

CLASSIC DRIVER

Chrysler was brought back from the dead by Ghia's Special Coupé

Lead

Despite Chrysler's success during the 1930s, its popularity as a big player dwindled at the end of the 1940s, but thanks cars like this Special Coupé by Ghia heading to Worldwide Auctioneers' Auburn sale on 29 August, the brand was brought out of the darkness.



Think of the big American three, and it's likely you're head straight to General Motors, Ford, and possibly Chrysler. During the 1940s, these three US heavy hitters were the go-to marques for roadholding, refinement, and style unlike any anything else on the road. Chrysler enjoyed huge success during this time, but almost as quickly as the sales flooded in, they were dwindling, and as the early 1950s came around, there were 11 brands in the US selling more cars than Chrysler. Something needed to change, and so the hunt was on for an answer.

While this US drama unfolded, Italian firm Ghia was being acquired by Felice Boano, who despite being a fan of the work Ghia had established themselves on, producing limited numbers of high-quality cars, some level of expansion was needed for the company to survive and thrive. In a meeting of two worlds, Chrysler execs would visit Italy to discuss a potential lead on collaborating with the likes of Fiat, where Chrysler's new chairman KT Keller and chief designer Virgil Exner would meet and form a working relationship with Ghia's Luigi Segre. As the trio worked on ambitious plans to connect Chrysler and Ghia, the latter's owner Boano had heard enough, and decided to sell Ghia to Segre, leaving the door wide open for collaborations to take place.



1952 came around and the pairing had seen some successes with Ghia-bodied Chrysler products, with the Plymouth XX-500 born in 1950 being a standout. These concepts were true works of modern art, but to money hungry bosses, they weren't quite as exciting in the projects. Thankfully, one of Chrysler's main export managers agreed that the market for Ghia-bodied Chryslers would appeal to wealthy buyers, and managed to get official approval to commission six 'Styling Specials', with further approval for Ghia to build 12 additional cars.



This gorgeous example is one of those 18 cars made, and was owned by the same collector for a staggering 45 years, leaving the car in remarkable condition throughout, totalling 33,000 miles shown on the odometer. An amalgamation of the finest American luxury, with sleek Italian bodywork and design notes allows this Impossibly rare car to look truly unlike any other car of this era. From certain angles it resembles the big-bodied Chrysler New Yorker, while slowly move around the car to reveal curves more suited to early 1950s Fiats and Lancias. Of all the incredible classic and collector cars heading under the hammer at Worldwide Auctioneer's Auburn Auction on August 29th, this is one of the stars of the entire sale.

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