



Out of Touch — But In Time

If you squint and tilt your head just right, modification is preservation

by JIM PICKERING



A FEW DAYS back, as I was rolling through an Instagram feed filled with slammed C10 trucks, modded muscle cars and mechanic memes, a reel popped up of a couple of goofball guys doing an over-the-top 1980s-styled lip-sync of Hall and Oates’ “Out of Touch.”

The Instagram algorithm knows I’m a kid of the 1980s, and I get it — if there was ever a decade to emulate with bolder colors than were actually there at the time, that one’s it. But the interesting part wasn’t the content, it was the commentary:

“Shout out to GTA Vice City for putting me on to Hall and Oates!”

“Say what you will about GTA, but they introduced a generation to bangin’ music.”

“Ahh yes, Vice City introduced me to 1980s music back in 2002, been jammin’ since.”

From a game?

I doubt if any of those commenters ever fixed an unspooled cassette tape with a BIC pen. But they have stolen a lot of virtual cars.

If you’ve never played “Grand Theft Auto — Vice City,” that’s OK. The only thing you really need to know about it here is that after your player has yanked some poor guy out of his car, you jump in and steal it to do whatever goal is next in the game — and you have control over the soundtrack via a virtual radio in the stolen car. Since the game takes place in a loose approximation of 1980s Miami, you can imagine what’s playing on that radio.

Now, traditional radio hasn't ever stopped playing 1980s-era songs in the 40-odd years it's been since it hit the airwaves — even if it's now on the oldies station. You can go sit in your car and hear Hall and Oates right now.

But to a new generation, that's irrelevant. When's the last time you heard a kid talking about FM radio?

It's fascinating how this music has found its way to new ears — in this case, via an open-world simulation that drew in young people in huge numbers. How huge? Despite adult themes and all that overt larceny (or maybe because of all that), the complete Grand Theft Auto series is both critically acclaimed and a top seller, with 385 million units sold to date.

For comparison's sake, Michael Jackson's "Thriller" — the best selling album of all time — has sold 70 million copies worldwide.

Apples and oranges, though, right? Maybe, maybe not.

Regardless, though, the music has come through here on its own merits — and that's what's important.

Low miles, not used

The same day that those goofballs danced around my phone screen, *Linkage* contributor Dave Kinney published a piece for Hagerty all about the trouble with matching numbers and low miles in the car world. According to Kinney, many of today's car people default to those traits as must-haves in their drive for collector cars without really considering all the facts.

As Kinney points out, those traits can be troublesome for buyers who want to actually use their cars. For a lot of people, something with higher miles, or with a replacement engine could be a better fit for less money spent. No fear of diminished value, no nail biting over damaging a piece of history. If use is the point, those cars can be the answer.

I think he's right, and I'll go even further. Modified cars, clones and replicas are fantastic drivers and serve a very important purpose at the entry level. Resto-Mods — long disliked among collector car purists — are going to play a much larger role in the preservation of the collector car than most people realize.

Why? Because next on my screen that day was a wide-tire big-block Chevelle. And then a slammed Impala. And then a twin-turbo C10 with no hood.

No whitewalls in sight, no golf course green in the background. And it's not just the algorithm this time. This is what's trending right now, at least in terms of entry-level buzz.

Beyond that are further realities. Big brakes help to save sheet metal in a world filled with distraction. Direct injection or forced induction will be required for a clean, hydrogen-fueled V8 rumble. Carburetors need not apply.

Social media proves that there's excitement mixed in with modification, and that excitement is rampant.



A modified C3
Corvette: Drive it
like you stole it

Preserving the drive

Preservation is a strange and multi-faceted topic, as you've probably already gathered from the content in this issue. Even the attempt to honor and preserve something the way that purists tend to do removes the item from the world in which it was originally designed to function. Think of it this way: The days of commuting in a low-miles Split Window in the rain are long gone.

But preserving the spirit in which something was used — even with modern parts sprinkled around in the name of cool factor, performance or just reliability — is one heck of a good entry point into the collector car world. Maybe more important than that, it bucks the typical, aged pathways that purists treasure and new eyes and ears can't contextualize. Think BIC pens, cassette tapes and that FM dial.

But it's just that: An entry point. The chrome and stainless, the long svelte panels with mirror-like paint, the elegance of Holley gold atop a concours-correct Corvette small-block — all that will come through on its own merits.

And that — well, I can go for that. ∞