

American Auto

NEWS



The Official Journal of the American Auto Club UK

February 2006
£2, free to Members



Rod's Stunning Studebaker

Inside This Month...



History of the Firebird



Derbyshire Xmas Meal



Jamie's Jeep Cherokee



STUNNING STUDEBAKERS

There's very few of us in the AAC UK who know what it's like to live with a 1920's Yank. Rod Fraser is lucky enough to have a pair of '20's Studebakers and wrote in to tell us more...

My first real contact with the American scene was attending Santa Pod in the very early seventies, after the meeting I was hooked on V8 power, I never missed a meeting for nearly ten years always camping in the back field with my friends even if it was raining we attended. If I remember rightly the beer was always good down at the Nags Head at the bottom of the lane. To anyone who has never seen a top fuel car race has just never lived, the likes of Dennis Priddle, Alan Herridge and Clive Skilton were super stars. One of the best spectator and competitive classes in the seventies was Pro Stock with the fabulous burnout and pre race antics of Tony Dickson, Gary Goggin, Kevin Pilling and many others, they were terrific crowd pleasers. I am sorry to ramble on a bit, it sounds more like an advert for drag racing, any way, a friend of a friend had in the mid seventies purchased a 350 ci Mustang fastback, my friend arranged a ride out in it for me, which was totally mind blowing. I knew from that moment I had to have a Mustang one way or another. As the internet had yet to be invented all you had to rely on was either the ads in Custom Car or the Exchange & Mart, anyway the search began, most of the cars which were affordable to me were in the London area which meant quite a few miles were clocked up at weekends viewing them, I am sure some of the prices being asked back then for what amounted to a pile of crap was trading on the fact that good American cars were few and far between. A 1968 289ci Coupe was found in Brentwood which was not only affordable but also had Cragger Mag wheels on it, although the chrome on them had long since gone the guy was willing to barter and a deal was struck, within a hour or so I was driving home to the west country. During the time I owned it the car was repainted and became necessary to replace the radiator and head gaskets due to a overheating problem. After a while I sold the Mustang fully intending to purchase another American car, a 68-70 Camaro appealed to me but alas never happened. The late seventies heard the sounds of wedding bells and patter of tiny feet thus funds for a replacement American car were put on the back burner, well to be honest there were no longer any funds.

About six years ago, after continuing to follow the American scene via mainly magazines and an annual pilgrimage, weather permitting to the European finals or Main Event at Santa Pod decided now was the time to buy another American car, the car of choice was going to be a 1957 2 door Bel-Air Chevrolet. As I was being very specific on the year and model, it was clear a good example for sale was not going to be found in the UK, I began trawling the inter-net and found what appeared to be very good examples across the Atlantic, but was very wary of parting with my cash before I had the goods. Perhaps, this may be an age thing but as I searched for a suitable car was gradually being drawn to earlier era cars i.e. 20s/30s but had to be a Sedan with wood spoke wheels. Now, I am very fortunate to live in the same town as Colin Rogers, who has an unbelievable amount of knowledge on early American cars and has probably owned most marques over the years, he has given me a never ending amount of advice on what to and what not to look at, his enthusiasm and help has been very valuable.

I viewed a few cars around the country but either they were too expensive, did not fit my criteria or the person selling would not commit their self to selling when the cards were on the table, when a chap that lives not a few hundred yards from me, wandered by one day clutching a picture of a 1928 Studebaker Commander and asked if I would like to buy it? The car was already in Transit from the States and he felt that he would prefer something newer. I said I would view the car as soon as it landed and if I liked I would have it, a deal was struck immediately upon my eyes seeing it, I have now owned it since 2004. I have now become a firm Studebaker fan and really appreciate the marque. The Big Six engine is really torquey for its age, but I now had the bug, I now wanted a eight cylinder car (just what is it about 8 cylinders?!) but wanted to keep the styling of the late 20s, so a President 8 was now required. The President like the Commander are very difficult to find for sale especially in Europe so, I looked on American sites and EBay and bid on two before they got out of my price range, when in early July this year one came for sale on EBay, I bid on it.



Right and above right - Rod's 1928 Studebaker Commander, and left 1929 President.





Whilst the auction ran a ten day period I rang around five different Shipping companies to get an idea of cost, time, port of shipping and whether it should or should not go in a container. Out of the companies asked, one stood out with not only their knowledge of shipping but their friendliness ,always returning a call or answering any question no matter how stupid I may have sounded as this was the first car I have imported. I was sent a quote via the net followed by snail mail which was more than satisfactory and contacted them after I won the auction. Upon mentioning that I was a member of AAC UK received a further discount. The car was then by its previous owner transferred from West Virginia to Baltimore, where the guy refused to book the car into port for me, but , the situation was speedily resolved by my nominated shippers, it went on the vessel and arrived safely at Southampton and was cleared all duties paid and collected within 3 days. I am sorry to have rambled on and on but the purpose of this story is to say that it is not as difficult as you may think to import cars from America , as long as the Shipping Agents know their business. I would like to give a big thank via the AAC UK club magazine to both John and Deborah for not only being nice people at GOLDEN CHARIOTS for all their help and making my import run quick and stress free. I would highly recommend Golden Chariots to any other member or person wishing to bring in their own car. The pictures are of my 28 Commander and 29 President

Regards, Rod. # 1216

STUDEBAKERS IN POPULAR CULTURE

- The Statler brothers of Hill Valley in *Back to the Future*, starting with selling fine horses, by 1955 the descendants were selling Studebaker automobiles. By 1985, Statler descendants were selling Toyota brand vehicles.
- In 1979's *The Muppet Movie*, Fozzie and Kermit drive part-way to California in Fozzie's uncle's 1951 Studebaker Commander. One of the two cars used in the original filming is currently housed in the Studebaker National Museum in South Bend, Indiana.
- The popular early 1960s TV show "Mr Ed" was sponsored by Studebaker Corporation. In an early form of product placement, Studebakers were seen prominently throughout the show.
- One of Nathan Detroit's lines in the original Broadway musical *Guys and Dolls* refers to garage owner Joey Biltmore getting "stabbed by a Studebaker".
- Frank Zappa's mock rock-opera "Billy the Mountain" features a superhero called "Studebaker Hawk."
- In the 1990s Nickelodeon TV show "Doug", one of Doug's friends is named "Chalky Studebaker".
- In the TV show "Happy Days", Mr. Cunningham (played by Tom Bosley) trades in his DeSoto for a 1962 Studebaker Lark during the 1982 season. The car appeared in the opening credits until the show's cancellation in 1984.
- The company's also mentioned in Billy Joel's history themed song "We Didn't Start the Fire".
- British art-rock band Roxy Music's 1972 debut single "Virginia Plain" contains the lyrics, "Where my Studebaker takes me / That's where I'll make my stand".