

# 1999 Shelby Series 1 Roadster Prototype

If all 249 production cars had been available in 1998, Shelby would have sold every one of them in an hour

By Colin Comer



Chassis number: PPI

The Shelby Series 1 was a high-performance roadster manufactured by Shelby American from 1996 to 2002. Only 249 Shelby Series 1s were built, and this was the first running car, as well as the “pre-production” #1 Series 1, which was featured on the cover of Motor Trend.

With a carbon fiber body, sophisticated chassis, and Oldsmobile 4.0-liter Aurora V8 engine, it was considered a modern reincarnation of the 289 Cobra. It was the first Shelby vehicle built with a Shelby-designed chassis, body, and suspension. Weighing 2,650 lb, the 320-hp sports car went 0–60 mph in 4.5 seconds and recorded 12.8 seconds in the quarter-mile at 112 mph; top speed was 185 mph. A post-title supercharger package from Shelby propelled the car into supercar status, with 0–60 mph times of 3.2 seconds and the quarter-mile run in 11.35 at 124 mph. Approximately 80 Series 1 cars were supercharged by Shelby.

Most Series 1s came in the signature silver color with blue stripes. This car, “PPI,” was used for dealer

and public drives given by NASCAR legend Davey Hamilton and Shelby test driver Gary Patterson. The car will be listed in the Shelby World Registry and is sold on a bill of sale.

**SCM Analysis** This car sold for \$92,400, including buyer's premium, at Barrett-Jackson's Palm Beach Collector Car Auction in Palm Beach, Florida, on April 3, 2010.

The Shelby Series 1 was indeed the first all-new Shelby design since the 1960s, and it is the only car ever entirely designed and built from scratch by everybody's favorite snake charmer. Development was underway by 1994, and the car was intended to be a 1998 model. The spec sheet read the way you would expect Shelby's dream car to be built—2,400 lb projected curb weight, 50/50 weight distribution, full aluminum chassis featuring extensive high-tech composite materials, a full carbon fiber body, all-aluminum 500-horsepower Oldsmobile quad-camshaft V8 originally developed

## Details

Years produced: 1996–02  
 Number produced: 249  
 Original list price: \$85,000, later \$140,000  
 SCM Valuation: \$75,000–\$95,000  
 Tune-up cost: \$100  
 Distributor cap: n/a  
 Chassis #: Plate on driver's side dashtop  
 Shelby build #: Plaque on passenger side dash  
 Club: Team Shelby  
 More: [www.shelbyautos.com](http://www.shelbyautos.com); [www.teamshelby.com](http://www.teamshelby.com)  
 Alternatives: 2000 Panoz Esperante; CSX4000-Series Shelby Cobra  
 Continuation roadsters; 2010 Ford Shelby GT500 Mustang  
 SCM Investment Grade: C

## Comps



1999 Shelby Series 1  
 Lot 1324, s/n CSX5125  
 Condition 2  
 Sold at \$126,500  
 Barrett-Jackson, Scottsdale, AZ, 1/18/2010  
 SCM# 156702



1999 Shelby Series 1  
 Lot 4632324402, s/n 5CXSA1812XL000207  
 Condition 2  
 Sold at \$96,695  
 eBay Motors, Houston, TX, 5/1/2006  
 SCM# 41627



1999 Shelby Series 1  
 Lot 2480, s/n CSX5213  
 Condition 2+  
 Not sold at \$117,000  
 Kruse, Auburn, IN, 4/27/2004  
 SCM# 33764

for the Indy Racing League, rear-mounted transaxle, huge brakes... the list was endless.

Magazines clamored for coverage, and the Series 1 graced car magazine covers literally for years before anybody could actually buy one. Buyers lined up and placed hefty deposits for the proposed \$85k 1998 car, only to later see the base price jump to \$98k, then \$113k, and then nearly \$140k—and be told they had to wait years to take delivery.

### Enter the bad reputation

Unfortunately, production constraints, EPA/DOT red tape, and the like led to an almost-3,000-lb car that instead used a production Oldsmobile Aurora 4.0-liter V8 making 320 horsepower, in addition to numerous production delays. Many early buyers ended up suing to get their deposits back, and the Series 1 gained a bad reputation. When the magazines finally got hold of cars to test, the performance results fell short of the promises of 12.8-second quarter-mile times and 4.4-second 0–60 mph sprints (as noted in the B-J catalog text). A number of early cars tested also suffered embarrassing mechanical failures, leading the automotive press to call the cars flawed and an unfinished product.

Thanks to the use of proven GM parts like the Aurora V8 and a C5 Corvette 6-speed manual transaxle, the cars were actually quite robust mechanically. The chassis design was fantastic and the Series 1 handled exceptionally well. Interiors were a hodgepodge of more GM parts bin items, but such is the nature of a low-production specialty car. All Series 1 cars were silver, with optional center stripes in various colors.

### The cars sold through Oldsmobile dealers—remember those?

Production cars trickled out of Shelby, the first being delivered in 1999 and sold through Oldsmobile dealerships (remember those?). By 2003, 249 Series 1 cars had been built, with quite a few still languishing unsold in dealer inventories.

These original “production” Series 1 cars were sold as complete, certified new cars with 17-digit VINs. In an odd twist of fate, the company that acquired Shelby American during the Series 1 production went bankrupt in 2004. Shelby ended up buying the extensive inventory of remaining unfinished Series 1 cars and parts, and



in 2005 offered a “Component” version Series 1. They were completely finished rolling chassis, minus engines and transmissions, sold as CSX5000 series cars. This eliminated the need for EPA and DOT certification, as the end user would complete the car, making it a kit car of sorts. These CSX5000 Series 1 cars were sold for around \$100k.

### PPI escaped cover for a demonstration

Our Barrett-Jackson subject car, aka “PPI,” could be considered the most crude, but also perhaps the most famous Series 1. In January 1998, I was fortunate enough to talk my way into a ride in this car late one night, before B-J’s Scottsdale auction, where it was to be on display. I wasn’t at all bothered by the Camaro gauge cluster, radio, and HVAC controls that were apparently held in place by duct tape and friction. At the time, I don’t think anybody would have cared, as the Series 1 was the most anticipated new supercar on earth—the second coming of the Cobra.

PPI sounded great, handled great, and went like hammers of hell. If all 249 Series 1s Shelby would eventually build had been on-site in Scottsdale that year, he would have sold every one of them in about an hour. But alas, they weren’t, and he didn’t, and the buying public is fickle. It really was a shame the timing didn’t click, because these are usable performance cars with World Champion blood in their veins. Today, they’re affordable too, as the current market for the original run of production Series 1 cars is from \$65k–\$100k, depending on mileage, condition, and whether or not they have a supercharger under the hood.

### This car may never see the road again

And the subject car? Today, PPI may be a little shopworn and still rough around the edges, but it was the first fully functional example and will always be collectible for that fact alone. Unfortunately, as an untitled prototype that was sold on a bill of sale, I doubt it can ever legally see the road. However, all things considered, to be able to buy any serial number 1 Shelby, especially directly from Shelby American, is a big deal. And for the right collector, the guy with one of every other Shelby creation, at \$92k this one has to go in the “well bought” column. Maybe someday the new owner will let me take a run in it just for old time’s sake. I’ll bring the duct tape. ♦

(Introductory description courtesy of Barrett-Jackson.)

