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2005 Dream Cruise Muscle Cars

The ten best from the era of big hairy speed.

by Gary Witzenburg (2005-08-22)

2005 Woodward Dream Cruise by TCC Team (8/22/2005)

TCC's complete coverage of the '05 Cruise.

Here I am, again, hoofin' Woodward at the Dream Cruise. It's rained all morning, now it's Michigan mid-summer sunny, hot and humid, and starting to look like Woodward's Dream Cruise typically looks. So many cars, so many people! You can see literally every kind of car and truck cruisin' and parked along the road, and most every kind of folks, cruisin' and gawkin'.

Most have one thing in common: there's nothing they'd rather be doing this hot August day than be part of this unparalleled annual auto happening.

The editor wants "Top Ten Muscle Cars." How in the world, I'm wondering, can I pick anybody's top ten favorites, let alone my own, just walkin' up the Avenue seein' what I see? Gotta have a GTO, a big-block Mustang, a coupla Mopars, a 427 Vette.... That's just half the field. Guess I'll grab whatever jumps out and strikes my fancy.

If you like this list, great! If you don't...if I picked some you think shouldn't be there and missed some that should, well...sorry. Yes, it's a bit heavy on GM, because -- with four strong competing brands - so was the muscle car market back then. Good Chevys, Pontiacs, 442s and Mustangs were everywhere along the way; really good Mopars a bit more rare; muscular Buicks and Mercurys much harder to find. And yes, I own a '67 Corvette that looks much like the one I picked. That is my favorite old Corvette and one of my favorite old cars. Deal with it.



If you were there with your four-wheeled pride and joy, and it's absolutely the fastest, rarest, most beautiful, most perfectly turned out muscle machine on the planet yet didn't make this 2005 list, well...double sorry. Maybe I didn't see it. Maybe I did and you weren't around when I came by. As Detroit Lions football fans are fond of saying, maybe next year.

Here are my humble picks, all (as it turns out) from Michigan, in the order I found them:

1971 Plymouth Super Bee

Kerry Holmes of Bloomfield Hills waited 20 years for the previous owner to loosen his grip, just three months ago, on this brilliant yellow Bee. Why this car? "Because it's rare, one of the more heavily optioned '71 Super Bees that were made, and one of nine with a factory sunroof. Also the color. It's a real catch-me color." Holmes says it's original, with 89,000 miles on the original



engine, "except it's been painted, once."

1970 Chevrolet Chevelle SS-454

Burt Adams of Algonac found this car, fully restored, in Tulsa, Okla. "I saw it on the Internet, talked to the fellow, and a year later had the car. It's one of my favorite muscle cars." Born in Van Nuys, Calif. , it lived in that state most of its life and sat outside for 17 years. It needed new paint, interior, suspension and a whole lot more. The only thing it needs now is a set of original-type hood pins. "I'm going to be putting those on," he says.



1972 Hurst Olds

Far too many excellent Olds 442s to pick a privately owned one. This fine Hurst Olds belongs to GM's Heritage Center and is autographed (just above the badge on the right front fender) by "Miss Hurst Golden Shifter" Linda Vaughn, one of the prettiest and genuinely sweetest things ever to happen to motor sports and the high-performance market.



1973 Dodge Charger

Ken Johnson of Fraser, Mich. , got this car as wedding gift. No kidding. His wife, a decade before she became his wife, and her father bought it in 1980 for \$225 (it needed a little work) and spent 10 years locating hard-to-find parts and putting it together. "It had no hood, no fenders, no decklid," Johnson says. "The only thing there was the original 400 big block, which I still have." He also has the original wheels, and the car still wears its original interior. She gave it to him in 1990, and he and his friends spent 80 more months making it look this good. That's Ken, Jr., posing proudly with his dad and "their" car.





owned

this fully restored 'Stang for three summers. "I'm a Mustang fan and, except for the Shelby, this is the king of Mustangs. The Shelby to me is a very nice car, but for the money, I like this just as well." It's a 428 Ram Air four-speed example with the relatively rare and highly desirable shaker hood scoop.

1970 Ford Torino GT

"I've always raced Fords," says Roush Racing employee Red Johnson of Pinckney, MI. "I had a '69 Torino I bought new and raced. Had a '70 429 Super Cobra-Jet, then got rid of that and bought this one. Put a 460 motor in it, new wheels and tires on it, new exhaust system and headers." Originally a Tennessee car, he found it in West Virginia. "I've worked for Jack Roush for 22 years," Johnson adds. "I raced with him in the '60s in the old Super Stock days."



1967 Pontiac GTO

John Banach of Sterling Heights bought this baby blue Goat in Georgia 12 years ago. "Cosmetically, everything is original," he says, "That's the way I bought it. Mechanically it's been gone through and restored like a Royal Bobcat Pontiac back in 1967." He pulled the original engine and put it on a stand, rebuilt the transmission and installed a rebuilt 455 under its tach-equipped hood. "I always had a thing for Pontiacs," Banach adds. "I grew up on the east side of Detroit, in an area where everybody had Mopars. But as a kid, when my neighbor came home with a '69 GTO, I was really impressed."



1967 Chevrolet Corvette 427/435

Bloomfield Hills' Bruce Alexander's '67 435-hp 427 Corvette looks a lot like mine, only a whole lot better. Much faster, too, since mine's a much more affordable small-block. Bruce believes it's the best-looking Corvette ever, and who am I to disagree. He bought it just eight months ago, complete with this gorgeous (non-factory) red paint job, added new bumpers and a new convertible top and swapped the (factory optional) "bolt-on" aluminum wheels and bias tires for '67-look redline radials on (factory standard) steel "rally" wheels. "I've been looking for a 427 Corvette for years," he tells us. "It came down to this or a Marina Blue one, but the blue one had the 390-horse engine and no side pipes, and the price was right on this one."



1987 Buick Regal GNX

It was past 4:00 when I got to Birmingham and raining gain, pretty hard. I was still looking for a good Buick and some sort of Mercury muscle car to complete my list. The rain seemed here to stay, and a lot folks were covering their cars or packing up to leave. Walking south once the rain let up, I came across this very wet GNX, one of just 547 built. Packing a stout 300-horse turbocharged intercooled V-6, it was one of the very few true post-fuel-crises muscle cars, and Buick's last. No owner was around to chat or wipe it dry, so I moved on.



1963-1/2 Mercury Super Marauder S-55

This may not be the best or fastest muscular Mercury ever, but it's certainly one of the more rare and interesting. Long-time NASCAR fans will recall the fastback Ford and Mercury coupes introduced mid-year 1963 for the primary purpose of winning races through reduced aerodynamic drag. As I recall, they were effective on the track as well as in showrooms. Owner Kirk Dillery of Battle Creek, Mich., was absent, but his note inside the windshield claimed



this car as the earliest-built Marauder known to exist and probably the only one of 64 built with the rare Super Marauder 405-hp 406-cid engine. He bought it in Aiea, Hawaii , in August 1981.