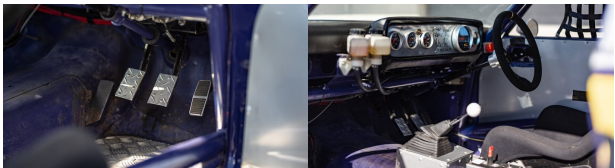


CLASSIC DRIVER

The Ford Capri Perana V8 is among South Africa’s greatest homologation specials

Lead

Built as a clone of the car that won the 1971 Western Province Saloon Car Championship, Glen Loxton’s Jacaranda Pink Ford Capri Perana is a true South African muscle car. We headed to Killarney International Raceway to meet the beast.



We all know the Ford Capri’s genesis story: Europeans, and the Brits in particular, grew tired of watching all the fun Americans were having with their Ford Mustangs from across the pond, so they built their own. However, while the Capri certainly looked the part, it never quite measured up to the brawn of its American counterpart. At least not in Europe.



Enter Basil Green of Basil Green Motors in Johannesburg, who by the time of the Capri’s arrival, had already become notorious for turning common or garden Fords into fire-breathing monsters. The cars transformed by Basil Green Motors were affixed with the Perana name, chosen by Basil’s wife, as a hint at their added bite. Basil’s first run at tuning Capris saw 20 cars implanted with Essex V6 engines, but shortly after, Ford South Africa started offering a factory Essex V6 option, and Basil knew he would have to up the anti even further.



In 1970, Basil shoehorned the Mustang’s Windsor V8 under the hood, and thus the Capri Perana V8 was born. Ford was such a fan of Basil’s work that they sanctioned the Capri Perana, meaning anyone could walk into a South African Ford dealership and buy their own, and it even came with a full factory warranty. Their infatuation with the Capri Perana wouldn’t end there; between 1970 and 1971 they produced the 500 units necessary to homologate the Perana for saloon car racing, with Capri 3000 XLs being delivered without engines or transmissions to Basil Green Motors, ready to accept their new, more powerful hearts. The finishing touch was a searing yellow and black paint job that ensured onlookers knew they weren’t dealing with any regular Capri.



Fast forward to the present day, and I'm standing in the heat of peak South African summer in the pit lane of Killarney International Raceway, where I've tracked down the most successful racing Capri Perana there is - or at least a perfect copy of that car. Owned by Glenn Loxton, this Capri Perana's Jacaranda Pink paintwork exactly matches that of the car that won the 1971 Western Province Saloon Car Championship. Driven by Peter Gough under the Selford Motors team, the Jacaranda Pink Perana would go on to rack up seven overall and class wins in just eight races, making it the most successful Capri Perana of all time. However, after the season ended, Selford Motors returned the car to road specification and it was sold, at which point it dropped off the face of the earth. To this day, its whereabouts and subsequent history are unknown.



That's where our lovely subject comes in. Between 2012 and 2013, Peter Lindberg, the well-known racing driver and Shelby Mustang concessionaire, purchased an original Capri Perana, chassis BG00068 you see here, and set about creating an exact copy of the 1971 championship winning car. It was then purchased by a Mr Ferdi van Niekerk, who with the help of Peter Gough himself, adorned it with the Selford Motors livery. In 2014, Peter Gough took to the track in a Jacaranda Pink Perana yet again, racing alongside Ferdi Jr with much success.



While Glenn was unable to show me around the car himself, Nian, the car's caretaker and owner of Nian du Toit Racing, was more than happy to oblige. Walking me around the Pink Perana, he tells me, "It's very old school to drive - it's really a brute force car, there's no power steering, no power brakes and everything feels a bit agricultural. "That doesn't mean it isn't fast or fun to drive, but it's probably the furthest thing from a single-seater imaginable." After climbing into the car, he fires the sizeable 350bhp 5-litre V8 into life, and it settles into a low, choppy growl - already you get a sense of what Nian's talking about.



Despite the lack of a passenger seat, I climb in too, and with a firm grip on the roll cage, we set off for a sighting lap of Killarney. Shouting over the sound of the V8 upfront and gravel pinging against the wheel arches, Nian comments, “There’s a lot of weight with the live axle, and it also has leaf spring suspension at the rear, so it can get quite bumpy!” Bouncing over the undulations of Killarney’s back straight sat atop two fairly sizeable bolts affixing the batter to the floor, I find myself in firm agreement.



After just one lap, I’m ready to climb out and get back to taking photos. It’s a fantastic car, but I’d much rather be looking at it than sitting in it as a passenger, especially in this afternoon light with the silhouette of table mountain as the backdrop. While many of the race cars you see in Europe are polished to a mirror finish, Glenn’s Perana is clearly a track tool and it gets used as such, but that doesn’t mean it’s any less cherished by its owner.



Chatting to Glenn after the shoot, he tells me, “I would have loved to have owned or raced one in period. The Perana was the ultimate performance car in South Africa in the early 1970s and it’s a fantastic tribute to the ingenuity of Basil Green and Ford South Africa. It’s a great pleasure to own and maintain an original Capri Perana.” Glenn’s Perana may be an old school machine, but it’s character and history only adds to the impact it has on you. It’s safe to say the Capri Perana has more than enough bite to justify the name.

Photos: Mikey Snelgar for Classic Driver © 2022

Gallery

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