

The classic car world is possibly one of the most opinionated collecting pursuits known to man, and nearly everyone seems to have an opinion on relative values and desirability. Each car on this list has at one time or another been deemed by “experts” to be hopeless as a collectible and each has one thing in common— they’ve skyrocketed in value.

1. 1956-58 Studebaker Golden Hawk



Hagerty

Poor Studebaker, the cars of the ill-fated favorite son of South Bend, Ind., never seemed to get the same love from collectors as the cars of the Big Three. But they may be getting the last laugh. At a time when the prices of most American cars of the 1950s have been flat, the Golden Hawks have been red-hot. With great looks and some of the best and sportiest interiors of American cars of the era, even European collectors have taken a new look at Hawks, where the car's small by American standards proportions make more sense. Ten years ago, these were \$25,000 cars. This past January, a not terribly well optioned car sold at an auction in Scottsdale, Ariz., for more than \$100,000. Let's hear it for the underdog.

2. 1965-69 Corvair convertible



Hagerty

The air-cooled rear-engine Corvair is perhaps the ultimate automotive underdog. The hatchet job that Ralph Nader did on the first generation of the car tainted even the vastly improved second-generation Corvair. In truth, it was a fantastic car, with great looks and even an optional turbocharger. Jay Leno loves his. Yet, historically, they've appealed to a narrow market—fans of front-engine Chevy muscle shun the car as do import snobs, to whom the car's size, looks and handling should appeal. Collectors were fond of saying that Corvairs would always be cheap. How wrong they were. Nice convertibles struggled to break \$15,000 less than 10 years ago; they've since doubled in value.

3. 1979-80 BMW M1



Hagerty

The M1 was BMW's first foray into the mid-engine exotic world. Just over 450 were built. With a little development help early on from Lamborghini and some inspiration from an earlier Paul Bracq-designed concept car, BMW produced a credible supercar and the first officially badged M-car that spawned a long line of special Motorsports BMWs. Back in the flamboyant 1970s, though, the car was deemed to be too low-key inside and out. But its subtle good looks have aged extremely well. As recently as 2003 an M1 sold for just \$49,000 at an auction in the UK. Three years later, they were still going for well under \$100,000. This past March, one sold at an auction in Florida for \$379,000.

4. 1976 Porsche 912E



Hagerty

Porsche has always struggled with the entry-level stuff. They know that they should have an entry-level car, but they've often either fumbled the execution and/or suffered a backlash from the Porsche snobs. The 912E was a one-year-only stop-gap effort that held down the down-market fort after the end of 914 while the front-engine, water-cooled 924 was readied for the U.S. It was essentially a stripper 911 with a VW Transporter-derived 2.0-liter Type IV air-cooled four-cylinder engine. On the surface, a sports car with a bus engine sounds like a bad idea, but it was actually the same engine from the outgoing 914, and if you could get past the sound, it was quite pleasant with tons of low-end torque. Just under 2,100 were made (all were sold in the U.S.), and while in the past it has been derided by supposed Porsche experts as "perennially undesirable," the 912E's mid-'70s vintage 911 looks and easy serviceability have made them quite desirable today. I personally paid \$6,500 for a nice one in 2005. The same car would be worth \$20,000 today. A New York dealer has recently advertised one for just under \$40,000.

5. 1955-63 Mercedes-Benz 190SL



Hagerty

The 190SL has lived forever in the shadow of its bigger, sportier and more powerful sibling the 300SL. And while they're outwardly a bit similar, they're in a whole different league performance-wise. The 190SL used to be dismissed as "a German Thunderbird," or a car whose looks wrote a check that its performance couldn't cash. But as 300SLs rose to over \$1 million, collectors began to accept the 190SL for what it was—a very well-built and pretty sunny day cruiser. Cars that traded for under \$50,000 just a few years ago can now bring a quarter of a million dollars.