

Motoring events 1966

In 2016, the Pretoria Old Motor Club is celebrating its 50th anniversary. 1966 was a very good year for motoring enthusiasts; several important cars were introduced and two important events in the history of motor racing took place that year.

In 1963, Henry Ford II held talks with Enzo Ferrari regarding the possible purchase of the famous Italian marque by one of the American giants. After a deal was reached, Enzo Ferrari asked who would run the motor racing division. When Henry Ford II replied that he would, Enzo Ferrari excused himself. Ford plotted revenge and developed the GT 40 to beat Ferrari in endurance racing.



The GT 40 made its debut at the 1966 Le Mans 24 hour endurance race, and dominated. Chris Amon from New Zealand could never win a Formula 1 Grand Prix, but he and Bruce Mc Laren won the race. Ken Miles and the 1967 Formula 1 World Champion Denny Hulme came second in another GT 40. The GT 40 would win Le Mans every year until 1969.

This was also the year in which the maximum engine capacity for Formula 1 racing cars was doubled from 1,5 litres to three litres. Lotus had dominated Formula 1 for most of the 1,5 litre era, which lasted from 1961 to 1965. However, the company was not yet ready to introduce the Cosworth DFV engine that was still under development and had an uncompetitive car for this season.



Jack Brabham had already won two World Championships in 1959 and 1960, but he decided to form his own team. For 1966 he used engines from the Australian engineering firm Repco for the cars driven by himself and Denny Hulme. At the French Grand Prix he made history by becoming the first racing driver to win a Grand Prix in a car that he had manufactured himself. Three more victories followed, and by the end of the season he won his third title, despite already being 40 years old. This was also the year in which Jackie Stewart launched his campaign to improve the safety of Formula 1. He won the Monaco Grand Prix, but at the Belgian Grand Prix he was involved in what could easily have been a fatal accident. At the Belgian Grand Prix, held at the Spa-Francochamps circuit, he found himself trapped in an overturned car that was leaking fuel. The marshals could not assist him and his BRM team mate Graham Hill got him out after borrowing a spanner from a spectator's car.



Several important cars were introduced in 1966 internationally, but from a South African point of view, the most significant newcomer came from a manufacturer that would go on to dominate the

sales charts for decades to come. In 1961, Dr. Albert Wessels imported a few Toyota Stout-pick-ups to South Africa. This model was soon put into production and quickly became popular. In 1966, the company entered the passenger car market for the first time. The Corona 1,5 sedan was first displayed at the 1966 Rand Easter Show and was introduced to South Africa soon after. Car Magazine tested the car for the August 1966 issue and predicted that it would make a big impression on the South African market. It took a while for



Toyota to achieve great success, but by 1980 the company became the market leader and has not looked back since.

The year also saw the introduction of a very important new engine that would remain in production until the 1990's. The Ford Zephyr and Zodiac Mark IV were revolutionary compared to their predecessors and introduced a range of V4 and V6 engines. The V6 engines were made standard on the South African models, and were available as a 2,5 or a 3,0 litre. Although the cars themselves were not particularly successful and were discontinued after the German 17/20M range became very popular, then V6 engines were used in several other models, among others the Capri, the Cortina, the Granada and the Sierra. In 1977, the 2,5 was discontinued when the Cortina Mark 4 was introduced, but although the German 2,3 and 2,8 litre V6 engines were introduced overseas to coincide with the introduction of the Granada Mark 2, the 3,0 litre continued in production, and was only discontinued in 1993 when the Sierra and Sapphire were withdrawn from the South African market.



A newcomer to the international market that would become a real classic was the Alfa Romeo Spider, also known as the Duetto. This was based on the very successful Giulia range and was introduced at the Geneva Motor Show in March 1966. The original model was a 1600, but the 1750 Spider Veolce replaced it in 1968. In 1969, the Spider gained cult status when Dustin Hoffman's character drove a 1966 Spider 1600 in the movie *The Graduate*. This ensured the Spider's international popularity and since then, the original Spider, as well as some of the later models, appeared in several movies.

Two manufacturers that made a big impact on South African motorists disappeared from the South African market.

Although DKW had gained a very loyal fan base and several of them have survived, the three-cylinder two-



stroke engines these cars came with, became outdated especially because of their reputation for pollution. The DKW F 102 was introduced in 1965 to replace the very popular 1000S, but was never introduced in South Africa. The F12, an improved version of the Junior, was introduced for 1964, and became quite popular, but an international decision was made to withdraw the marque from the market. The first Audi to be introduced to South Africa, the Super 90, bore more than a passing resemblance to the F 102.



Another manufacturer that was withdrawn from the market was Studebaker. By 1966, only the Daytona sedan was available in South Africa. In the February 1966 issue, Car Magazine reported on a facelifted version of the Daytona, which was due for release in South Africa later that year. However, this model was not introduced here, because in the May 1966 issue, the announcement that Studebaker would be withdrawn from the market was made, along with what would be the last Road Test of a Daytona.

These are only a few of the most important events during what was undoubtedly a memorable year for car enthusiasts. It is ironic that the cars introduced in 1966 are now old enough to be considered classics, and that their owners can now be members of the Pretoria Old Motor Club. That said, the club has made a significant contribution in ensuring that classic cars are being restored and displayed on a regular basis. Long may it continue to do so!

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