

CLASSIC DRIVER

The 'Hippie' Porsche 917-021



Only just eclipsed by the marque's first-ever victory at Le Mans, a sensation of the 1970 24-hour race was Martini Racing's psychedelic long-tail Porsche 917. So popular was the purple/green/white car that other race organisers said: "Please bring us the hippie"...

'Porsche 917-021', the subject of a new book by Jacques Breuer and Raymond Collignon, tells the story of the other 'hippie' Porsche 917K, its time racing in the 1970 World Championship of Makes and subsequent life as a road (!) and historic racing car.

In recent years, it has been painstakingly restored by Mecauto (as you can see below) for current owner Vincent Gaye. With a brand-new chassis, rebuilt engine and dazzling Martini & Rossi paint scheme, 917-021 returned to La Sarthe for the 2012 Le Mans Classic.

Turning the clock back to 1970, it was Martini Racing's Hans-Dieter Dechent who offered 'his' (actually a factory car) 917-043 for Porsche's recently appointed designer, Anatole Lapine, to decorate.





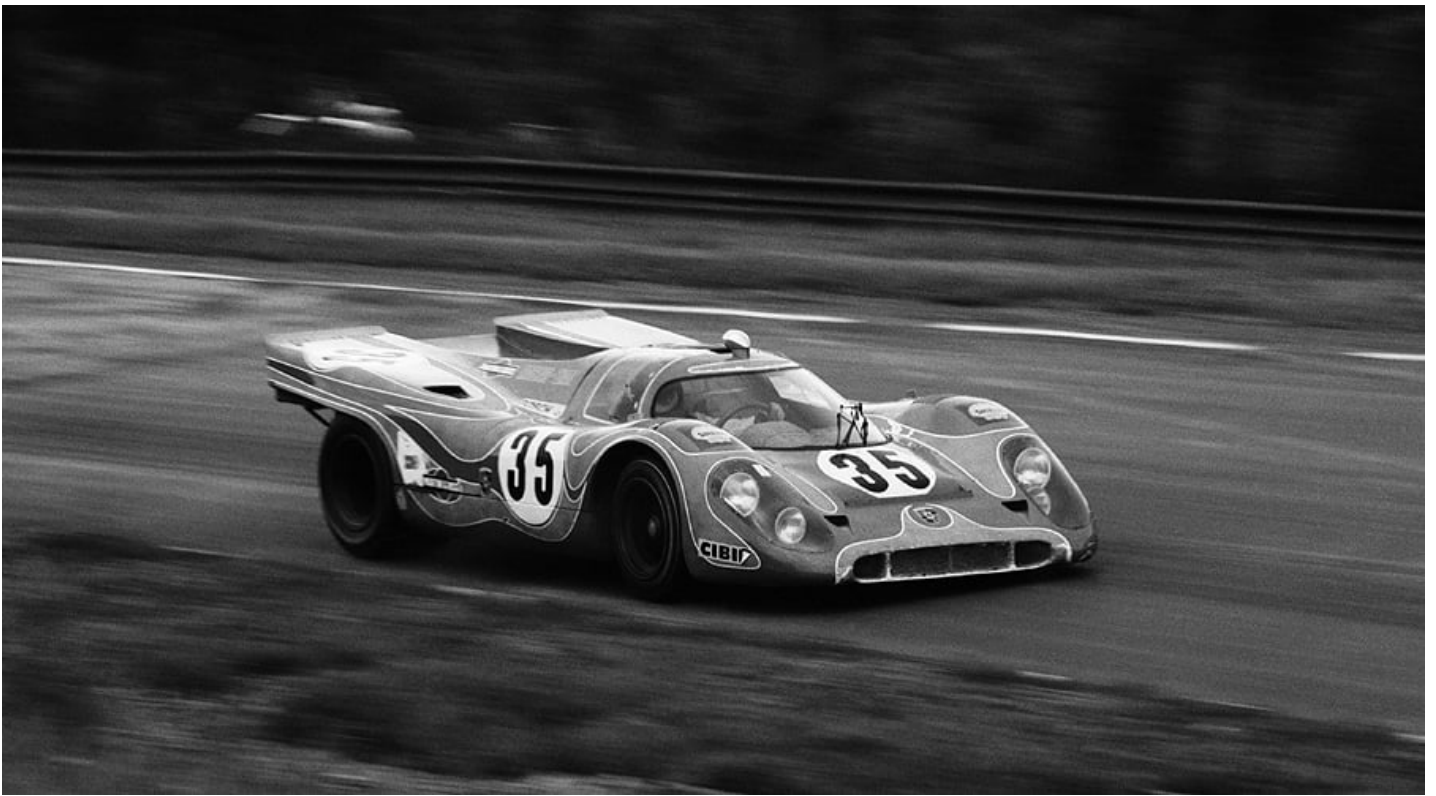
Departing from the planned white-with-red 'script', Lapine penned the swirling 'hippie' design, first laying purple and then matt fluorescent green on factory-fresh white Porsche paintwork. The work was completed over the Le Mans week, using some 1,500 spray cans.

