

CLASSIC DRIVER

5th June 2003 - Auction Preview - Christie's at Rockefeller Centre New York



- by Steve Wakefield

Eric Clapton provides the warm-up for Frank Sinatra at Christie's 4th June Rockefeller Centre New York Sale. Figuratively only of course, as the watch-fancying British guitarist has put some of the finest pieces in his collection up for sale prior to the car auction in which the 1970 Lamborghini Miura P400S that once belonged to 'Old Blue Eyes' himself is one of the highlights.

Christies have assembled a solid collection of cars, most of whom have a strongly 'US' feel about them, featuring as they do very high standards of restoration and the ability to be 'on-the-button' concours entries. A typical example of this would be the **1939/46 Delage D8/120 Cabriolet Grand Luxe** with Chapron coachwork. At an estimate of \$700 – 900,000 the car is expensive but it does have the history of winning its class at Pebble Beach in 1999.

Also a regular at Pebble Beach is the **1933 Alfa Romeo 6C-1750** (\$450 – 550,000). Totally immaculate, and about as far away from the typical British VSCC car covered in fuel stains as you can get, it has covered just 50 miles from its complete restoration in recent years.

The Sinatra car has a more wholesome feel about it, Christie's recommending 'recommissioning' prior to use but it's clearly all there and having superb provenance, a wonderful colour combination of Arancio Metallico/Pelle Cinghiale and being one of the most exciting cars of its era make it our sale highlight. No estimate given, perhaps a price for 'regular' example would be \$100,000 so let's see what happens on the day.

Much more of a restoration project, but no less dramatic is the wonderful **Bertone 1952 Abarth 1500 Biposto Coupe**. A forerunner of the styling house's BAT series of cars in the 50s the car was believed to have been lost for many years. With a guarantee from Amelia Island for a Concours entry in 2004 the car will no doubt be dazzlingly prepared once more and represents an opportunity for someone to get that all too rare 'barn find'. Unfortunately someone else had found it so the estimate is \$80 – 120,000.

Also in the sale are some very high quality Jaguars, Ferraris and American Classics of the 1930s and 1950s but I cannot let the **1965 Fiat 500 Giardiniera** (\$10 – 15,000) pass by without mention. The model was your author's first car in 1976 and a very rare site now – even in its home country. As Christie's say it's perfect for 'nipping round the paddock at Laguna Seca'. Hear, hear to that say I, and it's also pretty good vehicle on which to learn double de-clutching.

Christie's next sale in London is on 16th June at their familiar Jack Barclay location – just as well the Fiat's not there.

For a full listing, see the [Provisional Auction Lotlist](#).

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