

Benelli racing bikes to feature in Bonhams' 2012 Las Vegas sale

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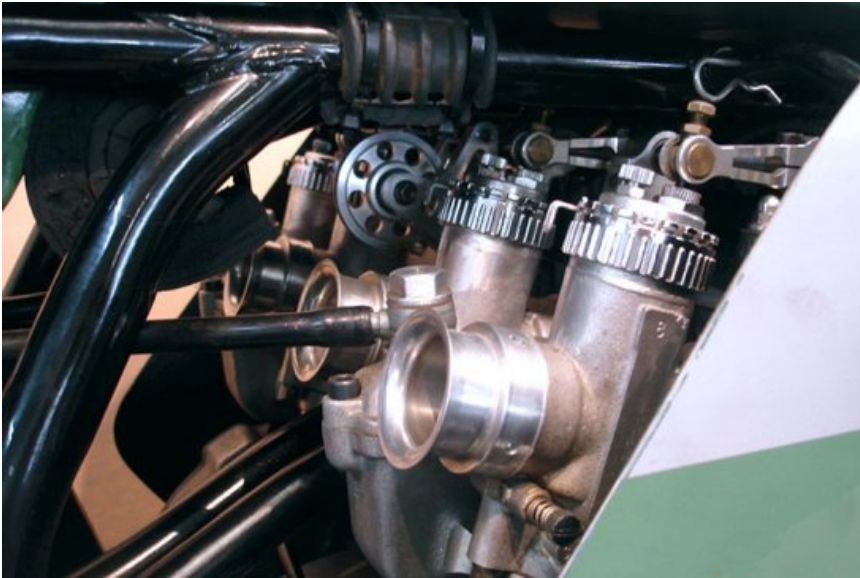
Bonhams' 12 January Nevada motorcycle auction will include two significant racing Benellis. Joining the genuine ex-factory 1958 250cc single is a faithful replica of the company's jewel-like 1969 350cc four-cylinder racer.

The Italian company is one of the oldest manufacturers of motorcycles in the world. In the early days it was Tonino Benelli himself who was the undisputed star of the company's racing team.

In later years, Italian rider Renzo Pasolini won the Italian Championship on 250cc and 350cc machines two years running, in 1968 and 1969. In 1969, Kel Carruthers was victorious in the World Championship 250cc class and also won the Isle of Man Tourist Trophy.

This was the last World Championship for a four-stroke motorcycle until the two-strokes were banned in the early 2000s. Other riders with Benelli connections included Mike Hailwood, Geoff Duke and Jarno Saarinen.

The single-cylinder 250cc Grand Prix Factory racer is one of only four made and one of just three surviving. More recently, it had been owned by race team owner and Italian motorcycle manufacturer Giancarlo Morbidelli.



The four-cylinder, 16-valve, 7-speed, 350cc racer you see above is a replica of the company's 1969 GP model, meticulously created by expert George Beale. It was sold to collector Jack Silverman, who raced it at historic events including Daytona, Willow Springs and Laguna Seca.

The two 'bikes are early entries in a likely 120-machine sale at Bonhams' second annual Las Vegas Motorcycle Sale on Thursday, 12 January 2012. It will take place inside the Auto Collections museum at the Imperial Palace Hotel & Casino on The Strip. Other highlights include 50 "time-capsule, nearly original" motorcycles from the Du Pont family.

For further information, see www.bonhams.com/vegas.

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Photos: Bonhams

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