

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## On the road to Pebble Beach with a stunning Talbot-Lago Teardrop Coupé

**Lead**

One of the stars at this weekend's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance will be this otherworldly beautiful Talbot Lago C T150 SS Teardrop Coupé. Right before the show, the owner granted us an early-morning séance to evoke the spirits of art déco coachbuilding on the mythical 17-Mile-Drive.



Should you be among the crowds at the Pebble Beach Concours this weekend, we'd like to bet that a good chunk of your time will be spent gazing in awe at this ultra-rare Talbot Lago C T150 SS. And if its looks are sufficiently far-out to stop someone in their tracks today, imagine how space-age its unique Figoni et Falaschi body must have seemed when the car first took to the streets of Paris no less than 85 years ago.



The sweeping ‘goutte d’eau’ or ‘teardrop’ lines were penned by Anthony Lago after he became influenced by the automotive illustrations of Georges Hamel (aka Geo Ham), who perfectly captured the new era of speed and excitement with which the 1930s has become synonymous. Lago created extravagant front and rear wing mouldings that flowed into one another, resulting in the so-called ‘sweepspear’ design - of which this is one of the rarest and most original examples, known as a ‘New York’ model on account of the style being unveiled at the city’s 1938 Auto Salon.





Such a car was not designed for shy, retiring types, neither was it intended for the impecunious. It was a car for wealthy rakes, moneyed bounders, and rich roisterers – all descriptions which are perfectly applicable to the first owner of chassis 90105, the Australian playboy and heiress-hunter Freddie McEvoy.



'Suicide Freddie' - as he was known among friends due to his daredevil antics as an Olympic bobsleigh star, downhill skier, automobile racer, and intrepid yachtsman - was a mere 30 years old when he took delivery of the Talbot Lago while living in Paris and gadding about between the Riviera in summer and St Moritz in winter. But a shrewd head for business combined with an A-list contacts book, sporting fame, and Beatrice Cartwright, his, er, 60-year-old oil heiress 'girlfriend' (and later short-term wife), meant money was no object to McEvoy. Who, as well as chassis 90105, also ordered 90106 and 90107.





His close friendship with Talbot dealer Luigi Chinetti must have helped, too, and it was thanks to Chinetti that chassis 90105 ended-up in America with its next playboy owner, Tommy Lee, within a couple of years. Lee would undoubtedly have been drawn to the car's spectacular looks – but he would also have appreciated the fact that this was certainly no case of ‘style over substance’.

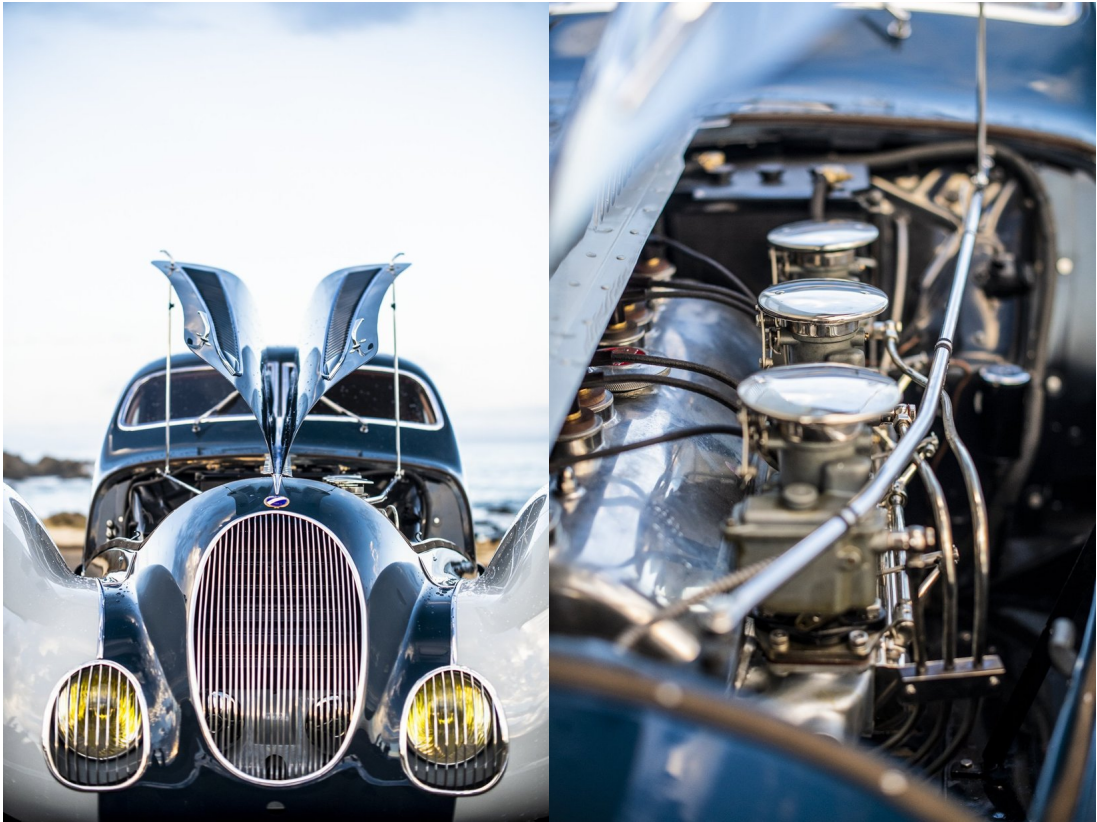


The ‘SS’ in the car’s nameplate stood for Super Sports, a label it was worthy of thanks to its combination of four-litre, six-cylinder engine and shortened, lightened T150C chassis. With 140 horsepower on tap and 130 kilos less weight to pull than a standard model, there wasn’t much on the market that could live with the Teardrop – and Los Angeles-based Lee made the most of its performance, out-dragging hot rods on the boulevards and racing all comers on nearby lake bed circuits.





Following Lee's death, his car collection was consigned to LA's Roger Barlow's International Motors, ending up in Wisconsin where it caught the eye of noted Milwaukee-based industrial designer Brooks Stevens while parked outside a local restaurant. As the creator of everything from the Harley-Davidson Hydra Glide to the Jeep Wagoneer and from the Miller Brewing logo to 'Skytop Lounges' for passenger trains, he knew a good shape when he saw it – and the Teardrop quickly ended-up as a star of his burgeoning collection.



A keen motorsport fan, Stevens entered it into a handful of races, however, by the early 1950s, his desire to save it from damage restricted its outings to road use and the occasional concours appearance. And it was thanks to that sensible approach that chassis 90105 has ended up as probably the most genuine and untouched Talbot-Lago Teardrop in existence.



Although the elegant French Blue paint it wore when it left Figoni et Falaschi's carrosserie was changed to the red during Stevens' ownership (apparently by an over-eager curator when Stevens was out of town), the paintwork has since been restored to its original specification. Additionally, the 'faux cabriolet' coachwork is just as it was when new and the car's running gear – engine, gearbox and axles – are all correctly matching. Even its unique, ratchet-operated opening windscreen panes remain in perfect working order and the highly detailed interior trim (even in the boot) remains staggeringly original.

The fact that Stevens owned the car for more than 40 years accounts for its remarkable state of preservation, and since his death in 1995 it has belonged to just three equally fastidious keepers, all of whom have ensured that it remains the most 'carrosserie correct' teardrop in existence. True, there are going to be many remarkable and covetable cars gracing the Pebble Beach fairways this weekend, but few will match this Talbot Lago for looks and originality, and probably none for its sheer, platinum-plated playboy provenance.

*Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2022*

**Gallery**







