

# A Fine Pair

JH Classics



**John Hurst of JH Classics may have been away from the industry for a while but as this pair of owners cars prove, JH Mk2 is doing rather nicely, second time around...**

**T**here's something iconic and well, just right, really, about the Dino. It must be among in the top five of the most beautiful cars ever made, ranking alongside Porsche 917, Jaguar E-type and Lamborghini Miura.

Although always highly-regarded, values have gone crazy in recent years. I remember being at the BCA Classic auction about 12-years ago when Hawk-boss, Gerry Hawkrigge stuck his hand up for a very tidy blue example for £18,000 and only just missed it. I think the hammer finally went down at £23,000 for it in the end. By contrast, try getting one for less than £200,000 today! Values such as that coupled with genuine desirability make this ideal replica territory, of course.

It's no good making a copy of something that no one has heard of, or a car that you can buy in original form for just a little more than a replica. No mileage or sense in that. Dino is a car people aspire to but only a few can afford...

Dave Perry was the man who really got the ball rolling for Dino replicas here in the UK, after he'd established the Cobra replica on these shores. An important man in the annals of the UK kitcar industry, it has to be said. However, it was Roger Woolley, the egg baron of Melton Mowbray, also boss of RW Kitcars, who sold 1145 of those Perry kits, re-named Karma, back in the day.

Another offshoot of Perry's original import was the Daytona Classics project, a truly unfortunate operation that didn't really cover itself in glory. One of their customers was one, John Hurst, Irish Hussars Captain, a Ferrari fan and looking for something to excite him post-Army career.

John loved the Dino but hated everything about the Daytona Classics kit and decided that he could do much better himself. As he says, there was very little salvageable from the kit he bought, but it served to act as a base for what became the JH/Deon brand.

Having sold a good number of kits, and almost getting the range productionised and sold in the United Arab Emirates, the JH Classics/Dino operation didn't end very satisfactorily, and John Hurst went off on what turned out to be a 13-year sabbatical, which saw him develop a successful property business.

However, the old adage that once kitcars are in your blood, they stay there, proved right again, as John bought, and built himself a DNA 3Sixty kit, attracted by the use of Toyota MR2 donor vehicle, which got him thinking... He worked out that his old Deon products were extremely close in terms of track and wheelbase and could see real potential. Exploring further, he decided to ditch the separate chassis they originally featured and re-developed the products to accommodate the Toyota floorpan, which was a bonus, as was the fact that they are IVA-exempt, too.

JH Classics the second coming arrived in May 2011 and a re-appearance at that year's National Kit Car Motor Show. It was a welcome and triumphant return...

The MR2 makes good sense for body conversion purposes. The second generation (W20) MR2 (1989-1999) came with the 3S-GE four cylinder engine in the UK, and four variants of that unit were produced, scrolling through 160-, 170-, 190bhp and 197bhp incarnations, the latter two with the sophisticated BEAMS (Breakthrough Engine with Advanced Mechanism) system.

The 3S-GTE unit, also a 2-litre, was an import unit, derived from the Toyota Celica engine and produced around 250bhp.







The popular conversion of transplanting a Camry-Spec V6 (3VZ-FE) brings more torque and importantly, more usable power, although as with all Toyota units there are plenty, make that copious, amounts of tuning parts available. Since returning to the scene John has sold a steady stream of kits and fully built examples of his newly revised DGT model. They've certainly been well-received and customers seem to share the view that the choice of donor is a clever one. I recently got the chance to sample a couple of customer cars on a glorious late summer's day and it proved quite a memorable experience...

### JACKO ZILLI'S DGT

Jacko and his wife, Dawn, live in Crawley, West Sussex and this isn't his first foray into the kitcar ownership experience, as he previously built, and still owns, a very tasteful Extreme 355 that took him four years to build. Moving on... A carpenter by trade and with Italian origins, Jacko has a passion for all things Ferrari, counting 308 and 355 among his all-time favourites, although the Dino has always been at the pinnacle of his affections. Having actually enjoyed aspects of the challenging F355 replica build process, when the opportunity presented itself with the JH DGT, he decided he couldn't resist and being impressed with what was on offer. Rather than build this one himself he commissioned John Hurst to build the car for him. Jacko was order number five for JH Mk2, and he took delivery in January 2013, rating his experiences with John Hurst's Somerset company very highly. Indeed, so pleased is he that he'd recommend the company to others, without question. When it came to colour choice, he toyed with (Argento) silver



## JH Classics choices

### JH DGT 204

Uses standard four-cylinder engine, be it naturally aspirated or turbocharged from the MR2 donor vehicle. The car's nomenclature stems from 2-litre; 4-cylinder (up to 200bhp) with prices from £24,500 + donor (add £250 for the Spyder version).

### JH DGT 306

As above, but uses the Camry Quad-cam engine, hence 3-litre V6 (185-325bhp) Prices from £25,650 + plus donor.

### JH DGT Le Mans

Announced as we closed for press. See News in Brief this issue (page 6)

or (Chiaro) blue for his replica but ultimately looked no further than Rosso Corsa, traditional Ferrari racing red...probably due to being a craftsman, Jacko, who is also a Morris-man, has an eye for quality, and really appreciated the fact that John followed his specification to the letter, presenting him with regular build updates and photo records as the build progressed.

