

Project Top Secret

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29/01/2019 The relaunch of the Porsche 935 caused quite a stir at the 2018 Rennsport Reunion. But what happened in the weeks and months before the big reveal? The Porsche Newsroom provides never-before-seen snapshots of the inner workings of the development team.

No one suspected anything. Everything was top secret, right up to the end. Vehicle tests were only performed in the final stage, and general goings-on in Weissach were well hidden. Nothing was leaked – not even other departments caught wind of "Project Flatnose". This all meant that the element of surprise when the vehicle was ultimately unveiled at Laguna Seca in California was – like the car's maximum torque – immense. Standing a little way away from the commotion was its designer, Grant Larson. He and the development team had been waiting for this moment for a long time, maintaining a vow of total silence throughout. After months of suspense, the sports car they designed was finally revealed. Grant was behind the design of the successor to the legendary 935.

The 935 race car was based on the Porsche 911 model 930, was active between 1976 and 1986, and caused a sensation at international racetracks. The 935 was used by Porsche works teams as well as private racing teams, and won the FIA World Championship for Makes for Porsche, four times in a row.

It dominated the 12 Hours of Sebring on multiple occasions just as it did the 24 Hours of Daytona. It was also the class victor at Le Mans. No other near-series race car has enjoyed the same level of success. The 935 set a standard for all of eternity, especially in its white Martini colour scheme, which earned the Le Mans 935/78 model the nickname, “Moby Dick”.

Larson: “We essentially didn't have a lot of time to make our vision a reality”

“Taking on the heir of such a legendary Porsche filled each and every one of us with pride from the first moment,” the designer reminisces, looking back on the tense development period. “We essentially didn't have a lot of time to make our vision a reality. At least the exterior design had to be created in three to four days, which meant that there was just one attempt – and it needed to stick,” he explained, his eyes following the contours of the new 935. “This project was special because of all the freedom we had. There wasn't going to be any homologation, so both we and the engineers were free to design as we wished,” said the designer fondly. “My team and I were extremely motivated from the beginning – it's not every day that you get an opportunity like this.” Grant Larson also helped design the Porsche Carrera GT, the 911 model 997, as well as the Boxster.

He was accompanied by Matthias Scholz and Kay-Alexander Breitbach, the overall project manager and the project manager for GT customer racing, as well as the entire 935 team. They all came to California for the début, including partners, of their own volition. Together they rented a villa in the mountains of Monterey, not far from the Laguna Seca racetrack – a kind of Porsche commune.

“Of course, the plan was not for every employee to go to the USA première, so most of us took extra holidays,” enthused Kay-Alexander. “To have worked on the new 935 is special to each of us. The Porsche brought us just a little bit closer together,” he continued. “The fact that it was presented at the Rennsport Reunion – and in an anniversary year to boot? That's just huge.”

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The Porsche engineers were involved unusually early in the vehicle development phase. “We normally join the process in the wind tunnel stage at the latest, but with the new 935 we were already included at the design studio phase – it created a special group dynamic,” says Matthias Scholz.

The new Porsche 935 will be used for club sport events and for private racetrack training sessions. Based on the 911 GT2 RS, and taking inspiration from its historical role model, extensive body parts were replaced with carbon fibre elements. The base colour is white, just like its predecessor, the Moby Dick. With a total length of 4.87 metres, the elongated rear shields the Porsche 911 hidden deep underneath.

“This spectacular car is a birthday present from Porsche Motorsport to fans all over the world,” said Dr Frank-Steffen Walliser, head of motorsport and GT vehicles.

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