

Painstaking Porsche 356 B restoration results in a hat-trick of awards

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29/11/2022 When a historic Porsche scooped three major awards at Motorclassica 2022, it was a rewarding moment for the team at Australia's first Porsche Classic Partner, Porsche Centre Melbourne.

A 1961 Porsche 356 B topped a trio of key categories at this year's Motorclassica event, an annual three-day celebration of Australia's finest classic, sports and racing cars held at Melbourne's Royal Exhibition Building, after a painstaking restoration by Porsche specialists.

Along with winning the category for New Age Classics – British and European (1961-1970), the stunning Aetna Blue 356 B was also awarded Best Porsche as well as Restoration of the Year, marking

only the second time that one car has taken away three awards.

It was a proud moment for the skilled artisans behind the 356 B's return to glory. Among them is Peter Bowen, Porsche Classic Specialist Technician at Porsche Centre Melbourne, Australia's Porsche Classic Partner.

The 356 B as a labour of love

For Bowen, who has 38 years' experience in motorsport and historic Porsche models, the project was a labour of love. He was responsible for the car's mechanical restoration, which included bringing back its original 1,600 cc engine and four-speed gearbox to an as-new condition, among many other projects. He explained how, as is often the case with car restorations, there were plenty of headwinds: "The first big challenge was that much of the car was disassembled when we received it," he says. "... there were boxes of parts, so we had to solve those puzzles first."

It turned out to be a critical move because there was an important fact hidden amongst the jumble of components. "So much of the car was original," Bowen says, underlining the rarity of this Australian-delivered 356 B T5, which was sold new by Hamilton's, Porsche's original Australian importer. "The body, engine, gearbox and window frames are all original. Even the window regulators, radio, instruments and steering wheel are. They were all fitted to the car when it was new and they've all been meticulously restored, not replaced. "This was important. The owners wanted to save every component possible; the goal wasn't to replace parts but to restore everything we could."

High level of authenticity

Achieving this level of authenticity took time and care. It also took a vast amount of research. For example, when it became evident replacement right-hand drive headlight lenses were needed, owners Theo and Niki Dimopoulos were adamant that originals be sourced. A thorough exploration resulted in Theo Dimopoulos finding an original pair from a lady in Malta. Still brand-new from the 1960s, they were wrapped in their original Genuine Porsche parts packaging.

Work commenced at Porsche Centre Melbourne in late 2019 and while Bowen worked on the car's exhaustive mechanical restoration, the body and upholstery were undergoing their own revival. By mid-2021 Bowen's work was almost complete, bringing with it one of the project's most rewarding phases.

"The biggest joy for me was how well it drove when it was finished," he says. "We went the extra mile sourcing date-correct parts and restoring everything that was able to be restored, and that's important on such a special classic Porsche.

"It's wonderful to have the opportunity to work on cars like this. Seeing it complete, and how happy the owner is, makes it all rewarding. And to see the car being recognised with awards at Motorclassica is a

bonus."

About Porsche Classic

Porsche Classic aims to preserve and maintain both legendary classic and modern classic Porsche vehicles. Offering original parts, restoration and repair services, the highly skilled and specialist team can call upon many years of Porsche-specific experience. From 2023, Porsche Classic will also take over support for the 997-generation 911 and 987-generation Boxster and Cayman models.

Key to maintaining the large number of classic Porsche models is the Original Parts and Accessories department. The production and provision of more than 60,000 Porsche Classic Original Parts ensures that the sports car manufacturer's four-wheeled legends will remain on the road for a long time to come. Since 2013, new editions of more than 2,000 original parts have been released, and the range continues to grow steadily. Performance parts also form part of the offering, covering new developments with historical relevance and performance-enhancing components alongside a range of lifestyle products. Technical documents are also available. Factory restorations are another key element of Porsche Classic's work, along with the fulfillment of individual customer dreams as part of the recently relaunched Sonderwunsch programme.

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