

# CRAIG

Barrett-Jackson:  
the Super Bowl  
of auto auctions

# *Jackson*

BY SUSAN LANIER-GRAHAM  
PHOTOS BY CARL SCHULTZ





The Barrett-Jackson car auctions have been selling collector cars in Scottsdale since the 1970s. The company, celebrating its 43rd Scottsdale auction this January, has even trademarked its claim to fame—The World's Greatest Collector Car Auctions™. But CEO Craig Jackson likes to stress that Barrett-Jackson is about more than selling collector cars. "We like to say this is a lifestyle event," explains Jackson. "We've made it an event the whole family wants to attend."

While Jackson's lifestyle event does indeed feature "Automobilia" (assorted automobile memorabilia) and the Sunday before the auction opens is Family Value Day where families can experience some great automobiles, it still remains the premier auction in the industry.

"The auction held here in Scottsdale every January is the barometer of where collector prices are for the rest of the year," explains Jackson.

And after a lifetime in the business, he definitely knows cars.

## THE HISTORY OF BARRETT-JACKSON

Jackson's family is typical of so many who lived in Michigan post-World War II. Both of Jackson's parents (Russ and Nellie) worked at General Motors—at least until they were married. Company policy prevented them both from working for GM, so Nellie started a dress shop. But Russ Jackson had a lifelong love of cars. The family first started visiting Arizona in the 1950s, when they would stay at Rancho Vista Bonita guest ranch, located on the site where Pinnacle Peak General Store stands today. The Jackson family moved to Scottsdale permanently in 1960 and opened a car wash. Russ Jackson was already collecting and restoring cars then, and it was that love of collecting cars that led him to Chicago native and car collector Tom Barrett in the early 1960s.

Barrett and Jackson decided to bring their collections of restored cars to auction the first time in 1967, when they hosted Fiesta de los Autos Elegantes as a fundraiser for the new Scottsdale Public Library. The sale was such a hit that the pair decided to launch the Barrett-Jackson Auction Company in 1971. It was an amazing success and Barrett's own Mercedes

770 Phaeton sold for the amazing sum of \$153,000.

The business was under the direct leadership of Russ Jackson and Tom Barrett for years. Jackson's oldest son Brian, who also raced cars, was involved in the business. The mid-1990s brought major change to the company when Russ Jackson died of colon cancer in 1993 and son Brian succumbed to colon cancer two years later. Tom Barrett retired in 1997. Youngest son Craig Jackson answered the call to service and took over the reins as chairman and CEO in 1995. "I grew up in the business," explains Jackson. "I started from the ground up and studied automotive technology in college."

With Jackson at the helm of the famous company, he took it to new heights, introducing cutting-edge technology and live Internet bidding.

## CHARITY FUNDRAISING IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF BARRETT-JACKSON

After they launched their auction company in the early 1970s, the founders made sure that charity remained a vital part of their vision. That trend continues today.

"In recent years, we've raised between \$8 and \$10 million each year for charity," explains Jackson. "Overall, we've raised more than \$60 million for charities."

Most years, Ford and/or General Motors donate Vin number 1 of certain vehicles for the charities.

The 2014 auction will be no exception. The first two production Chevrolet Camaro 2014 "Linda Vaughn LV-1" vehicles will be auctioned off during the January 2014 event in Scottsdale to benefit Dreamakers, a non-profit organization that provides fundraising for charitable organizations. The two LV-1s will go to benefit IKAN, the International Kids Alliance Network. Not only are these the first two production vehicles, but there will only be a total of 500 LV-1 Camaros produced—50 white and gold convertibles, 50 black and gold convertibles, 200 white and gold coupes, and 200 black and gold coupes.

In addition to the annual charity, Barrett-Jackson also raises money for the Barrett-Jackson Cancer Research Fund in honor of Russ and Brian Jackson at TGen,

a company working to find cures for colon and prostate cancer.

"We want to do things that change people's lives," explains Jackson. "We also give a lot to military charities. We take care of our veterans after they take care of us."

## WHAT TO EXPECT AT BARRETT-JACKSON'S SCOTTSDALE EVENT

"Our auction is a bucket list item for collectors," says Jackson. "It's the Super Bowl for collectors." Indeed, hundreds of thousands have made their way to Scottsdale over the years for the week of auctions. But Jackson points out that it isn't just multi-million-dollar automobiles. Out of the hundreds of autos auctioned off during the event, more than 1,400 vehicles have no reserves, making them accessible to a larger number of collectors.

"I sell dreams," explains Jackson.

They literally review between 4,000 and 5,000 applications each year to pick a broad mix of cars that can appeal to a wide audience.

