

CLASSIC DRIVER

Soaring from Beverly Hills to Paris with Paul Newman's 'Gullwing'

Lead

According to factory documentation, this Mercedes-Benz 300SL 'Gullwing' was bought by Paul Newman in 1957. And we all know the significance of an object associated with the Hollywood legend: 17m-dollar Rolex Daytona, anyone?

Making a name



After a three-year spell with its original owner in Watsonville, California, this sensational Mercedes-Benz 300SL was bought by Paul Newman in 1957 for use during his years in Los Angeles. At that time, the fledgeling actor was just making his name in Hollywood. In his critically acclaimed role as Rocky Graziano in *Somebody Up There Likes Me* in 1956, Newman had given the world a glimpse of what was to come: countless major roles, philanthropy, political activism, and, of course, motor racing.

To Tinseltown!



Having emigrated to Tinseltown from New York, Newman needed a car that would serve both as a reliable run-around and a vehicle that, if he was photographed driving along Sunset Boulevard or Mulholland Drive, was entirely befitting of a Hollywood superstar. Needless to say, the Mercedes-Benz 300SL fitted the bill. He bought the car second-hand from its first owner and enjoyed it for several years. It's unknown exactly when Newman sold it, but the car remained in California (Newman left in the early 1960s to start a family with his then-wife Joanne Woodward in Connecticut).

Rebirth



It wasn't until 1984 when the Gullwing, then painted silver and fitted with a tan interior, returned to Europe (to a famous philanthropist in Jersey, no less). In 2007, it famously wound up in the famous Theodore Charagionis collection in Athens, Greece, before Nicolas Jambon Bruguier of Classic Driver dealer [Classic Sport Leicht](#) negotiated its purchase in 2012. The decision was promptly taken to return the car to its original specification and so began a fastidious 6,000-hour restoration, undertaken by an intimate team of just five specialists.

The next chapter



The result is nothing short of spectacular. To give you an idea of the lengths Bruguier and his team went to in the quest for authenticity, it took them two years to source the period correct security door windowpane. Furthermore, this being one of the extra rare first 100 'Gullwings' built, there were even more aspects to consider. But originality and detail were paramount, and it tells. From the unctuous light blue metallic paint to the gorgeous chequered cloth seats and the leather luggage set. Paul Newman had impeccable taste - whoever becomes this car's next custodian should almost certainly make a pilgrimage to Beverly Hills...

Photos: Rémi Dargegen © 2018

Gallery

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