

DIECAST COLLECTOR

May 2012

Chicago Toy Show

Held on April 22nd, at the Kane County Fairground complex, some 20 miles west of Chicago itself, this huge show covered all 5 halls, and comprised over 500 exhibitors, who brought along the widest selection imaginable of toys and dolls old and new.

Given that American collectors were among the earliest and most keen to take the hobby seriously, it follows that America is the place to find the widest variety, and this show certainly seemed to confirm that theory. From new 1/64 diecast at around \$2, to the earliest tinplate of the highest quality and best condition at \$20,000, there was plenty for everyone to choose from.

As a specialist in handbuilt white metal though, I didn't expect to see much, so was pleasantly surprised with a couple of finds, like a Design Studio 1947 Buick convertible, mint boxed and complete, and two very early white metal pieces, the Motorkits version of the Rolls Phantom I Doctors coupe, and the John Day Bentley 3-litre tourer. These latter were on the table of Rex Barratt, along with several other early and rare models, like the Desmoreaux version of the Citroen 5CV of the 1920s, and a very early grand prix Renault that I have never seen before. Rex's other stock included tinplate, plastic and diecast, mostly in very good condition, and with prices generally reasonable.

For unusual diecast, one need look no further than Wim van den Bergh. An expert restorer /convertor, Wim had a fine selection of his creations, and (clearly marked) reproductions of the most rare Dinky and Corgi pieces, like the Dinky "Corn Products" tanker and Corgi Bedford "Avro Bode" van. Conversions included a fine Bedford car transporter, utilizing the front part of the Dinky Turntable Fire Engine, a Scammell Military Crane that mated the Corgi from the 1970s with the Dinky Goods Yard Crane from the 1950s, and looked perfectly in keeping. A quartet of police car conversions on French Dinky base models also caught my eye. Prices were realistic, with the "Corn Products" around \$250 and the "Avro Bode" van, \$120, prices that reflect the cost of the base model and the amount of research and work going into the finished model, whilst remaining a fraction of the cost of an original. Wim also offered a selection of original models in various conditions and degrees of rarity.

These are the highlights from just two tables of the hundreds. Other individual items included a group of Dinky 39 series American cars in the last colours from the 1950s, all in very fine condition, a very early "Vieux Tacots" 1/32 plastic kit of the 1904 Darracq, "Genevieve", absolutely mint and untouched, and a set of small-scale models of very early cars, made in Japan in the 1950s / 60s : You occasionally see the individual models, which look a bit like the Charbens "Old Timer" series, but never a set in its box.

The next show is October 28th, and if you can arrange to be in the Chicago area at that time, is well worth a visit. www.chicagotoyshow.com <<http://www.chicagotoyshow.com/>> , for more details.

CHARLES BARNETT