Of course, the best of the best are in the Salon Collection, which you can check out online at [www.saloncollection.com](http://www.saloncollection.com). Those are the cars with the reserves, the ones that sell for millions because they are just that rare. The most memorable car from the 2013 Salon Collection was the Original Batmobile owned by George Barris, which ended up selling for more than \$4.6 million. Jackson says the auction of the Batmobile was a moment to remember.

"Some thought it was over-hyped," he says, "but there were 12,000 people in that room watching the auction. It's an incredible feeling. You know you're watching history happen."

In the end, the two bidders ended up flipping a coin to see which one would walk away with the piece of cinematic history.

This year, there are some great offerings as part of the Salon Collection. The classic Mattel Hot Wheels battle of Snake vs. Mongoose will happen on the auction block. The original restoration of the only remaining Mattel Hot Wheels 1970 Plymouth Barracuda "Snake" Funny Car and the 1972 Plymouth Duster Hot Wheels "Mongoose" Funny Car will each go to the highest bidders.

Other great autos to watch this month include the only remaining original 1963 Shelby Cooper Monaco King Cobra, one

of only six ever built in 1963-64; Kobe Bryant's 1963 Chevrolet Impala Custom; a 1956 Red Chevrolet Bel Air; and a 1929 Duesenberg SJ LeBaron.

There seems to be a unique connection between most Americans and at least one classic car. For example, this author was excited to see the inclusion of a 1970 Plymouth Hemi Superbird 2-door hardtop in the 2014 auction. It brings back memories for her of a favorite uncle, now gone, who proudly owned one. It seems only yesterday that the 7-year-old was riding alongside her uncle, in awe of the way the car sounded as it sped at top speeds across the Texas flatlands.

Barrett-Jackson is all about helping people take home just such memories. The company also has a reputation for being honest and ethical. "We vet the cars when you consign them with us," Jackson says. "You know you're getting the real deal with us."

The event now lasts from one weekend to the next. Top talent performs—Bret Michaels is the entertainer at this month's Opening Night Gala of 5,000-6,000 people—and top chefs dish up food from around the Valley.

Guests to this year's event will also have a new facility in which to enjoy the auctions. The event space is almost one million square feet of indoor and outdoor space, making it the largest auction site ever built. The main building is now 680,000 square feet, with permanent restrooms and event space.

## THE 2014 BARRETT-JACKSON AUCTION ON TELEVISION

You have more options than ever for catching the auction, thanks in large part to the efforts of Craig Jackson. Every year since he took over as CEO, Jackson has raised the stakes. This year is no exception. For the first time, Fox and National Geographic will be broadcasting live from the auction. Fox Sports, Fox Sports 2 and Fox will be broadcasting every day while the auction is taking place, from Tues., Jan. 14 through Sun., Jan. 19. New this year, Fox Business channel will cover the event each evening from 7 to 9 p.m. MST. For those who want to see the sale of the Salon Collection, you can tune in on Sat., Jan. 18, from 1 to 3 p.m. during the afternoon Fox broadcast, and again from 5 to 7 p.m. on the National

Geographic channel.

If you want to head out to WestWorld and attend the auction, you can buy a weekly pass or pick specific days that you want to attend. Weekly passes are \$130 for advance purchase (\$90 for seniors, military and students with ID). Family Value Day is \$11 for advance purchase tickets. Other days vary and prices are listed on the Barrett-Jackson website.

## TODAY'S CLASSIC CAR INDUSTRY

Jackson finds the industry today more exciting than ever. "More people are coming into it [classic car collecting]," he says. "It's more global than ever. But people need to get into car collecting for the right reasons. It's not a way to turn money around in the short-term. Classic car collecting is a long-term investment."

Jackson says he tells people looking to start collecting that they must do their homework. "We have the world's top experts assembled here, so it's a great time to ask questions, even if you're not yet ready to buy."

Bringing new collectors—and auto enthusiasts who may someday become collectors—is a major goal of the Barrett-Jackson auctions. Most importantly, Jackson says he tells people that the perfect collectible is one you can take out, drive, and have fun with.

## THE FUTURE OF BARRETT-JACKSON

Jackson says he feels very strongly about continuing to grow the Scottsdale auction. "We live here. We try to be ambassadors for the state. We want to showcase the state. So many people who've come to Scottsdale for the auction end up falling in love with it," he says.

Jackson hopes to continue that tradition far into the future and plans to continue finding new ways to use technology to keep Barrett-Jackson at the forefront of the industry. Not only do the auctions raise millions of dollars for charity each year, but they also generate real revenue for the state. During the 2013 Barrett-Jackson auction in Scottsdale, local experts estimate that attendees spent more than \$100 million in the local economy.

For more on this month's Barrett-Jackson Collector Car Auction at WestWorld and to purchase tickets for the events, visit [www.barrett-jackson.com](http://www.barrett-jackson.com).