The car is powered by a Toyota 3VZ-FE V6, which produces 192bhp in standard guise, although Jacko's engine has been rather handily tuned to around 250bhp by the previous owner of the donor car.

Clearly very smitten with the Dino replica, I ask Jacko how happy he is with the car and his face breaks into a beaming smile. It's clear that he is over the moon and as he tells me: "I'll be buried in this one." Similarly, when I ask him what the favourite part of Dino replica ownership is he immediately laughs, looks at the car, opens his arms and retorts: "What's not to like?" Quite.

### JEROME STUART'S DGT TARGA

Self-employed businessman, Jerome Stuart, lives in leafy Forest Row indeed, it's his glorious house where we all met for the photos. A passionate car enthusiast since a very young age, Jerome has been better able to indulge his passion since he moved south from West London several years ago.

Having the luxury of added parking spaces and a 'boys toys' double garage-cum-workshop, definitely helps fuel his hobby. Jerome has owned several very nice cars over the years, including a genuine Porsche 356 and, currently, a mint Mercedes 250, but as he tells me, the ever-present, fashion-resistant poster on his bedroom wall was the Dino, never badged as a Ferrari in period, of course, being sold as a separate sub-brand by Enzo Ferrari, as a tribute to his son, who tragically died at an early age. He almost realised his dream ten years ago, but fear of

## SUITS YOU SIR!

The popular Camry-spec Toyota 3VZ-FE V6, used widely as a transplant for the MR2 Mk2, is ideal for JH Classics use. It's eckoned to make the car more drivable, with more linear torque and power delivery. It also sounds good even when idling...

The unit bolts straight into the MR2 aside from the need for a modified engine mount at the front of the unit, but it does use standard gearbox and driveshafts.

damaging such a prized possession kept his powder dry until he realised that a viable and alternative solution lay within the Somerset workshop of JH Classics. Not just any old lash-up either, but, superbly done, a finished article that would convince all but the most avid Ferrari-istas (I think I just made that word up -ed). Jerome's desire for doing things right means that he wouldn't be settling for second-best.

So, last summer, having done his due diligence, he visited John Hurst, found out more about the product, what was possible and what wasn't, and suitably satisfied, he found himself placing an order for the exquisite DGT Targa you see here. It also helps that his partner, \*\*\*\* also really likes his choice! Always a bonus...

As with Jacko Zilli, Jerome is hugely complimentary about the service and attention received from JH Classics, and he says that he was given regular pictorial updates during the build of his car and was invited to the workshop at regular intervals to monitor progress at first hand.

He's particularly complimentary about the painstaking way in which John detailed the car's specification exactly how Jerome wanted, and crucially, the car he imagined in his head was exactly what he received. Stuff like Nardi steering wheel, Cromadora wheels and the like feature here.

Jerome liked the fact that in addition to sourcing him a donor vehicle, John insisted that he drive it prior to cannibalisation another aspect that he found remarkably reassuring.

The best part of JH Classics ownership for Jerome? Where to start? He basically loves the whole thing, from the way people respond to the car to the noise courtesy of the V6 and the sporty exhaust: "It just makes you feel good" he smiles. I can't really add much more to that.

### JH Classics in 2013

John purrs like a contented cat at the sight of two of his finest gleaming in the glorious Sussex sunshine, and without a hint of arrogance proclaims that, DIY or factory built (from £28,000), these are typical of JH Classics builds, all to this great standard.

The kit packages start at £5150 for the fixed-head GT with the convertible Spyder version costing just £250 more. The



anticipated self-build budget is between £15-17,500 with the underlying imponderable being cost of paint-job.

Now, dear reader, you know exactly what I'm going to say about not scrimping in this area. Much like a great car with a crap engine is a crap car, so it follows that a poorly painted well-built vehicle, is er, a big let-down.

There's plenty of people who'll happily chuck paint at a car for you, but only a few can do it really well, even fewer can work with GRP to an acceptable standard. You see, a glassfibre body is different to a metal one, without stating the bleedin' obvious, of course, but in reality, preparation is different, as is the application of paint. It takes a skillful operator to allow for the differences. A good, top job could cost £3500.

One key thing that John, now ably assisted by his son, George, points out is that he only buys pre-converted Toyota MR2s, with the Camry V6 already installed, a fashionable trend among Toyota enthusiasts of the diminutive 'two-seat, mid-engine runabout' and reasons that he can take advantage of a conversion already done without any gremlins and teething troubles, ironed out. The V6 being more powerful, sounding good and more in keeping with a Dino.

The option is one that most of his customers, even kit builders, are taking advantage of and I can see why. Of course, if you prefer you can source your own vehicle, but allow around £3000 if you want John to do it for you. A win/win situation.

When I ask what the secret to JH Classics is he smiles and says: "I try and produce nice kits and cars for nice people."

Actually, seeing the quality of these two superb cars, and more importantly, revelling in the reaction of the owners, almost being enveloped by their enthusiasm, it's not hard to be massively impressed with the results. I'd say things are pretty rosy in the JH garden right now.



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