



CHICAGO TOY SHOW

Lucky man *Charles Barnett* was able to visit once again...

EXCELLENT weather following a recent cold spell brought the collectors and enthusiasts out in force for this event on April 22nd, held as always at the Kane County Fairground complex, some 40 miles west of Chicago itself.

So popular was it in fact, that co-organiser Diana Tabin told me that the numbers of visitors had been so great that at one point, the venue's massive car park was full to overflow and people had taken to the car parks of surrounding stores, luckily without complaint.

Remarkably in its 44th year, this is the major spring toy show for collectors in the American Midwest. Some 500 tables filled five large halls, a connecting atrium and one smaller hall and once again it was clear that the continuing popularity of the event lies in its embracing the field of collectible character and action figures as well as the usual fare of vehicles plus other toys and dolls. The character merchandise certainly attracted the younger enthusiasts in their droves and for those of us concerned about the future of our hobby, it was especially good to see so many keen youthful collectors turning up in person, instead of doing everything online.

There was a wide variety of "our" kind of old toys and models, including lots of European diecast and tinplate alongside the more usual American pressed steel,

cast iron and plastic. There was plenty of Matchbox in particular, supplementing Mattel's home-grown Hot-Wheels, with the occasional scarcity cropping up: I was able to acquire the 1-75 series Hillman Minx saloon in the unusual single-tone green colour in very good condition for \$45, which I thought was a very reasonable price.

Other eye-catching items included a display of very fine Crescent racing cars and accessories, and several motorcycle combinations by Morestone and others again in top condition, though with prices to match - \$125-150 apiece for the cars and bikes. Luckily, I'd had the wit to take a photo of these early - many had sold by mid-morning!

At the other end of the size spectrum, was a plastic and styrene "Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang" pedal car made by the American firm Pines, a name I've not come across before. Still with its box, this was priced at a hefty \$1100, despite needing some repair work to the side-wings and windscreen. But to quote the seller, "Where will you see another?"

The next show is October 28th - if you happen to be, or can arrange to be, in the Chicago area, this is an experience not to be missed. More details from www.chicagotoyshow.com ■

1. 1960s battery-operated racing car and tinplate Popeye toys from rather earlier
2. "Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang" pedal car by Pines, with its box!
3. Crescent Racing cars, Morestone etc Motorcycles, all in top condition
4. Neat lineup of Matchbox etc, unboxed...
5. And boxed!