

KEYS TO A CLASSIC

Pianos, cars – at first glance it's hard to see what they have in common apart from the fact that both have wheels. Still, the designer of the legendary BMW 507 roadster was driven to design for Steinway, creating this limited-edition piano.

THE CLASSIC SPORTS CARS of the world haunt the lusts of men for decades after their production, going from being considered great designs to works of art. This is surely the result Steinway hoped for when they approached Count Albrecht Goertz to design a limited-edition piano to celebrate their Hamburg factory's 125th anniversary, since the Count is the man behind what many consider to be one of the most beautiful car designs of all time, the BMW 507 roadster.

Multiple foam models and about 12,000 assembled parts later (try doing this in your toolshed at the risk of losing a decade of your life), the second of 125 'Goertz' pianos has rolled into Australia.

This remarkable piece is considered one of the most complicated pieces of handmade machinery in the world. At a glance, it doesn't seem too unique: big, black and shiny. But linger for a while and its personality becomes apparent. By the same token, Steinways are made to sound faithfully the same. If you were to wear a blindfold and swap the Goertz with, say, a Steinway Tiffany model (1969) and play *Claire de Lune*, or *One More for my Baby*, you wouldn't be able to hear the difference (although a trained ear may be able to pick up the slight maturation of sound with age and subtle character voice of the older piano). Blindfold off and chandelier on, the Goertz's individual design is in the pure realm of art.

The commemorative Goertz-designed piano boasts impressive steel strings as well as brass lyre sticks and hinges



"I don't know anything about pianos, but for me, music is movement," says the Count. The "movement" he speaks of can be witnessed in the flashes of light and shade, the contrast between matt and shine finishes and even in the way in which the lid shuts – like a smart glove box, floating gently down at a gentle touch to a soft conclusion. For automobile aesthetes, the piano boasts the shiniest and strongest of Swedish and American steel strings, a firm, adjustable seat, glowing brass lyre sticks and brass hinges. A functional modern prop stick and an oversized music stand reinforce the slick, strong lines and a confident, polished stance.

The Goertz is probably more of a collector's item than a concert pianist's dream – they will usually go for a model B, which is larger and offers more vibrations and musical strength. With designer object appreciation, however, the





value of the Goertz model could well rise above its \$175,000 asking price.

The Count credits his career successes to coincidence and has in fact written a book called *You've Got to be Lucky*. According to his design philosophy, "an object is finished only when nothing more can be added, and most importantly, nothing can be omitted". This is German perfectionism at its best and most strict, something he has applied on a range of items from a fountain pen design (which he claims to be one of the most challenging processes) to the BMW 507.

As dashing slick as any instrument can be, the Goertz remains, after all, a piano. And a piano is meant to be played.

Who wouldn't be excited to play a Steinway, especially when you have someone such as two-time Grammy award-winning classical

pianist Martha Argerich noting that, "the Steinway sometimes exerts a curious charm – it plays better than the pianist does".

I pen a song and pick it out on the bright keys and water-clear tones with help from the staff at Theme and Variations, where the piano is on display. An hour later I test drive the composition over the phone. Success arrives by the second chorus and I'm asked on the evening date I was secretly hoping for. If it becomes a hit, I probably won't ask the count to design the album cover, but could ask him to provide a BMW 507 to deliver the band (albeit one at a time), then invite him to join us for canapés next to the impressive instrument. **Ruby Boukabou**

Throughout the world, only 125 pianos like this will be made and Theme & Variations Piano Services has the only one in Australia. Ph. 02 9439 5277