


# CLASSIC DRIVER

## 1918 Stutz Bearcat

- Lot sold  
USD 182 458 - 218 950  
GBP 150 000 - 180 000 (listed)  
**Year of manufacture** 1918
- **Chassis number** S 2306
- **Number of seats** 2
- **Drivetrain** 2wd
- **Lot number** 558
- 
- **Drive** LHD
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Fuel type** Petrol
- **Exterior colour** Other
- 

### Description

Formerly part of the A.K.Miller Stutz Collection in Vermont, USA  
1918 Stutz Bearcat Series S Roadster  
Registration no. SV 8229  
Chassis no. S 2306

Harry Clayton Stutz demonstrated his engineering bent first in 1898 when he designed and built his first vehicle using parts from old farm machinery and a 2hp farm stationary engine. In 1900 he built another vehicle, this time using an engine of his own design and so successful in his local area was this vehicle that he built a few similar vehicles for friends and neighbours. He set up his own machine shop about this time, trading under the name The Stutz Manufacturing Company. Journeyman engineer Stutz went on to work in different areas of the motor car related industry and was most successful in designing and patenting a transaxle incorporating gearbox and final drive in a single casing. Inevitably these dalliances in so many aspects of the motor industry led to Stutz deciding to build his own car, wisely avoiding the over-loaded market sector claimed by Henry Ford, instead boldly deciding to build a powerful sports car to take on the likes of Mercer and Simplex. Not only was Stutz ambitious but his ambition was matched by his engineering talent. It was not surprising therefore that, built in just five weeks, Harry Clayton Stutz's first car did sufficiently well at the 1911 Indianapolis 500, finishing 11th despite numerous stops for fresh tyres, to prompt its creator to set up the Ideal Motor Car Company to manufacture the 'Car That Made Good In A Day'.

The first production models were closely based on the successful Indianapolis car and featured proprietary

Wisconsin engines and Stutz's own rear three-speed transaxle. A 50hp four, the 6.4-litre Wisconsin engine was of the twin-camshaft 'T-head' type, with inlet valves on one side of the block and exhausts on the other. It would be used up to 1917 when Stutz began to manufacture its own power units. There was also a 60hp six in Stutz's range for 1912 and the famous Bearcat model was available on both chassis. Stutz's most famous product, the legendary Bearcat was one of the first true sports cars, being stripped of all but the bare essentials and offering little in the way of weather protection or comfort. In 1912 Stutz won 25 out of 30 competitions entered thanks to the Bearcat.

Although produced in small numbers by American standards, the Bearcat's competition successes ensured that the company enjoyed a disproportionately high-profile reputation. The Bearcat remained a fixture of the range until the end of the 1924 season when the installation of Frederick E Moskovics as company president marked a change of emphasis: from now on Stutz cars would be aimed at the luxury end of the market.

The Bearcat of 1918 was not only powerful, its four cylinder sixteen valve engine with dual ignition displacing six litres, the car was stylish too, the fashionably minimal coachwork with step over sides and long flowing wings being later copied by so many other manufacturers.

Alec K. Miller was a reclusive and eccentric Stutz enthusiast who lived near Vermont near the Canadian border. Not only had he amassed a large collection of Stutz cars which were languishing in barns on his estate but he had also reputedly acquired the remaining spares when the factory closed its doors in the 1930s. Alec Miller was notoriously difficult, if not impossible to deal with but this car, S 2306, was prised out of the collection in the 1990s by the previous owner, well before the historic 1996 A.K Miller Stutz dispersal sale of 48 cars and related spares following his death.

S 2306 was freed from Miller's clutches as a rusted rolling chassis by British VSCC stalwart Mike Holt. It was mechanically complete but with no salvageable body parts, although the front wing stays were re-used in the restoration. A detailed search was undertaken to locate the required parts to rebuild the Bearcat. Instruments, including the 'rare-as-hens'-teeth' speedometer, were found at Hershey, the windscreen was located in Dallas, rear lamps were found in Paris, headlamps came from Colorado and the dynamo and fuel tank were eventually purchased at the Miller dispersal auction sale. Reassembly and restoration of the chassis was entrusted to Jim Duncan in Fife and master craftsman Michael Sharpe in Derbyshire built the coachwork to original Bearcat design. The painstaking restoration took twelve years to complete

S 2306 came into the present family ownership in 2009 ? another active and enthusiastic VSCC family. The scrutineers', stickers in the cockpit testify to its busy competition history since then. It has competed at Loton Park, Shelsley Walsh, Harewood and Prescott Hillclimbs and has sprinted at Curborough. 'Personal best' time for S 2306 at Prescott was an impressive 62.27 seconds in 2016. It has raced at Oulton Park and at Mallory, winning the Dick Baddiley Edwardian Handicap at Mallory in 2015 by a nail biting 0.03second margin! It has regularly proved to be the fastest of the road equipped Edwardian sports cars rather than the out-and-out Edwardian racers. More sedate events have included VSCC Light Car and Edwardian Section events and several outings to The Gordon Bennett Rally in Ireland.

During the present ownership S 2306 has been carefully maintained and, most importantly, the notoriously fragile original cylinder block has been replaced with a new casting from USA Stutz aficionado, John Bertolotti. S 2306 is now presented in a nicely patinated condition ? much as you would expect a carefully used Edwardian Bearcat to have looked in the mid 1920s. This impressively powerful and quick, iconic American sports car, which was officially dated by The Veteran Car Club of Great Britain in 2002 and was issued with a VSCC buff form in 2009, comes with a Swansea registration document and an interesting history file.

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