"When it was finished, nobody could move their index fingers any more," recalled Dechent. Porsche's Ferdinand Piëch, the man behind the 917 project, was less impressed. "You know, a race car just has to be white," he remarked drily.



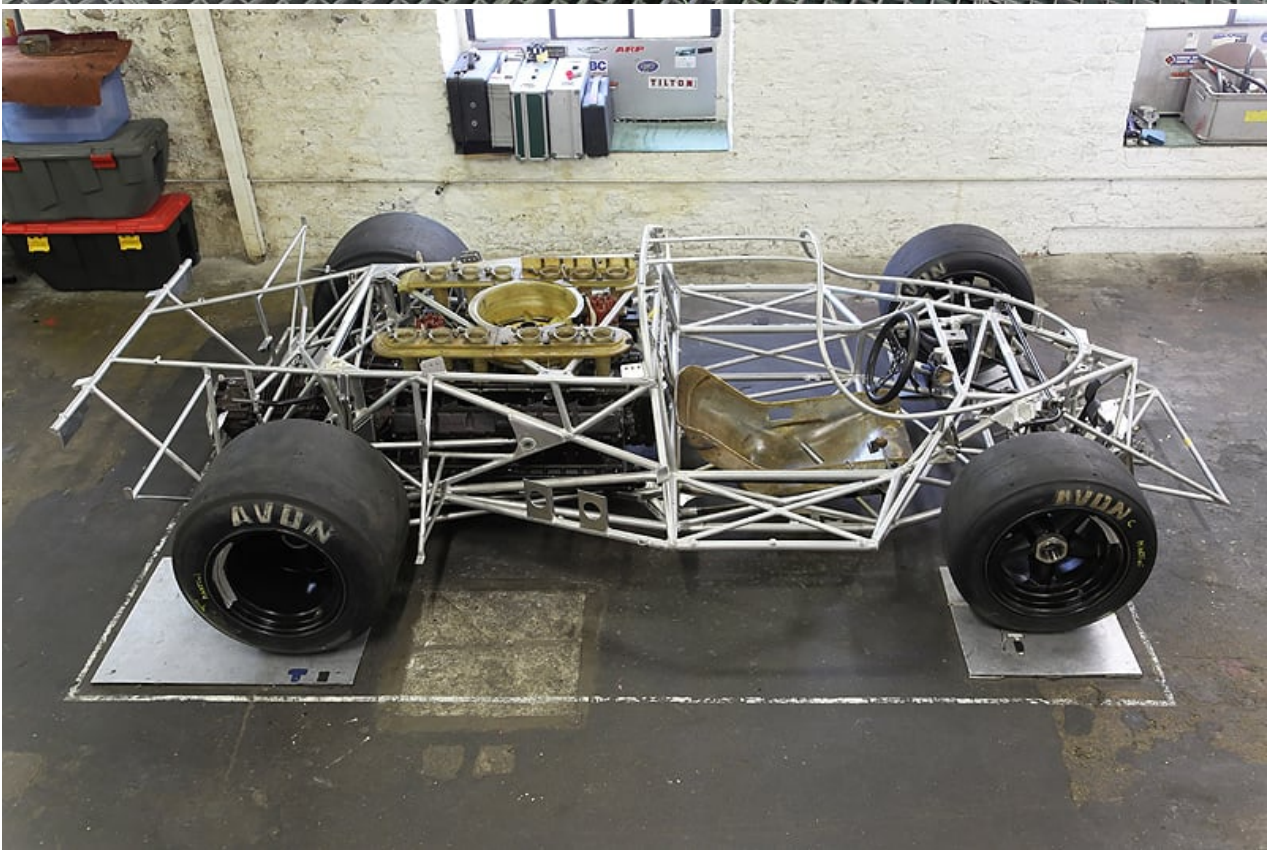


Weeks later, the organisers of the Watkins Glen Six Hours wanted their own 'hippie' 917. With the works Le Mans long-tail back at Stuttgart, Martini Racing took over the Finnish AAW team's 917-021 *Kurz* and the Franco-Dutch pairing of Larrousse and Van Lennep (below) raced in 'hippie' colours to ninth place one day, sixth the next. It was subsequently repainted yellow/red in another psychedelic design, this time for AAW's long-term sponsor Shell.



You can see from the photographs how accurately the restorers followed the original. And this car remains the sole original 'hippie' 917, as the factory *Langheck* 917-043 was converted to a 1971-spec car for the Gulf racing team's Le Mans entry and subsequently scrapped by a ruthless Porsche management.





Scrapped?! Man, it's enough to make you cry.



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The brilliant 'Porsche 917-021' book (95 euros + postage) produced by Jacques Breuer and Raymond Collignon: www.917-021.com

Mecauto: ww.mec-auto.com

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