THE POWERS THAT BE 1993

PRESENTING OUR SECOND EXCLUSIVE LISTING OF THE 25 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE COLLECTOR CAR WORLD.

BY PETER FREY

How to judge the ebb and flow of power, especially in so short a span of time as a year? Power is usually a more ponderous thing, but then again, the past few years have been an experiment in what happens when you keep your finger on the fast-forward button.

After being driven sky-high by speculators a few years ago, prices have since returned to 1988 levels. Enthusiasts are now keeping the market alive, and because of the faltering worldwide economy, they have their pick of once-in-a-lifetime deals. Overall, the trend is toward smaller deals involving cars that people can drive—both street cars and vintage racing automobiles. Of course, big deals are still happening, but they are fewer and farther between.

Like the industry, our list of the most influential people is changing. Some auctioneers, brokers, and collectors remain, but some are retiring—two dropped off the earth or cast from the fellowship of cars, but simply standing aside this time 'round to gather their strength and let some new names see the light. Such is the ebb and flow of power in this year of recovery.

In such an unsettled time, choosing a list such as ours is a delicate matter. Lacking omniscience, we judge in human ways—by action, or the lack of it; by the magnitude of a project begun or accomplished; and, at times, by smaller things: an incremental movement up or down, judged by a jury of peers, words echoing

TOP LEFT: Barry Tarshman Jr. works behind the scenes to make the Cole Tarshman company a major power in the collector car business. ABOVE: Bill Miller (left) and Chip Miller (below) make eight automotive events a year at the Carlisle Fairgrounds in central Pennsylvania.

down a thousand miles of telephone line, deciding someone's fate.

The goal: a list of 25 of the most powerful people currently operating in the field of old cars. The criteria: Money is not enough, nor is a warehouse full of the finest examples of the artificer's art. Rather, we have judged power as the combination of activity, knowledge, connections, passion, and the ability to make things happen. Quoting from last year, we have chosen "people whose opinions, thoughts, words, and deeds are the tides and currents of power."

You'll notice some changes in the presentation of this year's list. For example, there are more multiple entries, made up of several individuals that we've decided to count as one, having judged that in these particular cases it is not a single individual but the sum of various individuals' efforts that yields power. We've also deleted the Honorable Mentions list after having been told by several people on last year's list that there is precious little honor in being "mentioned."

Christian Philippoz is a car collector, race car driver, and event promoter who created Europe's most influential classic car event, called the Auto mobile Classique & Louis Vuitton at Bugatti.

One additional change: Last year we let the alphabet decide who went where. Our informal ranking machinery was still too new to trust it with the task of ranking the 25 most powerful—and it still is, though you'll notice that this time around the names are no longer ordered by the alphabet. We're not exactly ready to stand up in front of the whole world and declare that this is the order in which power proceeds. Instead, we did this: We talked among ourselves and mored names around. We talked to experts around the world and mored the names around some more. And when the talking was done and the deadline upon us, this is the order the names were in.

Too human and fallible a process for you? Write a letter, and maybe next year, when the time comes to compile this list, we'll call you and ask your advice. Until then, here's how we see it.

For 15 years Barry Tarshman has served as the engineer for Revelstoke, a European version of cars that has become a fixture on the Continental automotive scene.

DON WILLIAMS
Danville, California

By virtue of his constant innovation, tireless travel, worldwide deal-making, and involvement at the most rarefied heights of the world of megabucks cars, Don Williams has earned a seat at the head of the table. In 1992, Williams (and his Blackhawk Collection team) bought and sold tens of millions of dollars' worth of major classics. In addition, he staged four major "salon" events, in which he gathered together some of the world's greatest classics and took them on the road, elegantly displaying them to enthusiasts and potential buyers in various locales around the world. This year he's planning four to six salon events. He's also recently opened a million-dollar showroom for the cream of the Blackhawk crop, bought (with Richie Clyne) a Bugatti Royale for an estimated $10 million; and put together a complex deal that resulted in the sale of the famed 1930 Bentley "Blue Train" for around $5 million.

RICK COLE
MARTY YACOBIAN SR. AND JR.
North Hollywood, California

This triumvirate combines brains, money, experience, and nerve into what is regarded by many as the most aggressive collector and vintage car auction company in the business. Cole is the high-profile auctioneer/promoter whose annual Gold and Platinum lists both chart and create trends in classic/collectible vehicle values. The Yacobians Sr. and Jr. do their deals behind the scenes on the brokerage side of the business. Their auctions (six in 1992, with plans for eight for 1993) help set the value and vigor of the market. In his spare time Cole fields an Indy car for young hotshoe Jim Vasser, and the trio is organizing a world-class professional auto race to be held in Palm Springs. What's more, Cole and the Yacobians are working on a plan to merge their firm with another group operating in the classic car field, which would create a sort of classic/collectible car superpower. When do these guys find time to sleep?

