

AUTOMOTIVE

[CLASSIFIEDS]

BUYING AND SELLING

Mentor Museum of Speed lands its first million-dollar car

by Terry Troy

Do you want to own a piece of automotive and drag racing history? It will cost you just over \$1 million. But you can see it at the Mentor Museum of Speed for the price of admission, which is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under.

The Mentor Museum of Speed is now home to a 1968 Plymouth Hemi Barracuda, a record-breaking drag racer once owned and raced by Akron racing legend Arlen Vanke. The Cuda has been completely restored to its pristine racing state, right down to the sponsors names that are painted on the sides.

"In 1968, this car secured its place in automobile history by winning almost every significant national drag racing competition. That year it set records in its own class and was one of the first factory-produced cars to achieve such distinction," said Joe Carroll, owner of Cleveland-based Best of Show Automotive, an international restorer and seller of classic, muscle and high-performance cars.

Created as an outgrowth of the Best of Show Automotive business, the Mentor Museum of Speed opened its doors just over six months ago. It's now home to some 150 vintage classic and muscle cars that are housed in what the Museum calls "60,000 square feet of automotive heaven." You'll see cars up close that are normally only found in private collections.

"Everybody has a favorite car from their childhood which brings back fond memories," said Rick Iacoboni, marketing director for the Museum. "For me it is T-birds. For others it could be Mopars, Hemis, Vettes, Cudas, or Camaros. There's a favorite car here for everybody."

Vanke, a renowned Chrysler test driver and member of the Superstock Legends Hall of Fame in Columbus, personally oversaw the meticulous two-year restoration of the 1968 Plymouth Hemi. He ensured that the car was 100-percent accurate and authentic with original parts. The car was hidden away for more than 25 years prior to the restoration.

"This fully-restored, one-of-a-kind car features an incredibly-rare original 426 Hemi engine. It was the 13th car off of the line, and even today, it is the most famous of the Hemi Cudas," said Carroll.

What also makes this Cuda worth so much is that its racing life was short lived.

"Drag racing cars are like butterflies," Iacoboni explained. "They have a very short life because the technology changes from year to year. Many of these cars simply end up sitting in a garage or barn until someone realizes what they are."

Because its inventory is sold globally, all cars at the Museum are completely restored and are 100-percent ready to drive at all times.

"Most of the cars we sell are shipped around the world and are bought sight unseen," said Iacoboni. "Because our reputation rides on every car we sell, we go through extraordinary efforts to make sure that we have all of the paperwork to back up everything we say."

Two vehicles from the Museum recently left for the famous Barret-Jackson Auto Auction, including a 1969.5 Plymouth Road Runner A12, which was the first off of the production line.

But don't worry, there are still plenty of vehicles to see. While it sells vehicles globally, the Museum also has spotters around the globe looking for cars, so new ones come in almost every week. And there's a list of its inventory that's updated weekly at the Museum entrance.

From its working repair shop to the race track that circles the collection and the automotive art hanging on the walls, the Mentor Museum of Speed is a destination and a nice way to spend an afternoon.

The Mentor Museum of Speed is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays.



The Mentor Museum of Speed is now home to a fully restored 1968 Plymouth Hemi Barracuda which was originally raced by Akron racing legend Arlen Vanke.