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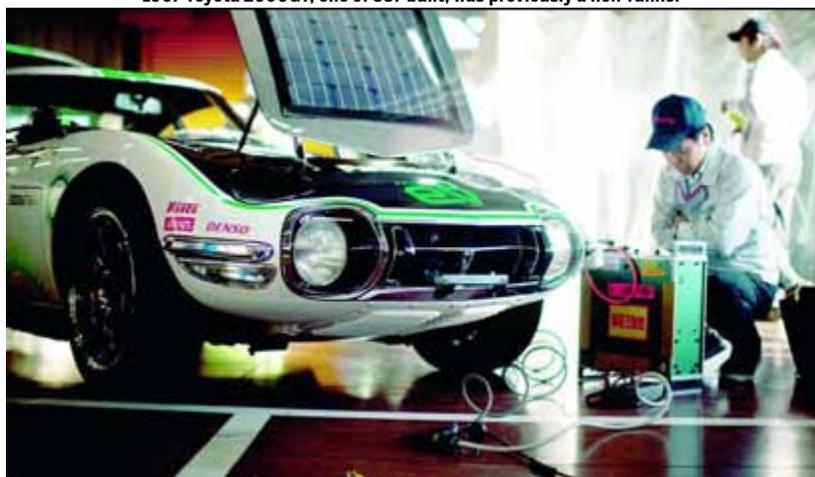


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EVENTS NEWS



1967 Toyota 2000GT, one of 337 built, was previously a non-runner



Solar panels on the bonnet power electric motors driving the wheels

CRAZY TOYOTA 2000GT IS POWERED BY THE SUN

ENGINEERS FROM A GROUP OF JAPANESE TECHNOLOGY FIRMS have built a solar-electric-powered 1967 Toyota 2000GT in a bid to future-proof appreciation – and use – of the sports car.

The Crazy Car Project from the Toyota Automobile Association, which includes personnel from Toyota Motor Corporation, Panasonic and Denso, restored the non-running 2000GT and replaced its two-litre straight-six with solar panels on the carbonfibre bonnet connected to electric motors driving the wheels. The idea is that future generations, perhaps in a world without oil-based fuels, should still be able to experience the excitement of driving a characterful car.

The 2000GT SEV is claimed to be capable of 125mph, but instead of a crisp exhaust bark – or silence – you'll hear one of a dozen sound effects: the jet, spaceship, helicopter and train noises almost

sound normal compared to the other choices, which include a galloping horse, a cat's meow, a sheep's baa and a cockerel's cock-a-doodle-doo. And, no, it's not April 1.

The Alcantara-trimmed interior includes bespoke gauges for speed and battery reserves in the original housings, while the rear-view mirror can be switched from being a conventional mirror to a monitor displaying images from a rear-facing camera.

The team plans to enter the car in electric vehicle competitions and has plans to convert another car too, although what that will be is uncertain.

What do you think of this project? Is it an interesting and well-meaning vision of our past in the future – or a sacrilegious way to treat a rare survivor of only 337 Toyota 2000GTs built? Email classic.cars@bauermedia.co.uk with your thoughts.



Simon Kidston

Mystery super-buyers baffle the classics world

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O – AN ALUMINIUM-BODIED MERCEDES 300 SL GULLWING, one of the 29 originals, blitzed its pre-sale estimate and cost its new owner something approaching \$5million at an Arizona auction last month (see page 20).

That's around £3million, in case you paid £5000 for yours new in 1955 and had forgotten it's still in the garage. Not done for the day, bidder number 306 then snapped up a unique Bentley 4½ Litre for a couple more million, double what it had changed hands for earlier. Finally, when a dazzling light green Maserati Ghibli SS Spyder purred across the auction ramp in front of the thousand-strong crowd, paddle 306 again went up and stayed there until the auctioneer's hammer came down with the words: 'Your car, sir – and another world record, ladies and gentlemen.'

So who is this mystery buyer? That's the fascinating part: nobody knows. Not even the auction house, it appears, because the bidder in the room received his instructions on the telephone, said to be Mr Big's agent. Where do the cars go? Nobody knows that either. They just seem to disappear into thin air.

Rumours are rife. The movers and shakers who inhabit the top of the classic car market all know each other, and it doesn't usually take long for the jungle drums to spread news of a big acquisition. Not knowing makes them even more inquisitive.

The French, understandably not happy at being left out of this largely Anglo-Saxon orgy of one-upmanship, had to have the last word. Well, it seems only fair given that the svelte Ferrari 250 GT California Spider that popped up in a Paris auction two weeks later was originally owned by one of the greatest Gallic playboys of the 20th century, whose conquests included Brigitte Bardot, Jane Fonda and Catherine Deneuve. This time no fewer than nine telephone bidders were ready to do battle with those huddled in the sale room, and an anonymous figure had to dig deep – €4.5million (about £3.8million) – to kick proverbial sand in the face of determined opposition.

The auctioneer's hammer had just fallen when, guess what? The UK popular press got in a frenzy reporting the record-breaking private sale of a Ferrari 250 GTO – and although they might know who sold it, anything seems to go when it comes to guessing the actual price and the identity of the new owner.

So if not the usual big hitters, who's snapping up these cars? The popular theory is an exotic sounding emerging market buyer. 'Look at what the Chinese have done to fine wine prices,' goes the spiel. 'Classic cars are bound to be next.' This, however, ignores the impossibility of road-registering any kind of secondhand import in China, never mind taxes that virtually double the price. 'It's an Arab sheikh,' says another school of thought. But they aren't new to collecting and tend to be savvy buyers, so why the sudden spurt? Forget India where, despite an illustrious motoring history, these days it's a nightmare to import a classic, never mind export one. Russia? Rich Russians want their assets out, not in, and still prefer modern German machinery.

So let's just be patient: some of the greatest ever historic automotive events take place in 2012, and if you'd just acquired the ultimate motoring masterpiece could you really resist getting behind the wheel and joining the fun?

Simon Kidston lives and works in a world filled with the finest classics. In between acting as a consultant to collectors and performing as the multi-lingual presenter at top European events, Geneva-based Simon (www.kidston.com) finds time to enjoy his own cars, including a Porsche 911 Carrera 2.7 RS and a Lamborghini Miura SV.