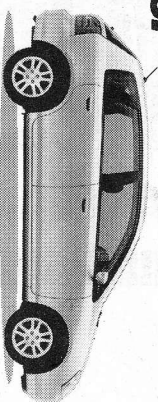


Ford focus: Steve's Thunderbird and the famously ugly Edsel

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The Buick stops here!

US car nut Steve has Riviera touch

By Adrian Taylor

AMERICAN car nut Steve Wright's obsession is fast developing into a one-man car show.

The Millhouses businessman can't control his lust for rare and racy gas guzzlers from about the time that he was born.

He grabbed the headlines when he imported an extremely rare Ford Edsel, a car described as so ugly it is beautiful, to join the Thunderbird he had in his garage. Now he has unveiled two more stunning examples of 1960s excess, a Buick Electra 225 and a Buick Riviera.

"I never realised how prestigious the Buick badge was until I got my hands on the cars," said Steve.

He runs a business selling mobility scooters from his home in Pingle Road.

"But look at the Electra. In 1960 it burst on the scene with a 6.0 litre

high performance engine, electric windows, electric seats, electric convertible roof, power steering and power brakes. At the time Rolls Royces had wind up windows."

The Electra is a flyer too, capable of 140mph.

"Buick made only 6,746 of them and there could be just 11 left in running order. I've seen two and imported this one from Alabama." He reckons it is worth £23,000 because it is so rare and sought-after. But that doesn't mean he'll be treating it as a museum piece.

"It's a car to drive and enjoy, and I can't get enough of it."

He has the same attitude to the Riviera, a 1963, 6.5 litre, 325bhp monster that hits 60mph in eight seconds and returns just 16 mpg. "For its time its performance

was incredible and when you floor the accelerator it sounds like you are firing a machine gun.

"I found it on the internet seconds after a guy in Wyoming had put it up for sale, and I'd bought it in a matter of hours for £6,800 including shipping and taxes.

"It was a great deal for me because I think it is worth at least £12,000."

Not that Steve will be selling.

"I don't want to make money out of these cars. They are for me to drive and enjoy. They're a hobby, not a business.

He's on the lookout for a 1960 red Cadillac Eldorado. But wouldn't it be simpler to live in the States?"

"Probably. I'm building a collection of native American art. But there's something about driving these American cars on English roads. People stare and admire that makes me feel good."

Eye-catching:

Everyone stops to stare and admire when Steve Wright goes by in one of his collection: two Buicks, foreground, and a pair of rare Fords at the rear

