

SHOW AND TELL

Cars are popular vehicles for TV shows

By Peter Meade

It's "Herbie, The Love Bug" to the rescue! When CBS needed a replacement series for their Wednesday night line-up, they started up the spunky little Volkswagen that drove through four "Love Bug" movies from 1969 to 1980. Dean Jones reprises his movie role as Herbie's owner in the Walt Disney Productions series, premiering Wednesday, March 17.

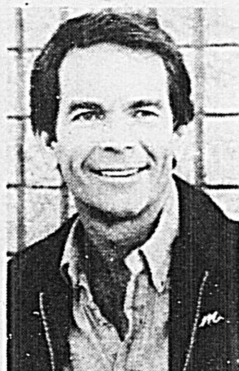
Cars have become very popular vehicles for television shows. The squeals of burning rubber have replaced the pattering of hoofbeats across television screens, a trend revved up by Burt Reynolds in his two stunt-filled "Smokey and the Bandit" car comedies.

Television's most popular carcom, "The Dukes of Hazzard," has been a crashing success for three seasons

partly because of an orange hot rod named the General Lee. The Duke boys, who failed remedial Driver's Ed, use their 1969 Dodge Charger for impromptu demolition derbies.

Lawmen have always had gimmicky autos, too. James Bond's Aston Martin from the movie "Goldfinger," equipped with an ejection seat and machine gun tailpipes, set the standard. The Green Hornet's Black Beauty, a customized 1966 Chrysler Imperial on TV, and the gadgety Batmobile were always involved in their super-hero owner's adventures.

Some of TV's more unusual clans have driven equally unique motorcars. The Monk, eemobile and coffin-hooded Munstermobile were just two of the popular TV custom cars of the late '60s. Despite their wealth, the



Dean Jones stars in the new series "Herbie, the Love Bug."

"Beverly Hillbillies" kept their backfiring old truck, complete with a rocking chair in the back for Granny.

Two red, high MPH and low MPG cars have prominent roles on two popular

crime dramas. The Ferrari from "Magnum, P.I." is always zooming along some Hawaiian highway, while the white-striped 1974 Ford Torino of "Starsky and Hutch" is still chasing bad guys somewhere in the land of syndication.

The Mercedes-Benz is the current television status vehicle. Two of television's most wealthy families — the Ewings of "Dallas" and the Harts of "Hart to Hart" — own both a Mercedes station wagon and a two-seater convertible.

The most unusual TV car ever must be the 1928 Porter that was the reincarnation of Jerry Van Dyke's mom on "My Mother the Car." Ann Sothorn supplied the voice for the maternal motorcar, but the 1965 series only lasted as long as most car warranties: one year.

TUBE TALK

Linda Gray on Dallas, drinking and Davis

By Dan Lewis

HOLLYWOOD — How does Linda Gray describe her rise to stardom on "Dallas"?

"I started that first season as J.R.'s wife. The second season, I was Sue Ellen. Now, I'm Linda Gray. I love that transition."

She says she has played "the best alcoholic on television." After four years or "Dallas," her problem this past season was how to keep her "psychotic and neurotic" character fresh. "I didn't want the drinking to continue," says the auburn-haired, soft-voiced actress. "I had lunch with the producers to discuss the future of the character and we decided that Sue Ellen would be the first member of the family to leave the nest." She feels the separation between Sue Ellen and J.R. Ewing (Larry Hagman) has made her role even stronger.

Miss Gray spent nearly 20 years as a model, an actress in commercials, and a guest star on many series. "I used to be superwoman — a wife, mommy, housewife and dog-washer, and I thought that was terrific," she says.



Linda Gray

"Then I thought there's more — a lot more. I realized it was time to take care of me."

Although the Sue Ellen role brought her fame — "Dallas" is the country's No. 1 TV show — a smash series can often stereotype its stars. "Not me," says Miss Gray. "I think I'm versatile and it is up to me to show the public how versatile I am." In this grand plan, Miss Gray appears on many talk shows and seeks other projects, among them an upcoming TV movie titled

"Not in Front of the Children."

Stardom has made Miss Gray a big headline name in some of the more sensational tabloids. One ludicrous story, she says, was a horoscope prediction that the "great love" of 1982 would be an affair between her and Hagman.

She does acknowledge, however, that the "magnetism Larry and I have is the best on television." She also feels that the principal reason "Dallas" is so popular because viewers enjoy watching rich people in trouble.

The show has had its share of personal trouble as well. When Jim Davis, who played the elder Ewing, died last year, the producers kept his character alive by dispatching him abroad, and making occasional references; the character's death was noted on the series several months ago.

There was talk of a replacement. "Jim Davis cannot be replaced," says Miss Gray. "It would not have been wise to bring in someone else to play the role. We were all very fond of him."

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