

Three Cars, Eleven Wheels, and Four Bodies

I'll not fail to mention that the dash of the 300SL was a rancid shade of lemon lime metallic green—double nice



1958 Berkeley

Owner: Geoff Archer, eBay Auction Analyst

Purchase date: July 18, 2007

Price: \$3,535 (\$35 for delivery)

Mileage since purchase: pushed it about 40 feet

Recent work: Stacked 200-lb replacement body on top of it for storage

This is an example of what you find when you search “restored” on Craigslist in Eugene, Oregon. That’s not to say that it was advertised as “restored,” just that it needed to be “restored.” This condition is clear from the fact that there is no hood, engine, or interior, the paint color is akin to aged buffalo hide, and there is a gaping hole punched through the boot where King Kong reached through the fiberglass to get a better grip on it before hurtling it into oblivion.

What’s more, the seller freely admitted to paying \$600 for this car fairly recently. He trailered it up from California, bought a bunch of expensive and hard-to-find parts, and then lost interest in the project. Why then would our value-savvy hero pay him more than a 5x multiple?

Check out that beautiful yellow block of Velveeta peering out of the minivan. That is one of (supposedly) four reproduction bodies built in the 1970s by some fiberglass experts with Cobra kit car and speedboat experience. Two-inch flares all around, a squarish mouth, and a plump yet masculine butt evidence that venom mixed into the resin. Headlight openings are tough-looking, laid back and squared off...like a Marcos (if that’s not too obscure a reference). That awesome yellow color is also in the gelcoat, so she’ll never need a paintjob.

Several times the seller reiterated to me that “the idea is that you take all the parts off this one car, and you clean them up and put them onto the new body.” My wife just rolled her eyes. Knowing that it probably will be a decade before I convince the kids to care about this thing, I am just going to hang it on the wall and stare at it as I ponder possible powerplants.

1955 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Coupe

Owner: Stephen Serio, Contributor

Purchase date: June 2005

Price: Full retail at that time

Mileage since purchase: 300 miles

Recent work: Restored cobbled-up dashboard and rebuilt all original gauges, full service, new tires, and sourced out all missing trim pieces.



I wrote on this car in October 2005, so I’ll start with the quickie synopsis. I bought the 300SL in California from the son of the original owner, who fancied himself a bit of a Cal-Kustom kinda artist. The good news was that the car was 97% complete, extremely well cared for, and nicely optioned with low miles. The odd news was that it was painted (almost from new) copper metallic, and the dash was customized with loads of extra gauges, an Iron Cross, and 1970s-esque stereo knobs and switches—nice. I’ll not fail to mention that the dash was a rancid shade of lemon lime metallic green—double nice.

I embarked upon righting the wrongs of the interior and, with even less haste, performed a full major service to give myself a new baseline that every owner of a new classic should possess. That included changing the shortened gear lever, removal of extra sound-deadening material, fitting a restored Becker Mexico, and 50 other “this and thats.” Three hundred miles of effortless and dead correct motoring later, and all seemed fantastic. But that dashboard...

After the reality check that it would cost twice as much to repair than to replace, the search was on for a new NOS dash—no easy task. Four months later, I located a dash in Germany, along with countless knobs and trim pieces, thanks to HK Engineering. Kudos also to Alex Finigan and Jack Stiles from Paul Russell and Company, who also proved to be invaluable in their help with locating a great many of the “you’ll never find it” odd pieces. Bigger kudos to Paul’s paint and leather shop for perfectly restoring the dash. Looks like I’ve committed to painting the car white one day.

1935 Morgan F2 Super Sports



Owner: Norm Mort, Auction Analyst, Canada

Purchase date: April 2007

Price: \$22,000

Mileage since purchase: about 100 miles

Recent work: relocated rear light, with brake and transmission adjustment imminent

With excess cash burning a hole in my pocket after the sale of my Allard, I thought I’d take the plunge and get something impractical to indulge my eccentric fantasies.

While web browsing I came upon a 1935 Morgan F2 offered by a Morgan dealer, Northshore Import Sportscars, just north of Chicago. After numerous emails and phone conversations with the amiable

owner, Norbert Bries, I purchased F234.

Only 113 F2 models were built from 1935 to 1939. Mine was built on November 26, 1935, and is therefore one of the earliest examples. That information was confirmed by the factory, which provides production data on every Morgan built.

The owner who completed the restoration had seen F234 on Northshore’s site and contacted me with all the details. Originally black and white, it was repainted red when restored in 1982.

The engine is original and had been fitted with speed equipment from Aquaplane, an aftermarket supplier in Britain, and the 1,172-cc Ford engine features a period aluminum head and intake sporting twin SU carbs.

Driving any three-wheeler at speed is a unique adventure. Slow as molasses off the line, the Morgan easily winds itself up to a great flying speed, but one should never forget the F2 only has cable brakes. Bumps are easily handled by the front wheels, but the single wheel at the back tends to launch itself.

Once the brakes have been adjusted, I’ll see if it really does have an estimated top speed of 80 mph. That should be sufficiently invigorating on three 4.50 x 18 tires with a fold-down wind-screen. ♦