

CLASSICS AGAINST CANCER

It was the 'in thing' — car fads through the ages

By Patrick Smith
Classics Against Cancer

There's always a new sensation going around in the car hobby. It seems every couple of years, something "new" migrates either from California or the show car circuit.

These auto fads take over the scene for a few years then fade away to be replaced by something else. Sometimes, what looks like a fad winds up being a solid part of automotive culture and even become revered status symbols. Come with us with a trip through the past and look over what were the "in things" to do to your car back in the day.

Purple Interior Lights: This was a big thing to do in the 1960s. Installing purple lamps around the kick panels or windshield posts to give your interior a dim glow was supposed to set up a romantic aura in your car for those drive in movie dates. Installing the lamps made you sort of a Don Juan character.

Air Shocks: In the 1970s, you had to have a pair of air shocks to

jack up the rear of your car. You bought a set of Gabriel Hijackers and added the air line plumbing to go either behind your licence plate or into the trunk. This way you could boost the rear end up and clear those monster sized L50 by 15 inch tires from rubbing against your wheel wells. It also showed

off that fancy chrome plated differential cover you installed last week. For awhile you could actually get air shocks as an option for your car.

Custom Stereos: People believed the factory radios were expensive and inferior quality. Every audio fanatic installed their favorite brand of radio with all the coolest features popular at the time. We went from 4 track to 8 track Muntz, then added

Quadraphonic sound. Later in the 1970s we switched to cassette decks. Installing the radio wasn't enough. No, we had to chop our door panels, hack our dashboards, consoles and package trays to install those Jensens, Pioneers and Futura speakers as well. It was worth it to hear Earth, Wind and Fire in Quad!

Sunroofs and T Tops: Once convertible models disappeared from



A 2010 Mustang GT and a 2000 Plymouth Prowler will be part of this year's Classics Against Cancer show.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

showrooms, a number of companies offered conversions and special kits to give your wheels the rag top feel without dealing with the hassles of a vinyl or canvas top. The sunroof and T Tops were two options.

The sunroof was a low dollar way to copy the expensive factory moonroofs found on luxury sedans like the Lincoln Mark V and Cadillac Eldorado. It was often installed aftermarket. For a brief period, manufacturers offered a sliding canvas roof on the Plymouth Duster, Dodge Dart Sport, Buick Skylark and Chevrolet Nova. By 1976 they were gone and the sunroof and T Top were the only choices left.

Swivel Bucket Seats: This is one

of those ideas that pops up every couple of decades. Chrysler had this in their 50s dream machines. Chevrolet brought it back in 1973 for the Monte Carlo and Chevelle Laguna.

SuperTrapp Mufflers: The early 1980s heralded a new idea in hot rod mufflers. An adjustable exhaust with circular baffles letting you make your car as loud or quiet as you want. It was high tech and pretty much a 1980s phenomenon.

Smoked Head and Brake Light Covers: These were all the rage in the early 1990s. You had to have a set of smoked GTS covers for your Cavalier Z24 or Sunfire. Another amusing variation was the louvered headlamp covers.

Ed Hardy Steering Wheel and Seat Covers: About five years ago, you couldn't go anywhere without seeing Ed Hardy's name all over car accessories.

They are curiously absent today and I suppose if a late model Camaro comes out of long term storage sporting these items, we'll be able to guess it was stored away in 2010.



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