

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## [Are you brave enough to engage the afterburners in the Spirit of America Sonic I?](#)

### Lead

Fancy hitting 600 mph in a wingless jet fighter? Now's your chance as the record-setting Spirit of America Sonic I jet car heads to RM Sotheby's Miami sale on February 27th and 28th!



To participate in any form of motorsport requires a certain level of bravery. The speed and g-forces experienced by F1 drivers demand a hefty amount of courage, while rally drivers are equally fearless flinging themselves around blind bends on uncertain surfaces. However, the biggest metaphorical balls in the entire automotive universe belong to those brave men and women who strap themselves into prototype machinery in an attempt to break the land speed record, and Craig Breedlove was one such man.



This earth-bound missile was developed by Breedlove with sights firmly set on shattering not only the land speed record, but also the sound barrier. At 34 feet long, the Spirit of America Sonic I was built around a GE J79 turbojet engine equipped with an afterburner, capable of producing a mind-bending 15,000 pounds of thrust. Its "Coke bottle"-shaped fuselage hugged the jet engine as closely as possible, with only enough room to spare for its pilot, an on-board air supply and four wheels. Speaking of which, Goodyear, the project's major sponsor, specially developed tires for Sonic I's forged aluminium wheels, while stopping power came courtesy of disc brakes and an aerospace-style drag chute.



Breedlove's hard work paid off on 2 November 1965, when he drove Sonic I to a record-breaking 555.485 mph at the Bonneville salt flats, but his record wouldn't stand for long. After Art Arfons stole the title with his Green Monster, Breedlove returned to Bonneville on 15 November, where he promptly reached 600.601 mph in Sonic I, making him the first man to ever cross the 600 mph threshold. Remarkably, Lee Breedlove, Craig's wife, also took a turn in Sonic I, reaching 308.506 mph to become the fastest woman alive.



While he never managed to break the sound barrier, Breedlove and Sonic I held the land speed record for a further five years, and it wasn't until 1997 that ThrustSSC finally went super-sonic. Acquired by the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum in 1975, Sonic I is now available for private acquisition for the first time ever as it heads to [RM Sotheby's Miami sale on February 27th and 28th](#).

[VIEW CAR](#)

**Gallery**

















