

CLASSIC DRIVER

[RM Sotheby's to sell unique ex-Le Mans Aston Martin DP215 in Monterey](#)

Lead

Completing its spectacular trilogy of Monterey headliners, RM Sotheby's has announced that it will offer the sole Aston Martin DP215, one of the marque's most significant factory Le Mans racers, at its flagship sale in California on 24-25 August...

With a [1962 Ferrari 250 GTO](#) and a [Le Mans podium-finishing Ford GT40](#) on the books, you'd think RM Sotheby's would be quite content with its forthcoming Monterey sale on 24-25 August. But quite the contrary - the Canadian auction house has just announced that it will sell another important golden-era sports car, the Aston Martin DP215.

Daring Design Project



The DP215 followed the DP212 and the DP214 as the final factory-built 'Design Prototype' sports-racing Aston Martin. Built at the request of John Wyer, the unique car was developed just two months before the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1963, where it was to be driven by Phil Hill and Lucien Bianchi.

A converted DB4GT this was certainly not - using expertise learned from the previous 'DP' cars, chief engineer Ted Cutting designed the DP215, utilising a modified box-frame chassis, in which the DP212's four-litre straight-six was mounted 10 inches further back than in the previous car, independent rear suspension, and an ultra-aerodynamic body crafted from feather-light magnesium/aluminium alloy.

Record-breaker



Indeed, at Le Mans, the DP215 recorded an astonishing 198.6mph on the Mulsanne Straight and became the first car to officially exceed 300kph at the Circuit de la Sarthe. Alas, despite the remarkable pace (it lapped some 12 seconds quicker than the Ferrari 250 GTOs), the DBR1-type gearbox failed just two hours into the race. The car would enter just one more race in 1963 before the Aston Martin Racing Department was closed for good.

Clearly aware of its potential, Aston retained the car for testing purposes, though disaster struck in 1966 when it was involved in an accident on the M1 motorway. Without its engine (this wound up in Colin Crabbe's DP214) and its gearbox, the car was sold to Malcolm Calvert in 1974 and so began a long-term restoration that would take decades to truly return the DP215 to its former and authentic glory.

In 1976, Nigel Daves bought the car and consulted closely with Ted Cutting himself on the continued restoration. By the time the DP215 came into the possession of renowned historic racing drivers Neil and Nigel Corner, the car was missing only its original engine and the correct-type transmission (the original gearbox was lost to eternity after the accident in 1966). Again, Cutting was consulted and a correct-type S532 transmission was painstakingly built by R.S. Williams and Crosthwaite & Gardiner.

Whole again



The proverbial cherry on the cake, however, came when the Corners managed to obtain and install the car's original engine - numbered 400/215/1 - after it had spent over 50 years in the DP214. "From a driving point of view, the acceleration in second and third gears always caused the hairs on the back of my hand to stand up," commented Neil Corner. "The previous engine fitted to the car was giving 372bhp on the dyno, which gives some indication as to what extent the original engine, now fitted to the car, could be developed."

This sensational Aston Martin, which we think takes aesthetic cues from some of the period's best-looking sports cars, is now waiting for a new owner to drive and enjoy it as much as the Corners have over the past 16-or-so years. Representing the end of the David Brown era and the pinnacle of Aston Martin's competition activities in the 1960s, the DP215 has an attached pre-sale estimate of 20-25m US dollars.

Photos: Simon Clay and Tim Scott for RM Sotheby's © 2018

Gallery

