

Calendar

Babe Magnets

Rod & Custom Nationals

Marc Meadors, vice president of Goodguys Rod & Custom Association, worries about graying heads at his company's car shows, including this weekend's Del Mar Rod & Custom Nationals. "We have this young guys' category because we gotta get them involved," says Meadors, who is 36. "Otherwise, when the older guys pass on or get too old to drive or whatever, we won't have anybody to take their places."

The name of Meadors's company, which is based in Alamo, California, is ironic, considering the image that hot

rods once had. "Back in the day, yeah, and in the black-and-white movies, hot

rods were the 'bad guy' deal," he says. "But it's totally not true anymore." The cars inspire nostalgia more than anything else. A car goes by on the fairgrounds, and people remember kissing in the back seat of one like it. "It's a feel-good thing."

The cutoff date for classics at Goodguys events used to be 1964; now, prudently, it's been extended to 1972. That means muscle cars and high-performance street machines from the Pony Car era will be at Del Mar.

Mustang, the original Pony, reaches its 40th birthday on the 17th of this month. The car was introduced by Ford at the 1964 World's Fair in New York. By the end of 1966, well over a million had been sold for about \$2400 each. It's been a good investment for those who have kept early ones in shape: some are bringing six figures at auctions.

"At the big auction in Scottsdale, Arizona," Meadors says, referring to the 33rd annual Barrett-Jackson Classic Car Auction last January, many prices paid for classic cars were "insane." Examples: "For a 1970 Hemi Dodge Charger, \$130,000. For a 1938 Lincoln Zephyr, \$432,000. I mean, Holy Toledo!"



Ryan Murphy's '55 Chevy



Last year's Goodguys Rod & Custom Nationals, Del Mar

This weekend, one of the biggest names in high-end hot rods, Boyd Coddington's Hot Rod Garage, will unveil its newest custom creation, the Dodge Viper V10-powered roadster. The company website doesn't list prices — a bad sign for most of us.

"Coddington's is for your baby boomer with lots of money or for somebody who's retired," says Meadors. So how does a young guy without a fat wallet get into this hobby? "He could buy a car for \$3000 or \$4000," says Meadors, "and it wouldn't have a good paint job, but at least it would drive. He could drive it to an event, start picking up parts. Fix it up as he goes."

Nineteen-year-old Ryan Murphy of Torrance is last year's winner in the category open to "[car] owners and builders 25 years and under." Murphy has reentered the competition for which the prize isn't money. "Only bragging rights," he says.

"His car is a '55 Chevy [210 two-door Post hardtop], painted white, with flames on the sides and gray tweed interior," reports Meadors. It didn't look like that when he bought

it in San Diego, not far from the fairgrounds, five years ago. "It was in really bad shape," Murphy says. "It was only a body. No motor, no transmission, no interior. It was completely stripped. It was in an old barn. A guy had started working on it. He'd had it for eight years and didn't get anywhere."

It cost Murphy \$4500 — money he'd saved from a string of birthdays and Christmases. "My dad helped me pay for everything else," he says. That total never has been calculated and continues to grow. "There's always work to be done on it."

Murphy got interested in classics because two friends of his brother, who is six years his senior, had '55 Chevys. "I always wanted one. And when I was 12, my grandfather started looking for one for me. He looked in the papers and didn't find anything, and then my freshman year of high school, my dad looked on the Internet."

After they brought the car home to Torrance, they didn't know where to start. It was the first classic car any Murphy family member had owned. "It sat in the garage for two months while we went to shows and got ideas, took pictures, wrote stuff down, talked to people. Then we started working on the body and frame and just kind of rolled on from there."

Once he got his license, Murphy drove his car to high school every day. (He's at school in San Luis Obispo now, where he has brought his Jeep.) Are old cars babe magnets or the opposite? "Girls my age like the newer cars," he admits. "But I don't care. I have a girlfriend and she likes my car."

Do people other than family and friends understand his hobby? "Some do, and some just appreciate the work that goes into it."

Is the competition he'll face this weekend on his mind? "Yes. Everybody wants to win; nobody will really admit it. You see a car you know is nicer than your car, and you just have to smile and keep on going and accept that you might lose."

— Jeanne Schinto

Goodguys 4th Annual Del Mar Rod & Custom Nationals
Friday and Saturday,
April 2 and 3,
8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.;
Sunday, April 4,
8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
Del Mar Fairgrounds,
O'Brien Hall
\$15; Seniors, \$12; Ages 7-12, \$6;
under 6, free. Parking: \$7.
Fairgrounds, 858-755-1161;
Goodguys, 925-838-9876 or
www.goodguys.com

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