this year. Paris, France in February, Amelia Island and Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in March and Essen, Germany in April 2019. The auctions were very successful. Over \$115 Million changed hands at the 4 auctions combined.

The types of cars from the 80's and 90's that did best

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were limited production, low mileage cars, primarily European. Examples of marques and models were Porsche 911 and 928, Audi Quattro, BMW Alpina and Motorsport cars along with 850 csi's. Mercedes of all sorts did well but most coveted were the high performance AMG models.

Besides European cars, there is a strong affection for 20+ year old Japanese cars, especially in the US. Early Acura NSX and Toyota Supra's are very sought after with rising prices. The 1967-1979 Toyota 2000 is extremely rare with some auction prices reached over \$1 Million several years ago. Mazda RX7s, Nissan 300ZX, Nissan Skyline GTR and Toyota Corolla GT's are on many Youngtimers' wish lists.

Some of the interest in these cars is driven by the age groups affinity for video games and films from their formative years. Think Gran Turismo and Need for Speed video games and The Fast and Furious movie series.

There is a class of Asian cars referred to "Kei-cars". They are the smallest of the highway legal passenger cars in Japan. There are kei microvans and trucks as well. The Kei category was created by the Japanese government in 1949. Today, Honda, Mitsubishi, Daihatsu and Suzuki still produce these tiny cars.

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Maximum engine size was 550cc from 1976-1990. It was raised to 660cc after 1990.

Many of the 1980 and 90's Japanese non-US Spec cars can be imported into the US now. Any car over 21 years old does not have to meet EPA requirements. A 25 year old car does not have to comply with DOT or Federal safety standards. Having a right hand drive Japanese car is a badge of honor for these passionate young collectors.

Anyone who has visited a Cars & Coffee type "No Rules" car gathering has seen that the car hobby is very much alive, even with the Generation X and Millennials. Now that they are entering the phase of their lives when they may have the resources

and time to begin to invest in collecting automobiles it is refreshing to see them put their own mark on the hobby. What counts is not what cars they love but that they still love cars! 🚗

*John Farrall has been passionate about cars since he first rode in his Dad's sports car, a yellow Triumph GT6. He is a Master Judge with the AACA, National Judge with the CCCA, speaker, author and an appraiser with The International Vehicle Appraisers Network.*



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