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# STUART'S DINO

GRACE AND RESTORATION OF A CLASSIC BY JIM MUISE

A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AGO, Stuart Singer, owner of Stuart's Paint and Body in Garland, turned the page in the duPont Registry and saw what could be the right car. He had been searching for a project that would show what he and his top-rated body repair shop were capable of, and he was searching for a personal passion. He found it all in a "two owner" 1972 Ferrari Dino 246 GTS that was advertised for sale.

"The car was in California, but a friend was going out nearby for business. I had him take a look. He called me immediately and said that the car was complete. He advised that I should move on it right away," Stuart says. "I had been talking to the owner and he wanted to find it a good home—his father had the car for over 20 years, having picked it up from the original owner in the early '80s."

Upon completing the deal, the car was shipped back to the Plano Road shop where Singer has built a reputation for being one of the top body repair shops in the DFW Metroplex. His shop is usually full of some very high-end cars, ranging from Corvettes to Lamborghinis and

everything in between. This little Ferrari was one that he and his son Zack were going to work on together. Every day he would plunk down for the operational side of the business, then piece by piece work the steel body and aluminum hood back to bare metal. And then they fixed everything back to original tolerances.

"The car was definitely the right one; it was in great shape to start with, but very tired looking. After all, it was 32 years old. It was only later that we discovered how complete everything was. It even had the owner's manual and operation manual for the original radio and warranty cards." Singer says he was lucky to start with a complete car, but also lucky that there are some spares for some of the parts still available. Mostly though there are companies that specialize in recasting some of the plastic pieces that are subject to sun damage.

"The hardest part was the blocking. There are no straight lines on a Dino, and when you have everything back to bare metal and primed, you go over it all and fill in any imperfections with a filler. Then we had



to hand sand most of the car.” A Dino is essentially a series of intersecting arches and rounded fenders. While exceptionally appealing to the eye, they can be a nightmare to a body man. “The rear deck lid was so light and thin, I had to make a backing block out of Styrofoam so it wouldn’t flex as we smoothed the surface. Making the doors and creases in the curves match up exactly right was very hard.”

After priming and blocking the car twice it was sealed with a coat of white followed by four coats of a custom-mixed red (Rossa Barchetta). This was finished with three clear coats and then hand sanded and buffed to a perfect mirror surface.

All Singer’s hard work—including finding suppliers for fabric and plastic—paid off as he finished the car two hours before it was supposed to be loaded on a trailer bound for Monterey, California. Once in Monterey, the car was to compete with more than 550 Ferraris and more than 100 Lamborghinis in the Concorso Italiano, one of the largest gatherings of Italian cars in the world. This year his little Dino was competing with others

from all over the world as the celebration honored the anniversary of its introduction.

As the judges made their way, Singer quickly borrowed a wrench from another competitor’s tool kit to add to his. The three judges went over every part of the car checking that everything functioned as it should and examining the detailed restoration with admiration. Singer beamed proudly as his little Dino received the Platinum award for Best in Class.

After the presentation, one of the judges approached Singer and offered a friendly critique of his efforts. The judge told him the restoration was so complete that they had to get down to some amazingly finite details in order to award Best in Show. Singer’s little Dino restoration had missed one minor detail. One maddeningly small item would have placed the car in the top of all the cars on display.

The screws that hold the inner lining in the rear wheel arches, two-penny screws, were rounded off during the production of the car. The screws on Stuart’s Dino were not rounded. They were perfect. The little Ferrari started life with an imperfection he didn’t know to replicate. ☉



Above: The devil's in the details. Stuart Singer helped by son Zack stripped down the little Ferrari, masked blocked and sealed white before working the Rossa Barcetta Dino back into award winning shape.

Left: Stuart beams as he crosses the podium to collect his Platinum Award for the 2004 Concorso Italiano in Monterey Bay, California.