

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Timeless Classics: Shelby 427 Cobra](#)

Lead

The Shelby Cobra was never a shy and retiring means of transport. For most people, the 4.7-litre '289' version of the Anglo-American powerhouse was more than enough in the early 1960s.

Racing versions regularly thrashed [Ferrari](#), [Porsche](#) and [Aston Martin](#) on the track and – on the road – there was nothing to touch it for bloodcurdling power and performance. But gradually the rest of the world caught up. By 1965, [Carroll Shelby](#) – never one to stand still for long – was impatient to see his racing cars develop even more power, and it was British-born race driver and engineer Ken Miles who came up with the perfect solution.

The art of shoehorning



His answer was to shoehorn [Ford's](#) 427-cubic-inch engine – a massive 7.0-litre unit – into the [Cobra](#), to create a car that could sprint from zero to 100mph in a mindboggling 13.2 seconds. So extreme was the performance (thanks to around 425bhp from the V8 engine) that road-going models required substantial changes to the chassis – including larger-diameter tubular chassis rails set five inches wider apart, coil springs instead of the now outdated leaf-spring suspension, and dramatically flared wheelarches to accommodate the widest possible wheels.

Over time, a great many other modifications were found to be necessary to turn the 427 Cobra into a genuinely useable road car. For example, the sheer quantity of heat from that prodigious engine proved to be a serious problem for driver and passenger, so it was necessary to develop generous additional ventilation and an upgrade to the cooling system. On the plus side, when it came to in-cabin comfort, the wider chassis meant there was more interior room than the 289 Cobras could offer.

The 427 also proved a hit with privateer racers and, although only one racing 427 was built by the factory, the model won a huge number of races right through to the 1970s.

Still no replacement for displacement



Only around 260 road-going examples of the 427 Cobra were built by the end of 1966, hence they are much rarer on the market today than the 289. The pictured car, [chassis CSX 3279](#), is a 1967 Shelby 427 Cobra, part of the [RM Auctions sale of the Sam Pack Collection](#) in Dallas, Texas, on 15 November. With just 12,000 miles on the clock, all of which are believed to be original, the estimate stands at \$1.1-1.4m.

We particularly like the line in the RM catalogue that states, "If there was ever a car that truly embodied the phrase 'there is no replacement for displacement', the Shelby Cobra is it." You're not kidding.

Photos: Teddy Pieper © 2014 Courtesy of RM Auctions

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