

Superformance Cobra, SA's oldest Beetle enter Concours

For the second Concours South Africa event, taking place at Sun City from 4-6 August 2017, the Cobra Club of South Africa has entered its Superformance Cobra in the Retro Modified class, and Volkswagen has entered South Africa's oldest Beetle.

The Superformance replica, modelled after the competition street versions of the Mk III Cobras known as the 427 SC, is the result of a painstaking build that took place over a number of years in Brakpan on the East Rand. The car is owned by Willem Stieler, a financial manager at the famed Denel Aeronautic firm in Kempton Park.



"The Cobra Club guys have very kindly clubbed together to enter my car, which has won the Cobra Club concours a number of times. We will be entering in the Retro Modified class at Sun City as a bit of an experiment, to see how it fits in with the judging criteria of the event," says Stieler.

The Superformance cars are noted as being amongst the finest Cobra replicas in the world, and have a huge reputation both in America and Europe. They were built at the hi-tech plant in Port Elizabeth. After a long-running copyright dispute with the original creator of the Cobra, the Superformance cars eventually achieved the accolade of being sanctioned by the great Carroll Shelby himself.

"This one I bought is a 1994 Superformance model, one of the very first cars," says Stieler. "I bought it as a bare body and chassis and four wheels. The right-hand front section of the body had been destroyed in an accident, including the front

wishbone assembly and the chassis was also slightly bent. So I had to remove the body from the chassis, which was a hell of a job, as the body was bonded to the chassis. I used a hacksaw blade to do this and it took me a few weeks to do that.

“I made a jig to replicate the right-hand-side wishbone, and I had a lot of help and advice from a Hi-Tech (Superformance) specialist called Greg Erasmus. Then the body I rebuilt, using a portion of a mould from the old Kit Car Centre, which made the very early Cobra replicas in this country. There were a number of small changes I had to make to get both sides equal,” says Stieler.

Volkswagen Beetle



The little fawn-coloured Peoples Car is a 1949 model sedan, built in Germany, and imported to South Africa by a private owner a good two years before the very first Beetle was produced here.

The Beetle is owned by AutoPavilion, the official Volkswagen Museum in South Africa, located at the factory in Uitenhage, Eastern Cape.

“We have been very excited about Concours South Africa, and we will evaluate this year’s event to see if it makes sense to bring a bigger selection of vehicles from Uitenhage in 2018 and use this opportunity to profile our AutoPavilion ,” said Matt Gennrich, general manager communications for Volkswagen South Africa.



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The car in question has had an interesting history, as befits a 68-year-old car. It was built just three years after the Volkswagenwerk in Wolfsburg, Germany was rescued from ruin after sustaining severe Allied bombing between 1939 and 1945 in World War Two.

Volkswagen production in South Africa commenced in late August 1951, at a new plant in Uitenhage established by what was then known as SAMAD, (South African Motor Assemblies and Distributors), which also built Studebakers and British Austins. The VW-South African tie-up was brokered by Baron Klaus von Oertzen, a man who was instrumental in the inception of the famous 320 km/h Auto Union racers in pre-war Germany, designed by Ferdinand Porsche.

Von Oertzen managed to get approval for the Volkswagen assembly contract from the South African government by brokering a deal that involved the export of copious quantities of South African wine to Germany.



This 1949 Volkswagen sedan – the term “Beetle” was not used by the factory – surfaced in South Africa in Middelburg, Mpumalanga, in 1971, after a national competition run jointly by the magazine *Wheels* and Volkswagen South Africa to find the country’s oldest Beetle. The car was at this time owned by a David Rubin, who was then given a brand new 1300 Beetle in exchange for the classic.

Christened as simply “Jan”, the 1949 bug went on display around South Africa before coming home to rest at Uitenhage, where it went into storage and eventually fell into a state of minor disrepair. Just over a year ago, “Jan” was rescued by a man of the same name, a certain Jan Schiedeck-Jacht, head of product engineering at VW SA in Uitenhage.

Schiedeck-Jacht organised a team of enthusiasts from product engineering at Uitenhage to embark on a restoration project.

While this conference will undoubtedly attract collectors entering their cars in Concours South Africa 2017, it is open to anyone interested in classic and collectable cars from an investment point of view. There is still time to enter your pristine classic for Concours South Africa 2017. For more, go to www.concourssa.co.za.

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