BRIAN JACKSON
CRAIG JACKSON
Scottsdale, Arizona

You can see the Jackson brothers in action each January at the prestigious Barrett-Jackson Auction, held just outside Scottsdale, Ariz. Although the event was founded by Tom Barrett, the grand old man of classic cars, and father Russ Jackson, who has been emeritus for years, Craig and Brian have assumed much of the day-to-day operation of the annual event, and will eventually take over complete control, probably sooner than later. At this year's event, three auctions will take place simultaneously: Cars will be auctioned all five days (January 20 to 24), 200 vintage and racing motorcycles will be auctioned on the weekend; and an antique automotive toy auction will take place on Sunday. The Jackson brothers also have various other projects under way. Craig is working on a television show called Auto Classics that he's pitching to several major cable channels, and Brian has just been named to the board of the Arizona Motorsports and Industries League, an association determined to bring a major vintage car race to a local racetrack.

Steve J. Earle has been the driving force behind the Monterey Historic Automobile Races for 20 years. Here Earle test drives a 1962 Jaguar XK-150C.

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THOMAS W. BARRETT III
Scottsdale, Arizona

After 47 years in the business, Tom Barrett's fingerprints are on nearly every major classic car in existence. He was the first person to auction a car for more than $100,000, an act that transformed the classic car hobby into a business literally overnight and earned him not just a permanent seat at the head of the table, but his own wing in the classic car hall of fame. You'd think nearly half a century of work would have bought him a cruise through the golden years, but he's still on the phone every day and made close to 80 deals in 1992. In addition, he realized a dream last year when he opened his Classic and Vintage Car Company in the heart of Beverly Hills. The facility, run by Barrett's nephew, Gary O'Dell, has a showroom that holds about 15 cars; a like number can be stored underground. In some respects, the place is indicative of Barrett's life: "I've never missed an opportunity. I just got around to some later than others."

RICHIE CLYNE
Las Vegas, Nevada

Richie Clyne is head of the Antique and Classic Auto Collection at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, where 700 of the best classics in the world are viewed by hundreds of thousands of people every year. New developments at the Imperial Palace include a display of historically significant vehicles belonging to former U.S. presidents, and the opening of a 40,000-sq-ft showroom where cars that are surplus to the collection will be sold. Clyne is also a partner with Don Williams in a variety of projects, including the World Classic Expo Tour, a traveling show of classic cars for sale, and The Auction, a major classic car auction held each November in Las Vegas. One of Clyne's more interesting business/altruistic arrangements is with the Nevada Correctional Facility at Indian Springs. Inmates of the facility are restoring cars for the Imperial Palace Collection, and learning a trade for when they get out—one that pays even better than crime.

LORIN TRYON
JULES HEUMANN
Pebble Beach, California

Existence demands absolutes. In the world of classic and collector cars, there must be an individual who is the most powerful, as well as an event that is the most powerful. We've suggested that Don Williams may be the former, and there is little doubt that the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance is the latter. Its influence has increased over the years due to the addition of the Monterey Historic Races and several major auctions which take place in the same general area on the same specific weekend each August, but even stripped of all that, Pebble Beach is still the all-powerful, semi-benevolent patriarch of the classic car world. And of all the hundreds of people involved in staging the event, co-chairmen Lorin Tryon and Jules Heumann still lead the parade, as they've been doing for two decades. Despite the economy, 1992 was the biggest and most international year Pebble Beach has ever had. The cars are art, but so is the event, and these are the two men who sculpted it.

STEVEN J. EARLE
Santa Barbara, California

It's no small achievement to create a forum in which the hardware of history can perform the task for which it was designed and then to develop that forum into bigger and better incarnations every year for 20 years. Vision is the thing, you see. Oh, work is important, sure, but why work unless you can see a future of which you care to be part? This August marks the 20th year for Steve Earle's vision—the Monterey Historic Races, where 340 historic racing cars from around the world compete for two days at Laguna Seca Raceway in Monterey, Calif. This year the vision expands to Japan, where Earle's General Racing Ltd. and Club Japan will transform the Monterey Historic Races into a Japanese. The inaugural event will take place May 3 to 5 at the Tsukuba circuit. Participating will be 150 cars, some from the United States but most from Japan. Two decades of lifting a world-class weight—now he decides to do it twice a year. Tough guy.

CHIP MILLER
BILL MILLER
Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Starting two decades ago with a small show called Postwar '74, Chip Miller and Bill Miller (no relation) ...

LEFT: Six of the most influential people in the collector car world gather around a 1928 Mercedes-Benz 680S. Special Colors: from the Blackhawk Collection. From left: Craig Jackson, Brian Jackson, Tom Barrett, Richie Clyne, Don Williams, and Rick Cole.