

CLASSIC DRIVER

1957 BMW 507 Roadster



It's only two weeks to go now until RM's star-studded sale at Battersea Park in London. One of the many stellar entries is this BMW 507, of which Classic Driver was allowed an exclusive preview.

The shape may be familiar from sightings at Villa d'Este and Pebble Beach; however, seeing the car for the first time 'in the metal' one is struck by a purity of line (with muscular overtones) that is of the very finest. The one aspect that fails a little is the rear, but the shark-like nose, long bonnet and front three-quarter profile is, quite simply, gorgeous.

The design evolved from a perceived requirement in the mid-50s for a car to satisfy demand both in the USA and Europe from upper-middle-class families prospering under the favourable economic conditions of the time, buying additional 'recreational' cars with their ever-increasing disposable income.

Max Hoffman, the well known post-War importer of European cars into the US, was a prime mover behind the project (as he was for the 'Gullwing' and Roadster 300SL Mercedes, and Jaguar XKs of the 50s). The resulting cabriolet - designed in its entirety by Albrecht Goertz, from door handles to bespoke hardtop - was a masterpiece, featuring not only sublime lines but also a high-grade mechanical specification that included needle-roller suspension bushings, semi-trailing arm independent rear suspension and a 3,168cc V8 (often credited as the world's first all-aluminium design).





The car debuted at the 1955 Frankfurt Show, entering production in November 1957 and then appearing as a Series II in 1958, a revised version with front disc brakes and increased horsepower. The later car also had extra space behind the seats, the resulting changes leading to a slightly compromised design, lacking the purity of the original, and considered by experts to be slightly less desirable.

BMW got the styling and mechanical dynamics totally right; however, its 'no-compromise' attitude led to a car that retailed at a price in excess of £4,200 - considerably more than the equivalent Mercedes-Benz 300SL, itself a very expensive car at the time. So the sales never matched the expectations and production ceased just two and a half years after it began with only 253 examples built, including two prototypes.

Of these, it's believed some 80% still exist, of which the black Series I Roadster you see here is one such. It was the 15th 507 assembled, and after an active life has just emerged from extensive restoration work in time for the Sale.

The driving position is typical of the period with a closer-than-normal steering wheel and pedals, but one which becomes readily familiar after only a short learning period. Starting is by a small button next to the key, and the V8 spins over and catches immediately, the sophisticated motor settling into an even rumble. Engage first via the delightful, cream bakelite-topped 'wand' and the car pulls away with the twin exhausts breaking into a crackly burble.

The long-travel suspension copes well with the lumps and bumps of suburban motoring, and visibility - with the new Haartz cloth top down - is pretty good. You soon get used to the big wheel relatively close to your chest, and then matching steering input to feedback from the road.



For me, the big attraction of the car - looks aside - is the engine. This car's motor had so few miles on it that it would be unfair to really explore its limits, but you could tell that it's producing some useful horsepower, and proves that the Bavarian company has been at the top of the tree for engine manufacture for over 50 years, going back to its aero-engine days of the wartime period.

The drive was brief, but enough to get an impression of life behind the wheel of one of the true thoroughbreds of classic motoring, and one that will, no doubt, be the subject of fevered bidding on October 31st at Battersea Park.

The 1957 BMW 507 Roadster is estimated at £300,000 - 400,000.

To see a full lotlisting of entries to the October 31st 'Automobiles of London' auction please [CLICK HERE](#).

To see all the entries to the October 31st 'Automobiles of London' auction in the Classic Driver car database please [CLICK HERE](#).

Timetable:

SALE:

October 31, 2007
4:00 PM - 11:00 PM

PREVIEW:

October 30, 2007
11:00 AM - 5:30 PM
October 31, 2007
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

GALA RECEPTION:

October 30, 2007
7:00 PM - 11:00 PM
By invitation only.

ADMISSION:

Admission to this event requires the purchase of an official auction catalogue available for £50.00 GBP or \$100 US (plus S&H). The catalogue admits two and must be presented at the entrance to the sale to be granted entry.

AUCTION LOCATION

Battersea Park
The British Genius Site, Battersea Park
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