

Why 'unexceptional' is the new exceptional

To most people with a pulse, cars are more than just tools of travel, they take an essential role in an emotional life, says Richard Webb.

We spend so much time in cars that it is unavoidable that they should feature heavily in our most treasured memories. Cars are emotional triggers; it is no surprise that our enthusiasm for them is potent and powerful.

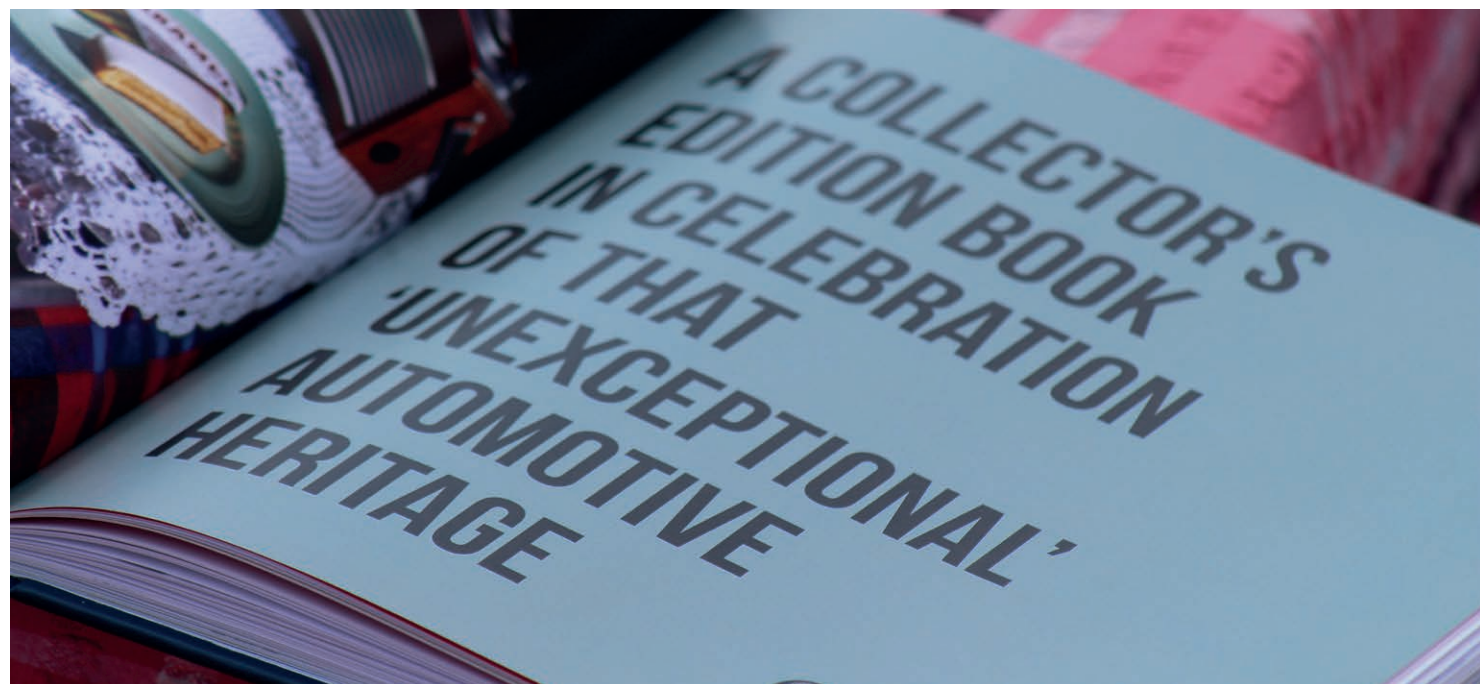
We feel a much greater connection with the cars our uncles drove, our first cars, the cars that got us through college; those humdrum everyday drivers that none of us will ever forget... because that's where the stories of our lives unfolded. We can admire an Aston Martin or a Ferrari, but we will never feel the same way about it as we do about our first Mini or Escort.

So really, it is the unexceptional cars that we truly love, because they are part of the story of our lives. We've all heard about the Goodwood Festival of Speed or the hundreds of exotic Concourse d' Elegance events around the world, but British insurance firm Hagerty International have organised their fifth annual 'Festival of the Unexceptional' to honour these mundane but very rare cars. These cars were the workhorses of their day: the base model

saloons, hatchbacks and estates that were sold in their millions between roughly 1968 and 1989 and are now so rare. A five-strong judging panel of mundane motoring masterminds admired a selection of taupe, primrose yellow and lilac coloured family saloons and estates, many equipped with rubber flooring, squidgy vinyl seats, no radios, manual wind-up windows and 'genuine' faux Formica wooden inserts.

"It was created in a response to highlight the attrition rate of some of the best loved vehicles of our more recent motoring history," says Hagerty's Angus Forsythe. "It's a celebration of everyday classics, the mundane and the oft-forgotten."

To me, this is a refreshing take on a car show awash with multi-million rand exotics completely out of the reach of so many. It should come as no surprise that the cars that really touch our lives are not the out-of-reach exotica that fill our youthful dreams, but the family cars that filled the driveways of our parents. After all, when last did you see an unmolested Ford Cortina or Citroën GS on South African roads?



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