

CAN YOU BE SMITTEN BY 50 YEAR OLD BRITISH CARS?

Rod MacArthur, Bedford NS



*Illustrating Rod's evolving taste in cars, from left to right:
his 1971 Buick Skylark GS Stage 1 (then); his 1973 MGB GT (now).
Rod still has the 571 hp Buick to go along with the 98 hp MGB GT.*

You are reading the confession of a Nova Scotian who was raised on dreams of muscle cars and hopped up, modified monsters that will go zero to sixty in less than four seconds. They were not only fast accelerating, but had to handle less ponderously than their more mundane siblings and they had to be North American. Anything else was not worth looking at – about as exciting as pushing a baby carriage around the block.

So what happened? Early onset dementia? What was the cause of this Saul on the road to Damascus transformation? Some of these are 50-year old cars with less than 300 horsepower, most with less than 100 struggling horses beckoning? Cars made in far-off old Merry Olde? What could possibly attract the attention of a confessed power freak?

Well – surprisingly, change can happen! Appreciation and interest can expand, they can become more inclusive.

This appreciation shift can happen faster than you would think. One of the places where it can happen at something approaching light speed is at an exposition like the British Motoring Festival. This fascinating event occurs every year in the sylvan setting of Kings Edgehill School in Windsor, N.S. The Festival happens this year July 13-15. The show day is July 14 and is THE day for participants and spectators alike!

What grabs even the jaded car nut is the variety of these, in some cases, seldom seen chariots. The smaller machines, the sports cars, have an attractive simplicity and beauty of design. They also handle and steer well and get decent gas mileage. Why didn't I really notice how attractive these cars were when I was a young gaffer? Why was I so blind? Except for special beauties such as the Healeys, the Jag E-types and certain high end exotica, I'm finding these little machines are really quite affordable. Good news! Especially so when all the "muscle" North American iron of old is now beyond the reach of mere mortals.

So have a look yourself. But watch out, it is easy to be infected! And, and... if you need that adrenalin shot – a North American V8 will fit under the "bonnet" of many of these little sports cars without too much trouble .

Another reason to get involved with these British cars is the camaraderie of owners and fans. A finer group of people you won't find. They are a cut above. The social side of the British Automobile Touring Association is without parallel. All in all a hobby worthy of support.