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Bill Thomas Cheetah - The Cheetah Legend, Continued

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The continuation Cheetahs not only have original-style interiors in them, every aspect of the [car](#) is the same way as on the originals-with some notable exceptions. "We've got better brakes and better tires on the continuation cars," Robert says about the main issues the Cheetah had. He adds, "We built the chassis 33 percent stronger and fixed the few weak points that we knew about, and it's a bulletproof car now." He details some more of the changes and upgrades made to the race-only versions of the continuation cars: "There's more gusseting, more tubing, different suspension components, different shocks, an oil cooler, a better engine, better clutch, and a fuel cell/fire system."



The legendary Cheetah is in...

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They're now so "bulletproof," in fact, that not even a high-speed, off-course excursion at Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin's Road America-prompted by another racer's oiling of the track-could shake it. "Bob Boyce once hit a guardrail with one at 130 (mph), and it pushed him off into the gravel," Robert says about the Cheetah owned and campaigned by Boyce. "They thought that he was going to roll it, and he didn't-he clipped the guardrail on the other side. He actually fired the car back up, drove back to the pits, and the only damage was a little bend in the rear trailing arm, which took the brunt of the impact. They took another arm off another Cheetah, put it on, and won the race the next day!"

Boyce's Cheetah is a common sight at Road America, competing in the vintage races held on the 4.048-mile circuit in Wisconsin's Kettle Moraine country. He won the Optima Batteries sprint race for his competition group at the Sportscar Vintage Racing Association's (SVRA) Spring Vintage Weekend last May, and in September he took a first in the Sports Racing class-and first overall-at the Vintage Sportscar Drivers Association's (VSCDA) meet, also at Road America. He's also scored 11 podium finishes there going back to 2004.



For this streetable continuation...

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If all goes well, you'll be seeing continuation Cheetahs racing in vintage events worldwide. "We're trying to get it approved by the FIA for racing in Europe," Robert says. "The market in Europe has opened up, and we're chasing the FIA market over there." Once the FIA gives its blessing, Robert says, they'll be able to sell it worldwide, with it becoming very valuable for those with money in Europe.

A lot of paperwork is required for the Federation



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Internationale de l'[Automobile](#) (FIA) to certify that a car is indeed a continuation of a previous one-paperwork that Robert, and Bill Thomas, provided. "He signed some letters for me that the FIA people needed," he says. "I found the articles, the dates, entry lists, and the final list of the races that they raced in 1964 under FIA/SCCA sanctioning, with the FIA people watching the races." Those races included events at Daytona, Riverside, Phoenix International Raceway and Kent, Washington.

Race or street, one thing hasn't changed about the Cheetah from original production to continuation. "People don't realize how brutally fast they are," says Robert. Sound interesting? You bet! But what about the price for a continuation Cheetah? They are quite a bit more than the 1964-vintage prices quoted above-but you get what you pay for. "Our street [cars](#) right now are \$80,000, and the race cars are \$95,000," says Robert.

Would a streetable Cheetah be a car you could drive to work? Maybe-especially if your commute route has a smooth surface with a nice set of twisties in it, and no cell phone yacking idiots near you. You'd also need to have neighbors at home or work who wouldn't mind the sound waves coming from the slightly-muffled, high-output small-block that might shake their windows and tooth fillings at least twice a day. And you'd also need understanding members of your local law-enforcement community. However, if you go for the race-only version, they all might be your biggest fans when you take to the track in it! You can get more information about the continuation Cheetahs at www.billthomascheetah.com.

Just as in the original
13...

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