

CLASSIC DRIVER

Revving up for Revival with a Goodwood-bred Aston Martin DB3S

Lead

This Aston Martin DB3S's debut at Goodwood was rather memorable, and not just for its performance on the track. What better way to whet the appetite for the Goodwood Revival than with one of the greatest British sports racers ever built, accompanied by a suitably outfitted 1950s pilot?

At this weekend's Goodwood Revival, two Aston Martin DB3Ss will compete in the Freddie March Memorial Trophy, one of which will be driven by [Classic Driver dealer Peter Bradfield](#). Coincidentally, he is *also* selling this customer example, chassis #118, and we seized the chance to get in the Revival spirit and spend some time with the car. "It's absolutely wonderful to drive," comments Bradfield. "It's got vice-less handling - I'm very familiar with the feeling of arriving at a corner too fast, in the wrong gear and on the wrong line. Some cars make you pay a price for that, but others just deal with the situation. This is certainly one of the latter."

Feeley's finest?



While it was commonplace to see rows of Jaguar C-types and Healeys navigating the sweeping curves of St. Mary's and Madgwick, seldom more than a handful of Aston Martin DB3Ss ever competed at one time. They were sultry, exotic machines, far lighter, nimbler and more aerodynamically advanced than the aforementioned Jaguar, if over £1,000 more expensive - a significant sum in the mid 1950s.

"The predecessor was the DB3, a utilitarian-looking car designed by an engineer rather than a stylist," explains Bradfield. "When they upgraded to the DB3S, Aston entrusted the body design to Frank Feeley, whose previous masterpiece had been the LG45 Rapide." Its diminutive dimensions were part of its appeal, and, visually and technically, it was an extremely desirable package. Successful, too, including at Goodwood, where a Works car claimed victory in the famous nine-hour race. Though it never competed in the nine hours, this customer example, then painted orange, made its debut at Goodwood in 1956.

An exuberant entrance



Imagine for a moment, if you will, the looks on the faces in the paddock at Goodwood in 1956, as Hans Davids' bright orange Aston Martin DB3S arrived, towed by a gargantuan – and dazzling white – Chrysler 300. Still reeling from the devastation of World War 2, the 1950s was, by all accounts, a rather drab decade for England. Such an exuberant entrance would no doubt have raised a few eyebrows from the motorsport old guard, more so when the car scored impressive third-placed finishes in both its (debut) races that day.

Dutch courage



Davids was an experienced Dutch racing driver (hence the Aston's bright orange paintwork) who – prior to purchasing 'RXK 500', one of the 20 customer DB3Ss offered by Aston Martin – raced a Jaguar C-type for the illustrious Ecurie Ecosse. He'd even been national motorcycle champion in Holland before the War. After, we imagine, rather a lot of ear bending, he soon managed to obtain the factory twin-plug cylinder head, which was otherwise reserved for the ten Works racers. This gave the car a substantial hike in power, one that would pay dividends on the track over the following few years, both in Europe and across the pond in America.

An irresistible opportunity



It subsequently passed through a number of long-term American owners, one of whom negotiated a 75-dollars-a-month two-year finance deal in 1965, and kept it until his death in 1992. And having never been badly wounded in combat, 'RXK 500' is in unquestionably original condition. "It's got its original chassis, body, engine and registration number," says Bradfield, "and now it's in this fabulous shade of green, with a small nod to its Dutch heritage in the orange mouth."

The opportunity to recreate Hans Davids' extravagant arrival in 1956 at the Goodwood Revival, with what is a superb example of one of the greatest British sports racers ever built, might be too good to pass up. You would, of course, also need to pull on an appropriately stylish 1950s get-up – perhaps taking some inspiration from our model Caroline?

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2016 / Model: Caroline / With special thanks to [Bentleys Antiques Shop](#) for providing the goggles, the [What Goes Around Archive](#) for the period coverall and helmet, and [A Piece of Chic](#) for the scarf.

Gallery

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