

CLASSIC DRIVER

[This ex-Gunter Sachs one-off Monteverdi 375L is heading to Monterey](#)

Lead

If you're looking for a 1960s 'gentleman's express' and you dare to be different, Swiss dealer Andreas Wüest might have something for you in the form of this unique Monteverdi 375L with one-off Frua coachwork. Once owned by Gunter Sachs, the car will be on display at The Quail.



As well as being a more imaginative choice than obvious contemporaries such as Aston Martin's V8, Ferrari's 365 GTC or even Iso's Grifo, this Monteverdi comes with an added bonus: it was owned by 'ultimate playboy' Gunter Sachs and is very likely to have conveyed his '60s sex-symbol wife, Brigitte Bardot.

Add a further strand of intrigue in the form of a major fall-out between marque founder Peter Monteverdi and coachbuilder Frua that was caused by the car's existence, and it's reasonable to expect that it will draw a crowd this Friday when Andreas Wüest displays it on the lawn at Quail Lodge in collaboration with Morton Street Partners during Monterey Car Week ([following-on from the sensational Monteverdi Hai he exhibited at The Quail last year](#)).



This is the actual car that Monteverdi chose to grace its stand at Geneva's International Motor Show in March 1968, alongside its High Speed 375S two-seater. At the time, it was finished in light blue with what must have been a deliciously louche (if somewhat impractical) suede-trimmed interior.

With its mighty 7.2 litre Chrysler Magnum engine, top speed of 250kph/150 mph, zero to 100kph/62mph sprint time of just six seconds and the added convenience of two rear seats, the 375L would have proved hugely appealing to glamorous continent crossers in search of a quick and comfortable car that could take them from breakfast in London to lunch in Paris and supper in Monte Carlo without breaking sweat.



So well executed was the 375L that, little more than a month after its unveiling, it was awarded first prize in the luxury four-seat coupe category at the Automobile Club of Germany's prestigious concours d'elegance.

Shortly afterwards, it was sold to its first owner Alfred Hopf, a Basel-based banking tycoon who was one of the marque's most enthusiastic clients, previously the backer of Monteverdi's Swiss Ferrari franchise and also sponsor of Monteverdi's 'Ecurie HOBA' race team. Although pleased with the car for its 'comfort and reliability', Hopf noted a couple of snagging issues - including 'overheating when driving at full throttle,' which was cured by additional wing vents.



But by the time Hopf acquired the 375L, the suede upholstery had already been substituted for leather, an outside rear-view mirror an eight-spoke magnesium wheels had been added, and the colour had been changed to the distinctive 'aqua verde' - all modifications that are still present today.

The car was subsequently loaned to Frua to show at the 1968 Paris Salon and then favourably reviewed by Road & Track magazine before being acquired by its celebrated third owner, Gunter Sachs - heir to some of the fortunes of the Opel car family on his mother's side and automotive parts supplier Fichtel and Sachs on his father's.



It's highly likely that Sachs and Bardot (whose three-year marriage ended in late 1969) would have driven in the car together, and it's believed that Sachs's great friend, the car-mad Austrian orchestra conductor Herbert von Karajan, also got to experience the thrust of the 375L's Magnum V8.

Indeed, so special is the car that Monteverdi eventually bought it back and it ended up as a prize exhibit in the marque's collection (and later in the museum created from the factory after Monteverdi ceased production). Most likely, the reason that Peter Monteverdi wanted the car back is because there isn't another like it.



Having only been in business as a car manufacturer for around a year but being eager to expand the range, Monteverdi had largely drawn and designed the car himself before asking Frua to build an initial 50 examples. However, the car was so well received that he subsequently upped that number to 100 - but financial difficulties at Frua, combined with Monteverdi's reluctance to stump-up the cash for the tooling required to expand capacity, meant only this single Monteverdi 375L was built.



The one other such body created by Frua was sold to AC and became the first example of its new 429 of 1969 - leaving Monteverdi to turn to Carrozzeria Fissore in Savigliano outside Turin to come up with a new design, resulting in (a claimed) 100 production versions of the Fissore-bodied 375L 2+2s being built and sold before the model was discontinued in 1972.

But while Monteverdi succeeded in regaining ownership of his beloved Frua 375L, he lost a lawsuit from the coachbuilder claiming the rights to the design (not helped by the fact that the sometimes eccentric Monteverdi had stated decisively in the brochure for the car that 'the shape and body come from the well-known bodywork couturier Pietro Frua from Turin').



As a result, he held a grudge against Frua for the rest of his life, responding to an invitation to the first International Pietro Frua Meeting in 1996 (13 years after Frua's death) by saying that 'the house of Monteverdi could not co-operate with Frua in any way....'

Monteverdi himself died just two years later. Perhaps the two of them made friends in the afterlife - and will look down on Quail Lodge this weekend and congratulate themselves on the one-off triumph that is the Frua-bodied 375L. If, like us, your heart has been stolen by this lovely Monteverdi, then please [get in touch with Andreas Wüest](#).

Photos by Glen Allsop

Gallery

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