

CLASSIC DRIVER

Out-jetting the jet set of St Moritz with a one-off Lincoln Indianapolis

Lead

If you're planning to hit The Ice St Moritz this weekend, prepare to be amazed at the sight of this unique Lincoln Indianapolis that's likely to 'out-jet' anything that even the famous jet-set resort has to offer.



With its sextet of faux, side-mounted exhaust pipes, proboscis-like front end and aircraft-style wraparound screens, the one-off design study looks eye-poppingly futuristic even today - so imagine how extreme it must have seemed when the wraps were first pulled off it at the Turin International Automobile Show in 1955.

As is often the case with such 'concepts' the design was created in double-quick time, flowing from the pen of Gian Paolo Boano, the talented 20-something son of the celebrated coachbuilder and former Ghia boss Felice Mario Boano. Boano senior only founded Carrozzeria Boano in 1954, but Gian Paolo had an ex-Ford friend who suggested that, if the Boanos could create a dramatic and futuristic design based on FoMoCo underpinnings, it might serve as a starting point for establishing a potentially lucrative arrangement between the fledgling firm and the giant manufacturer.





Gian Paolo was thus handed a Lincoln chassis – Lincoln being Ford’s luxury marque – and set to work creating large-scale sketches that he and the carrozzeria’s skilled craftsman brought to life using a combination of steel tubing and sheet metal. The hugely exaggerated hood was flanked by suitably long wheel arches (or ‘fenders’ in U.S. speak) that each held twin stacked headlamps and culminated in shrouds from which those fake exhaust tips ostentatiously protruded.

The feature was balanced by forward-facing air vents set into door-mounted cowlings that flowed seamlessly into the rear wings which, in turn, book-ended a sloping tail that made the roof seem even more ‘canopy’ like to reinforce the design’s aviation influences.



The 2+2-seater ‘cockpit’ was trimmed, chequered flag-style in black and white and featured a wraparound dashboard and bucket seats separated by a prominent, stepped centre console. And, just to make sure Boano’s futuristic creation didn’t go un-noticed, its already dramatic bodywork was finished in a coat of flaming orange paint.

With Carrozzeria Boano being based just a few miles west of Turin, it was an easy job to get the freshly-finished, freshly-named ‘Indianapolis Exclusive Study’ to the 37th Salone dell’Automobile, where it wowed the crowds and provided visiting motoring journalists with ready copy. Auto Age magazine even made it the cover star of its November issue, teasing its readers with the tantalising caption: “Is this the next Lincoln?”



The answer to that turned out to be a very definite 'no' – but it's said that Henry Ford II was so taken with the car that he gave instructions for it to be bought for the company and shipped to the U.S. (possibly becoming Ford II's personal property). Legend has it that Ford subsequently gave it to his swash-buckling actor chum Errol Flynn, after which it was moved-on to an owner in Boston, Massachusetts and then to another based an hour north in Manchester, New Hampshire.



The following decade saw further short-term tenures before the Indianapolis was acquired by the collector Thomas Kerr, who devoted 40 years of his life to tracking-down the

best Packards he could find. That dedication to the Packard marque meant the Indianapolis languished for the best part of 20 years until, driven by new found knowledge of the car's significance, Kerr commissioned top restorer Jim Cox to not only return it to its Turin show appearance, but to take it a step further by getting the instruments and power steering working (they originally didn't) and by fitting a punchy, 341 ci V8 and a four-speed automatic transmission.



The meticulous, two-year restoration instantly paid off, enabling the car to complete the 2001 Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance and win first prize in the Postwar Custom Coachwork class. The Indianapolis racked-up further awards at Amelia Island, Bethlehem, Greenwich and more before its importance was further recognised when it was acquired for the Texas-based collection of electronics billionaire Paul Andrews (who died in 2021) and his son, Chris Andrews.

Well known for preferring to drive their cars rather than just look at them, the pair again ran the Indianapolis at the Tour d'Elegance and scooped the Pebble Beach Lincoln trophy before eventually parting with the car when they 'thinned out' their packed motorhouse with a record-breaking \$54m sale staged by RM Sotheby's in 2015.



Now part of Swiss enthusiast Fritz Burkard's spectacular 'Pearl Collection', the Indianapolis has recently been described as 'the hottest of hot rod Lincolns' – and we reckon it will have left everything well and truly melted by the close of The Ice St Moritz on Saturday evening.

Photos by Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2023

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