

**T**he more things change, the more they stay the same. This is an adage that I've heard time and time again usually from someone older than myself, but it wasn't until recently that the message really rang true.

Two separate occasions caused this light bulb to go on and one of them involved my teenage daughter.

A quick look at any fashion magazine, popular television show, or a walk through a busy mall will reveal that the late 1960s and early '70s are back in a big way. Platform shoes, hip-hugger pants, bellbottoms, neon (formerly known as psychedelic) colors, flower power, daisies, beads, updated granny glasses, and (eee-gads!!) Nehru jackets are as popular as ever. Black-light posters and lava lamps are also hot items.

I really hadn't paid much attention to this growing trend until last Christmas when my youngest daughter (8-years-old) asked for a lava lamp. Well that was the dumbest thing my teenage daughter (13-years-old) had ever heard of, that is until the lamp appeared at Christmas time. Suddenly it was pretty neat to sit and watch all that funny stuff moving around inside a glass bottle. Now the teenager has one too.

But the real trouble began when the teenager began watching the cable channel Nick at Nite's TVLand and declared one day that the "Sonny & Cher Show" was the best show ever on TV. This particular show aired on CBS in the early to mid '70s. Of course Cher was always dressed in the height of fashion and Sonny wouldn't be caught dead without his color-coordinated platform shoes. Now the teenager and the eight-year-old are begging for platform shoes!

I must admit that I, too, have gotten caught up in this Mod Era thing and wouldn't mind trying out a pair of platform shoes I have stashed in the attic.

Once again, we have come full circle.

The second occasion that sticks in

my mind is when a flirtatious postal clerk asked if I was in the market for a new Mustang. (It wasn't hard for him to figure out my association with a Mustang club since I'm constantly taking in envelopes bearing the MCA logo and address.) I indicated that I really hadn't thought much about it. Besides the type I would want is way out of my budget (read Saleen Speedster). Of course he was curious as to what I would want to buy that would be so expensive. I tried to explain in two minutes or less about Saleen, Steeda, Kenny Brown, etc. I left him more confused than ever.

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On the way home I began to think about the way my father ordered his cars. He was never satisfied with anything available on the lot. He would visit several different dealers, examine countless numbers of autos, pick what he liked best about each one, and then place an order with the lowest-priced dealer. He always had a vehicle that suited him exactly with the type equipment he liked. An example of this is the 1964 Galaxie 500 Ford he still owns. The car is black inside and out, has a 289 power plant, three-speed manual transmission on the column, manual steering and brakes, and bench seat. Not your usual combination for such a large, heavy car but this is what he wanted.

I also watched this man become somewhat frustrated recently when he ordered a 1997 F-150 pickup. He

couldn't get the truck exactly like he wanted and had to settle on several compromises.

These days it seems that everything automotive is sold as a group or package. Air conditioning, power windows, power door locks, power seats, stereo equipment, intermittent wipers, cruise control, etc., is lumped into one package while nearly everything else is another group. When you change engine sizes the fun starts all over again! Streamlining the options list for new vehicles certainly makes the ordering and manufacturing process more efficient, but it sure takes the fun out of owning a new vehicle. Or does it?

Just as you could order nearly anything you wanted 30 years ago, you can now get an endless array of goodies from the aftermarket folks. There are enough performance, appearance, and convenience items on the market to transform any vehicle into a one-of-a-kind masterpiece.

And if you're not mechanically inclined there are plenty of folks out there who can do the work for you. In my neck of the woods Dugan Racing is a popular hangout for 5.0 enthusiasts.

If you want to purchase a vehicle altered to your taste but without having to make tons of decisions and shell out money on a constant basis for upgrades, small volume manufacturers such as Saleen Performance are ready and able to satisfy your wildest dream.

In this month's issue we highlight the Roush Mustang, a product of years of racing experience and knowledge obtained by Jack Roush of Roush Industries. These cars have the aesthetics and reportedly plenty of power to boot. (I hope to test drive one of these beauties in the near future.)

All of this means that despite the fact that car manufacturers have opted to offer only "package" deals, the enthusiast can still own a vehicle that is uniquely their own.

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Groovy!