

AUTOWEEK

Four Batmobiles, one venue

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Four Batmobiles from different eras landed on the lawn at the annual Art Center Car Classic

PHOTO BY MARK VAUGHN

ART CENTER'S CAR CLASSIC FEATURES MOVIE CARS AND MORE IN A FIELD OF ALMOST 100 CLASSICS

Four [Batmobiles](#), the Kurtis Midget Racer from *The Big Wheel* and even a *Mystery Machine*-themed 1967 [VW](#) van starred among the movie and television cars as the annual [Art Center](#) Car Classic in Pasadena went Hollywood last weekend. Someone had even reconstructed the famous HOLLYWOOD sign on the hillside above the campus, except this one spelled out ART CENTER.

The Hollywood theme, the beautiful California sunshine and the usual mix of famous car designers and their cars all combined to draw a record 2700 aficionados to the Art Center's relatively dinky sculpture garden for one of the best gatherings in the show's 11-year history.

Real Hollywood celebrity (and Autoweek columnist!) [Jay Leno](#) brought a [Chrysler Turbine](#) car and, as always, knew everything about it.

"It'll run on anything," Leno opined. "When it was in France they ran it on Chanel No. 5."

Other star cars included everything from the '67 [Pontiac GTO](#) seen in the Vin Diesel action thriller star vehicle *xXx* to the 1960 Herbie VW [Beetle](#) from *Herbie Fully Loaded*. There was even an S2000 from the upcoming *Fast & Furious 7* and the [Camaro SS](#) Bumblebee from *Transformers: Age of Extinction*. Bruce Canepa brought a 917 from the movie *Le Mans*. Bruce Meyers brought the Meyers Manx he built for *The Thomas Crown Affair*, along with the original Big Red Manx that appeared in a recent Pixar *Cars* short.



CAR LIFE

Gallery: Art Center Car Classic 2014

It was the Batmobiles that took center stage, though, both literally and figuratively.

Chronologically they started with a 1956 Oldsmobile transformed from comic book sketches into fiberglass as the first DC Comics Batmobile.

"It's what a Batmobile would look like as drawn in a comic book," said owner Alicia Belzberg.

George Barris was onhand to introduce the Batmobile from the 1966 TV series.

"The car started out as the Ford Futura concept car," said Barris. "We wanted to add all the stuff we did with hot rods. It's not really a crime fighter but a car people would enjoy, a car that made people happy."

Tim Flattery's Batmobile from 1995's *Batman Forever* was powered by a ZZ3 crate motor, the designer revealed at the show.

Harald Belker penned the George Clooney Batmobile.

"The general theme is simple," said Belker. "It had to be black and outrageous."

Belker has worked at Porsche and Mercedes but likes movie car design.

"There's no rules," he said. "It's never boring."

As is the case with everything in Hollywood, some cars were more real than others. The abovementioned were the real cars, others were "tributes."

"Not all (97) cars are from the movies but most are evocative of some movies," said Art Center's chair of transportation design Stewart Reed.

For instance, LA newsman Dave Kunz not only brought his tribute Bullitt [Mustang](#), but wore the same style turtle neck and blazer Steve McQueen did in the movie. And while the *Scooby Doo* Mystery Machine was animated, who's to say Beau Boeckmann's Galpin Auto Sport couldn't build one from a 1967 VW van? No one, that's who.

Let's all get together at the show next year to see what they'll bring. Have your people call my people. Ciao, baby.



MARK VAUGHN - After working in Europe five years covering F1, Group C and German Touring Cars, Vaughn interviewed with Autoweek at the 1989 Frankfurt motor show and has been with us ever since. He still can't believe his good fortune.

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