


CLASSIC DRIVER



Bentley S3

Lot sold	USD 548 732 - 823 098 GBP 400 000 - 600 000 (listed)	Lenkung	Links
Chassisnummer	BC68XE	Zustand	Gebraucht
Zahl der Sitze	2	Standort	
Antrieb	Zweirad	Kraftstoff	Benzin
Losnummer	366	Außenfarbe	Sonstige
		Motornummer	34EDC

Beschreibung

"Blue Lena"

Formerly the property of Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones

1965 Bentley S3 Continental Flying Spur Sports Saloon

Coachwork by H J Mulliner, Park Ward

Registration no. JLP 400D

Chassis no. BC68XE

Engine no. 34EDC

The acquisition of an iconic luxury motor car has long been established as a milestone in the career of the aspiring rock star. In the case of Keith Richards, legendary lead guitarist with The Rolling Stones, it was this Bentley Continental Flying Spur, dubbed 'Blue Lena' in honour of Keith's favourite American singer, Lena Horne.

The Rolling Stones first rose to fame in the 'Swinging London' of the 1960s, a period of optimism and social change that swept through a Britain eager to throw off the shackles of post-war austerity, which manifested itself in an explosion of innovation in fashion and popular music. A southern counterweight to the Liverpoolian Beatles, the 'Stones coalesced around Richards and lead vocalist Mick Jagger, two childhood friends reunited by a shared love of American Blues music. They would be joined by guitarist Brian Jones, bassist Bill Wyman and Charlie Watts on drums. That definitive line-up did not arrive until 1963, by which time the band had already appeared at famous London clubs such as the Marquee and the Crawdaddy, performing cover versions of songs by the likes of Chuck Berry

and Bo Diddley. Their first single was a cover of Berry's 'Come On' and their first UK No.1 was another cover, of Bobby and Shirley Womack's 'It's All Over Now', which topped the charts in June 1964. The band's breakthrough hit, cementing their international reputation, was the Jagger/Richards composition '(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction', which topped charts worldwide in May 1965, bringing the band notoriety and wealth in equal measure.

Now in receipt of hitherto unimaginable riches, the band began to indulge themselves: Mick Jagger bought an Aston Martin DB6 and Bill Wyman an MGB, while Brian Jones was often seen at the wheel of his Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud. Not to be outdone, Keith Richards bought a Bentley S3 Continental Flying Spur, the most expensive model in Bentley range. That car was chassis number 'BC68XE'.

In the 1950s and 1960s the Bentley Continental was the world's ultimate Grand Tourer, a car in which you could set off from any European capital in the morning and arrive at Monte Carlo fresh enough to play the tables that same evening. With the arrival of the V8-engined version in 1959, this consummate ability was further enhanced. The V8 was, of course, the predominant power unit in Rolls-Royce's most important export market - the USA - so it was only natural that the Crewe firm would study the best American designs - principally those of Chrysler and Cadillac - for inspiration. Introduced in the autumn of 1959, the Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud II and Bentley S2 appeared externally unchanged from their 'Cloud and S-Type predecessors, though the duo's performance was considerably enhanced by the new 6,230cc aluminium-alloy V8 engine. Although wider and shorter than the 'six' it replaced, the new power unit fitted relatively easily within the engine bay, relocation of the steering box from inside to outside of the chassis frame being the most obvious alteration to the previous arrangements. Externally the new models appeared virtually unchanged, while beneath the skin Rolls-Royce's own four-speed automatic transmission was now the only one on offer and power steering had been standardised.

Rolls-Royce had envisaged the Bentley Continental as exclusively a two-door car but late in 1957 the decision was taken to sanction the production of a four-door variation by H J Mulliner. Introduced on the S1 Continental and known as the 'Flying Spur', this design was a collaborative effort by Rolls-Royce's in-house styling department and H J Mulliner, and bore a strong resemblance both to the two-door Continental and to existing coachbuilt four-door styles on Rolls-Royce and (non-Continental) Bentley chassis. To the Continental's existing qualities of pace and elegance, the Flying Spur added four-door practicality, a more spacious interior and generously proportioned boot. Combining boulevard elegance with Bentley's sporting tradition, the Flying Spur body style continued on the V8-engined S2 Continental and was revised to incorporate the S3's four-headlamp front end following the latter's introduction in 1962.

One of only 68 right-hand drive Flying Spurs built on the S3 Continental chassis, 'BC68XE' chassis was ordered by London-based dealer H R Owen on 18th May 1965 for one R N F Mason. The chassis was delivered to H J Mulliner, Park Ward Ltd on 13th July 1965. The car's original specification included a blue external finish ('to match Crewe standard Dawn Blue'); beige Connolly leather upholstery with matching headlining and carpets; electric windows to all doors; plain Sundym glass to windscreen only; Radiomobile 920T radio; Hirschmann electric aerial; parking and indicator lights on front wing sides; Dunlop whitewall tyres and a badge bar at the front.

Test driven on 9th September 1965, the Bentley was delivered to H R Owen some three weeks later, on 1st October. For reasons unknown, Mr Mason cancelled his order and the car was left in stock at H R Owen's dealership in Mayfair's Berkeley Square, which is where it was spotted by Keith Richards. Keith bought the car, which was registered in London as 'JLP 400D'. Copy chassis cards (on file) record the first owner as 'Rolling Stones Ltd (K Richard Esq)'. The absent final 's' is interesting, reflecting the Stones' manager Andrew Loog Oldham's notion that spelling Keith's surname that way 'looked more pop'.

