

1973 EX-WORKS AMON/STUCK BMW 3.0CSL 'BATMOBILE'

Owner: BMW Museum, Germany

By Jim Barclay, with acknowledgement to Unbeatable BMW — Eighty Years of Engineering and Motorsport Success, by Jeremy Walton (1998)

This BMW 3.0CSL was driven by Chris Amon and Hans Stuck as part of a two-car BMW 'works' team of BMW CSL cars entered in the eight-round 1973 European Touring Car Championship (ETCC). This story covers a brief resumé of the six ETCC races and the Le Mans 24 Hour race in which this Amon/Stuck 'Batmobile' featured before the car was retired to the BMW Germany collection.

During 1973, Grand Prix drivers Niki Lauda, Chris Amon, James Hunt, and Jacky Ickx, plus Henri Pescarolo, all drove BMW 3.0CSLs in the ETCC. Ford Capri drivers included Jochen Mass, Jackie Stewart and Emerson Fittipaldi.

In Round 1 of the ETCC — the Monza 4 Hours race held in March 1973 — Amon/Stuck retired their 3.0CSL after 31 laps when their engine dropped a valve. They missed the next two ETCC rounds, but raced in the Le Mans 24 Hour event in June 1973. During the night, about halfway through the race, Stuck collided with a Ferrari, went into the sand, and their CSL was retired.

Round 4 of the ETCC was the finest race for this particular car: the 6 Hours of Nürburgring, Germany, held in July 1973. The race saw the debut of the 'winged' 3.3-litre BMW CSL cars (later dubbed the 'Batmobiles'), and Amon/Stuck were placed first. Using the wing on the CSL, lap times at Nürburgring were slashed by 14 seconds per lap. The wing had arrived, the opposition's Ford Capris were demoralized and BMW CSLs won the next four ETCC races, and the Championship.

Round 5 was the 24 Hours of Spa, Belgium, also held in July 1973. Stuck put the car on pole, the first sub-3 minutes 50 seconds lap by a touring car. The race started at 3pm, but by 3.30am the car was withdrawn after it 'irreparably dropped a valve'. Chris Amon recorded the fastest lap in the race with a time of 3 minutes 49.4 seconds (221.586kph average speed). This very quick time in a touring car compares favourably



Main photo: Chris Amon reunited with his BMW 3.0CSL 'Batmobile'. Photo courtesy of NZ Classic Car magazine

Left: Series of photos of Chris Amon driving the 'Batmobile' in 1973 — supplied by Paul Kooyman

with the fastest time ever recorded on the old Spa circuit — set by Chris in the 1970 'works' March 707 F1 car at 3 minutes 27.4 seconds.

Round 6 was a four-hour race at Zandvoort, Holland, in August 1973. The wing system on the 'Batmobile' CSLs did not seem to make as much difference at Zandvoort, and the heavier BMWs were wearing through tyres so much faster that the team had to cut holes in the spoilers to relieve temperatures of the near-side front rubber. The Amon/Stuck car, now with a 3.5 litre engine, was on pole, but Stuck flat-spotted his tyres in the race and pitted. It was left to Chris Amon to show how well he had acclimatized to sedans by belting the big works coupe around a second a lap

faster than the leading Schnitzer CSL. However, the gearbox gave way in the Amon car (again), and it retired.

Round 7 was the 6 Hours at Castellet race at Circuit Paul Ricard, France, in September 1973. Stuck took pole and headed an all-BMW front row. Amon/Stuck were third in the race, recording their first finish in four races. Inevitably, their gearbox was losing gears again, but they stuck it in fifth and managed to keep within 10 seconds of their normal lap times. BMW CSLs filled the first three places in the race with Hezemans/Quester taking their third straight win. Toine Hezemans took the 1973 ETCC Driver's title, and BMW the 1973 European Touring Car Championships.

Round 8 was the Tourist Trophy at Silverstone, England, in September 1973. This final round of the ETCC allowed only one driver per car in a pair of two-hour heats over 75 laps, each to be aggregated for the 150-lap race. Stuck was on pole, but this time Amon was driving the Elf Tyrrell F1 car at Watkins Glen. Stuck retired in race one with a broken clutch, but not before setting a lap record on 1 minute 43.4 seconds. He did not start race two.

In *Autosport* magazine, Nigel Roebuck writes of Chris Amon's recollection of the 1973 season in the BMW CSL:

Compared to a single seater, the BMW 3.0CSL felt harder-sprung, yet rolled more. You could brake late, like an F1, but cornering called for a totally different technique. You entered the corner later and drove a wider arc around it. Getting sideways in this saloon, with so little excess power over weight, meant scrubbing totally sideways until you came to a gentle halt! The CSL was a nice car to drive, but about 300lbs heavier than the Capri, which meant we got blown away on acceleration. Once we got the wings on the car, Stuck and I usually had the legs on the rest.

This car is normally displayed in the BMW Museum in Munich, Germany. It was brought to New Zealand for the Festival through the generosity of BMW Group New Zealand.

