A Greek Gift: The Aristotle Onassis 1969 Lamborghini Miura P400S

Lead
The 1966 hit ‘In the Days of King Otto’ might not have topped the charts outside Greece, but it was a big success for the rally-driving singer Stamatis Kokotas. In the early 70s, Kokotas received a present from his friend and fan, the Greek shipping millionaire Aristotle Onassis...

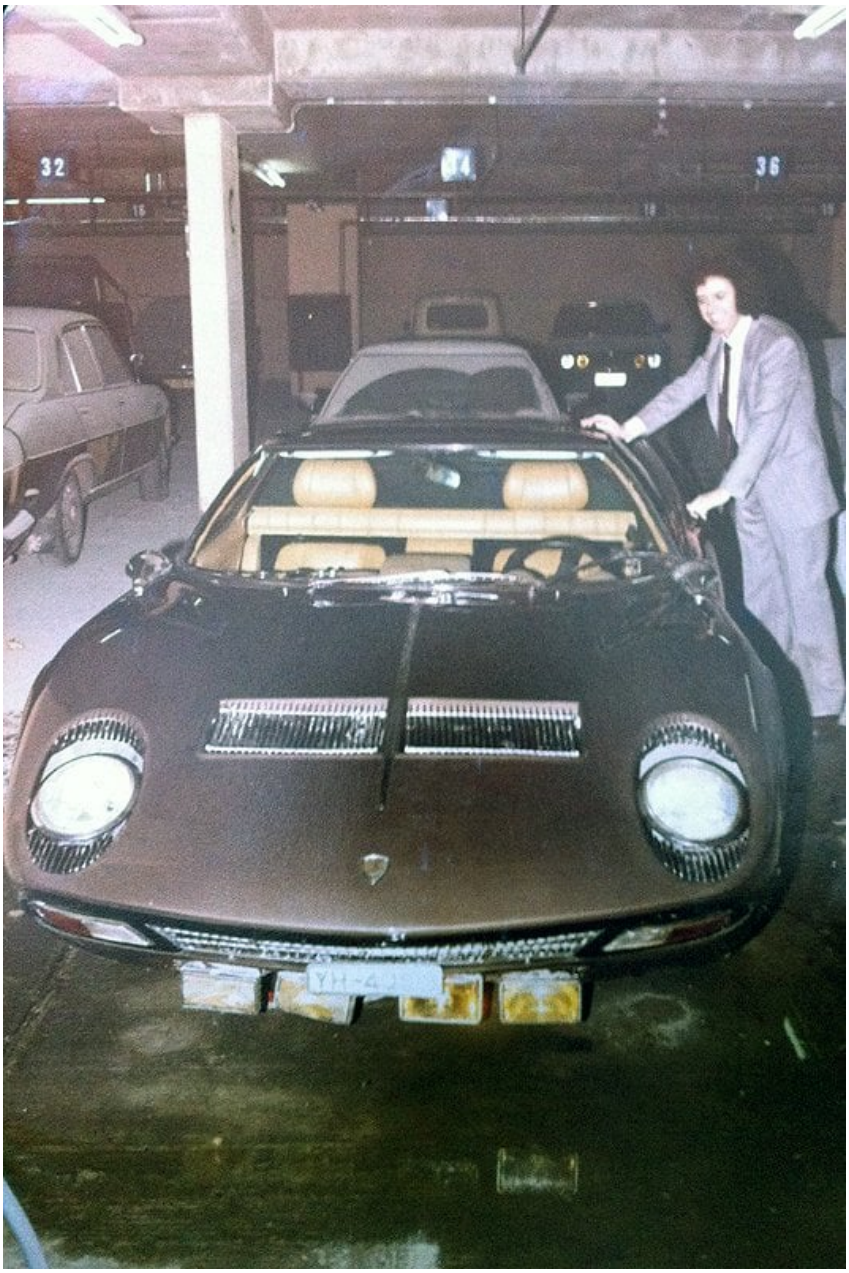
It was a metallic brown 1969 Lamborghini Miura P400S, the car you see here, and one which will be auctioned by the British house Coys at its 4 December, London sale.

If any car could personify the jet-setting lifestyle of the time, it was the Miura. Launched at the Geneva Motor Show in 1966, one of Bertone’s finest-ever designs (it was from the pen of Marcello Gandini) could stop traffic in the best streets of New York, London or Paris.

Ironically for a company noted for its refusal to compete in motorsport until recent times, the company’s engineering team of Gian Paolo Dallara, Paolo Stanzani and Bob Wallace created a mid-engined supercar akin to a contemporary Ferrari Le Mans entry. But it took Maranello until 1973 - after Miura production had finished - before its equivalent (the 365 GT4 BB) went on sale.

With a transverse-mounted, 3.9-litre V12 producing around 375bhp in P400S configuration, the car had the performance to match its low-slung, striking looks – although it would take a brave man to use it to the full.

Kokotas could well have been such a person, as he was a highly capable rally driver and enthusiast for fast cars, running an extensive collection in the 1970s, all funded by his singing career.



Onassis was both a friend of Kokotas and a fan of his music. It was typical of the man worth countless millions that he should share his riches with a likeminded artistic Greek.

As a P400S, this car benefited from upgrades such as electric windows and an improved engine. It also had the optional air-conditioning – essential in such a hot climate. Unique to it, though, are the engraved alloy air vents, passenger grab handle, gear lever, electric window switches and ignition switch surrounds. The steering wheel boss also has further bespoke etchings.

The well-known ‘eyelashes’ around the headlamps were made from alloy, and underneath the unique-shaped grille sits a battery of driving lights.

This car, clearly, means business.

Today, the 'barn-find' car with a matching-numbers engine (straight from display as an exhibit at the Lamborghini factory) is one of the remaining Miuras yet to be restored. It comes to the UK for the Coys sale after some 42 years in storage in the underground car park of the Athens Hilton.

Metallic brown with tan leather, and an association with one of the richest men in the world, it encapsulates the spirit of the time. It's estimated at GBP 320,000 - 370,000 and will require further investment to restore it to its former glory.

But imagine the satisfaction as the project takes shape and the completed car takes a bow at Pebble Beach or an owners' tour. As Onassis once put it: "After a certain point, money is meaningless. It ceases to be the goal. The game is what counts."

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