Recalling the Bentley in his recently published autobiography, 'Life', Keith said: 'This was "Blue Lena", as it was christened, my dark blue Bentley, my S3 Continental Flying Spur an automobile of some rarity, one of a limited edition of eighty-seven. It was named in honour of Lena Horne I sent her a picture of it. Having this car was already heading for trouble, breaking the rules of the establishment, driving a car I was definitely not born into "Blue Lena" had carried us on many an acid-fuelled

journey. Modification included a secret compartment in the frame for the concealing of illegal substances. It had a huge bonnet, and to turn it you really had to swing it about. "Blue Lena" required some art and knowledge of its contours in tight situation it was six inches wider at the back than the front. You got to know your car, no doubt about that. Three tons of machinery. A car that was made to be driven fast at night.'

Although it is not known where it was located, the 'secret compartment' was not the only modification requested by Keith, who also specified darkened glass for the rear windows, quarter lights and rear screen to ensure privacy for the rear seat occupants (see below...). He also had a Webasto sunroof installed, which would prove particularly efficacious when the band decided to decamp to Morocco in March 1967, and a little Philips record player.

The move to Morocco followed the infamous police 'drugs bust' of Keith's home 'Redlands' in Wilmington, Surrey where the Stones and their guests, including Mick Jagger's then girlfriend, Marianne Faithful, were staying. No arrests were made at the time but Richards, Jagger and their art-dealer friend Robert Fraser were subsequently charged with drugs offences. To avoid the attentions of a rapacious British media, which had been fed information about the arrests by the police, the band and its entourage moved to Tangier in Morocco to await the trial. Jagger and Faithful flew direct but Keith and Brian Jones decided to travel with 'Blue Lena', which was flown from England to France aboard a British United Air Ferries 'Carvair'. Keith's chauffeur Tom Keylock, who would become the Stones' chief 'fixer', then drove them to Morocco, with Keith sitting up front to change the 45s on the little Philips record player. Brian Jones and his then girlfriend, actress Anita Pallenberg, sat in the back with Deborah Dixon, a Texan friend they had collected in Paris.

Jones was taken ill with pneumonia during the trip and was transferred to Toulouse hospital, remaining there while the others continued the journey into Spain. Leaving a nightclub in Barcelona one night, they found themselves in a near-riot situation, with people throwing things at the Bentley. Luckily the police intervened to rescue them. Having spent a night in police custody, and after the Bentley's windscreen had been repaired, they continued the journey but without Deborah, who had had enough excitement and wanted to return to Paris. It was there, in the back of 'Blue Lena', that romance blossomed between Keith and Anita. The couple would go on to have three children and remain together until 1980.

From Morocco, Keith and Anita moved to Rome, Italy where Anita was to star alongside Jane Fonda in the motion picture 'Barbarella', directed by Fonda's husband Roger Vadim. They lived in the Villa Medici, a magnificent Renaissance palace with formal gardens, and were driven around Rome and its environs by Tom Keylock at the wheel of 'Blue Lena'. One of Keith's after-market modifications was a pair of loudspeakers behind the front grille, which Anita used to terrorise local motorists by putting on a policewoman's voice, reading their number plates aloud and issuing bogus instructions.

During the course of Keith Richards' ownership, 'Blue Lena' was involved in several accidents. In 1976, returning from a concert at Knebworth in Hertfordshire where the where the 'Stones had topped the bill alongside Led Zeppelin, Keith fell asleep at the wheel and the Bentley ended up hitting a tree. The were seven occupants, included Keith's son Marlon, but the Continental's inherent strength ensured that nobody was seriously hurt. The most serious accident happened later in 1976, on 19th May. Driving home on the M1 motorway from a concert at Welford Road Stadium in Leicester, Keith left the road and 'Blue Lena' ended up in a field, having ploughed through a hedge and a fence. When the police arrived they discovered illegal substances in Keith's possession and he was arrested.

In 1978 Keith parted with 'Blue Lena', which was sold to Lawrence Kayne, a Rolls-Royce dealer in Ascot. Keith was obviously a great admirer of the model, as his next purchase was another S3 Continental Flying Spur, which he still owns. Kayne kept 'JLP 400D' until 1988 when he sold the car to Anthony Gerrard Hill of Nantwich, Cheshire. 'Blue Lena' remained in Cheshire as part of Mr Hill's private collection until 2006 when it was sold to the current owner. By this time 'Blue Lena' was in a sorry state, still suffering the effects of past accidents. The new owner had no choice but to commission a painstaking restoration, which was undertaken by English Automotive Services of West Molesey.

'Blue Lena' was delivered to EAS's workshop on the back of a recovery truck, having been sitting in a lock-up for many years, partially dismantled and stripped of its paintwork. The body had to be extensively rebuilt, requiring many new panels due to the accidents it had been involved in while in Keith's ownership. Had the car not been so famous it might well have been scrapped, but the owner rightly insisted that it was a piece of history and should be made good again.

The search for missing or unobtainable parts would delay the project's completion for several years; the original beige leather was no longer listed so Connolly was commissioned to make a special batch; new darkened glass had to be made as the old windows were too scratched to use; and a new rear screen had to be made as heated ones were no longer available. Wing sections, door panels and boot sections were all hand crafted and made to fit, while all the mechanicals were overhauled and the engine rebuilt with no expense spared. EAS's detailed invoices are in the history file (inspection recommended).

After five years of restoration, 'Blue Lena' is now in splendid condition once again, a gallant survivor of its years in the hands of one of the all-time gods of Rock 'n Roll.

Bonhams 1793



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