

# CAR TALK

## WHAT'S THERE TO DO?

Here's a few things coming up to consider spending a day or part of a day on.

**Legends of Los Angeles** at the Petersen. Opening on November 11, this is a display of Southern California Race Cars and their builders. Should be very interesting.

**In-N-Out Burger and Hot Rod Magazine 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.** Saturday, November 17, at the Auto Club Raceway in Pomona. Apparently, both are celebrating their 70th year in business. There will be In-N-Out cookout trucks and hot rod races to enjoy and you can walk around and check out a special exhibit of historic Hot Rod magazine covers and feature cars. If you're a Hot Rod Magazine fan, and who hasn't been at some point in their lives, you can meet some of the Hot Rod staff and collect autographs.

**Los Angeles Auto Show**, November 30 to December 9, at the L.A. Convention Center. More than 1,000 new and customized vehicles on display.

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## WHY BE A DIYer?

If you watch the Barrett-Jackson or Mecum auctions on TV, you've probably noticed that you can go and buy a beautifully-restored or customized car or truck for a lot less money than it would cost to build it yourself. So, why would anyone want to subject themselves to the time, the money, the inconvenience and sometimes the pain of working on a project car themselves?

Well, I have always enjoyed working on vehicles and, yes, I've often ended up with something that was not as great as I envisioned it would be. And it almost always costs more and is harder than I thought it would be. So why do I continue to do it?

I recently read an article by Graham Kozak that pretty well explains why some of us do it:

There are a number of reasons an otherwise rational person might roll up their sleeves and become a do-it-yourselfer. The promise of cost savings gets you started, especially when you're younger and don't have much of a budget to play with, but a lot of people who can afford to hire a professional insist on diving in anyway. It's a point of pride. It's educational; build (or rebuild) something and you will truly understand it.

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It's fun. Or at least it's commonly assumed to be. We take it for granted that working on a project car must be somewhat enjoyable. Otherwise, why would we do it?

But if DIY is fun, we're all part-time masochists. Think back to that last project. What percentage of your time was spent happily spinning a wrench? How does that compare to the time spent breaking things, hurting yourself, fixing whatever you did wrong the first time around and eventually retreating into a case of cheap beer? (Root beer, in my case.)

With every do-it-yourself project I've undertaken to date, I've experienced far more moments of intense frustration than moments of Zen. I prevail, eventually, and when I take a step back from whatever I was doing, the exasperation fades and the feeling of triumph sticks around.

I could be totally off-base here, but I'd bet my experience is fairly typical. Still, there are people for whom everything goes according to plan. They're done on schedule and under budget. Their beers are celebratory, not therapeutic. But here's the thing: They're missing out.

I've been getting in over my head on everything from cars to boats to an old house for years. My budget means I end up doing most things myself, but if I didn't want the challenge, I could rent an apartment and take up stamp collecting.

No, I haven't learned to embrace the pain that comes with each project, and I haven't gotten much better at keeping my cool when things really go south. I doubt I ever will. But I've come to realize that the frustration is a big part of what makes a do-it-yourself project so satisfying. Some ancient part of my brain, I suspect, craves the strife.

There's a theory that humans are built not for speed nor strength, but endurance -that our ancestors hunted prey by chasing it down to exhaustion. Even after pointy sticks entered the equation, it remained a drawn-out process.

The invention of the Land Rover and the .30 caliber Magnum round rendered persistence hunting obsolete, but there's still a desire - a primal need, even - to square off against a seemingly insurmountable task and run it down to the bitter end, no matter what actual or figurative brambles lie in the way.

"Maybe it won't be so bad this time," we tell ourselves, even when part of us knows it's going to be a bear of a project. We can't help it. We thrive on the challenge. It's not exactly slaying the mammoth and feeding the village, nor is it landing on the moon, but our time spent in the garage battling problems we create is how we keep our edge.

And yeah, between the tears and the busted knuckles, we sometimes manage to wrench ourselves out of the pit of despair and into the occasional moment of flow. When nothing

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is broken or about to be, when everything is going like we'd imagined it would. Even a non-masochist would have to call that fun.

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## HOW ABOUT A CHRISTMAS POEM?

T'was the night before Christmas and out in the garage,  
There wasn't a trace of a Ford or a Dodge.  
The presents were all wrapped and the lights were all lit,  
So, I thought I would mess with the 'Vette for a bit.

I popped the release and lifted the hood,  
When a deep voice beside me said "Looks pretty good!"  
Well, as you can imagine, I turned mighty quick,  
And then, by the workbench, stood good ol' St. Nick.

We stood there a bit, not too sure what to say,  
Then he said, "Don't suppose you'd trade for my sleigh?"  
I said "No way, Santa", and he started to grin.  
"But if you've got the time, I'll take you for a spin."

His round little mouth, all tied up like a bow,  
Turned to a smile, and he said, "Hey let's go!"  
So as not to disturb all the neighbors retreat,  
We quietly pushed the Vette into the street.

Then, taking our places to drift down the hill,  
I turned on the key and let the clutch spill.  
The sound that erupted took Santa by surprise,

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But he liked it a lot, you could tell by his eyes.

With the Goodyear's a 'cryin', and the side pipes aglow,

We headed out where all the hot rodders go.

Santa's grin widened, approaching his ears,

With every shift up, as I went through the gears.

As Santa yelled, "Can't recall when I've felt so alive!"

I backed off the gas and said, "You wanna drive?"

Ol' Santa was stunned when I gave him the keys,

When he walked past the headlights, he shook at the knees.

The small block exploded with side exhaust sound,

Santa let out the clutch and the tires shook the ground!

Power shift into second and again into third,

I just sat there watching, at a loss for a word!