

CLASSIC DRIVER

Maserati Khamsin: Angular art

Lead

Some 40 years ago, Bertone revealed a successor to the Maserati Ghibli at the 1972 Turin Salon. The Khamsin, named after an Egyptian desert wind, was an edgy, angular car – with some surprising details...

It seems almost as if Marcello Gandini alone wrote the history of 1970s Italian sports cars

It was the work of Marcello Gandini: a man who, alone, seems almost to have written the history of 1970s sports cars. In the spring of 1973, his futuristic prototype for the Lamborghini Countach would amaze the public in Geneva, but the first shock came in the autumn of 1972, with his design for the new Maserati GT in Turin. Giorgetto Giugiaro's sensual Maserati Ghibli was a curvy child of the 1960s, while Gandini's successor was styled far more sharply, closer to the new ideal of the wedge shape. Particularly eye-catching was the Khamsin's rear glass, allowing – as with the Lamborghini Espada – a clear view of the owner's leather luggage.

A trick - with help from colleagues at Citroën



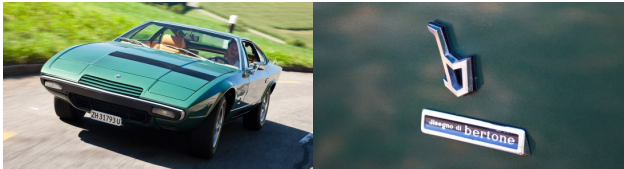
The aesthetic aims of the Maserati Khamsin were technically not easy to implement. The big V8, the work of Maserati engineer Giulio Alfieri, could only be forced under the flat bonnet by a trick from colleagues at parent company Citroën: the steering gear was placed in front of the engine, which could then be slid backwards – and that in turn helped the weight distribution and hence handling of the Khamsin. Other differences from the Ghibli included independent rear suspension instead of the live axle, power steering from the Citroën SM, and a five-speed manual or a three-speed automatic gearbox.

Egyptian desert storm



In 1973, the first production model of the Khamsin was unveiled at the Geneva Motor Show and, a year later, the first Khamsins were delivered. By 1982, almost 430 had been built. The real gift to sporty drivers was the 320HP 4.9-litre twin cam engine, giving it the sort of performance worthy of its desert storm name. The Khamsin could take on the best of them, including sports cars from Ferrari, Lamborghini, Aston Martin and Porsche, but it wasn't always easy to keep the GT under control – the hydraulically operated steering and brakes were other-worldly, to say the least.

Style suited to Milan, Paris and the Côte d'Azur



But the Khamsin isn't really about hot-blooded competition on the highway. It's more a car for rapid, stylish travel, whether for shopping in Milan, a business trip to Paris, or a long weekend on the Côte d'Azur. With your luggage on view to the world.

Photos: Jan Baedeker

Gallery

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