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[What happens when a Jaguar XK120 goes Supersonic?](#)

Lead

The Jet Age was an exciting, romantic time and, naturally, car manufacturers were keen to cash in on what was a burgeoning industry, even if their wares were firmly rooted to the ground. The Jaguar XK120 Supersonic is what happens when you let an inspired designer run wild...

The lucky few



Italian designer Giovanni Savonuzzi originally styled this jet-inspired body – aptly christening it the ‘Supersonic’ – in 1953, for a Conrero-tuned [Alfa Romeo 1900](#) in light of the Mille Miglia in which the car was set to compete. However, a nasty accident and subsequent fire during the race rendered the car a write-off, prompting a determined Savonuzzi, now employed by Carrozzeria Ghia, to build a small number of further bodies. These were primarily to be fitted on [Fiat 8V](#) chassis, no doubt due to its relative inexpensiveness compared with other Italian sports cars of the day.

Inevitably, the ultra-streamlined body took the fancy of a handful of wealthy customers around Europe, explaining how three ended up on [Jaguar XK120s](#) (as if they weren't pretty enough). The car shown is one of *two* ordered by a French businessman who, allegedly, never actually paid for the cars – the Parisian dealership through which the order was placed repossessed the pair as a result.

To the last detail



Aside from its deep metallic red paint, distinguishing this particular example from its two Anglo-Italian siblings (the body of one was sadly later transferred to a Shelby Cobra) is the cylinder head that houses three, two-barrel Webers as opposed to twin SUs, giving a substantial performance increase. Suffice to say, this Jaguar doesn't just *look* fast...

Indulge in the details for a moment – that pronounced high waistline that spans the entire length of the car; the yawning front grille, neatly divided by elegant polished struts; those subtly integrated quad exhaust pipes, a masterpiece in themselves; and those small rear-lights, suspended in turbine-esque clusters. It's dramatic – theatrical, even – and scarcely recognisable as the comparatively non-descript [XK120](#) on which it is based. It's culture and creativity personified – we absolutely adore it.

A star in the making



A star of both the Paris and Cannes motor shows in 1954, as well as a number of in-period *and* subsequent concours events (including last year's [Chantilly Arts & Elegance](#), where it was awarded a special prize), [the Supersonic](#) will be offered by RM Sotheby's at its Monterey sale on 13-15 August. While its pre-sale estimate has yet to be revealed, at auction back in 2007, this very car fetched 753,000 euros. With matching numbers, just 22,000km on the clock and only one other in existence, we expect the bidding to sail well past that when it crosses the block in August.

Photos: Darin Schnabel, courtesy of RM Sotheby's © 2015

Gallery

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