

Russo and Steele | Monterey, CA

NOT SOLD AT \$82,500. The 283-hp fuelie is arguably the best of the early Vetta. The car's quite concave quality sold at a bid.



Italo-American Delight

With a 1966 Vetta Ventura 5000 GT, the smorgasbord is always steaming

BY JIM DONNELLY AND DON SPIRO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DON SPIRO

The varied and sundry standard guides and catalogs that list European marques down through history can comfortably run to hundreds of pages and encompass scores of marques. It's only an illusion if you somehow start thinking that Automobili Intermeccanica was involved when half of them were built at some point. Indeed, Intermeccanica, the offspring of an expatriate Canadian and his wife, both obsessed with automotive exotica, was prolific in names during its long existence, if not in pure numbers: The record states that Intermeccanica built either entirely or in part, or at least directly inspired, something in excess of 25 cars since its founding in 1958 as the Italian subsidiary of a Canadian component supplier. Both were birthed in the fertile, adaptive mind of Frank Reisner, who turned a European jaunt into an unlikely career as the creator of exclusive automobiles in the very womb of Italy's most provocative purebloods.



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Das Traumfahrt
Programm des
Milton Brown

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Mission Apollo

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Für kurze Zeit hatten US-Autokäufer die Gelegenheit, italienische Sportwagen beim Buick-Händler um die Ecke zu kaufen. Der Initiator dieser italo-amerikanischen Koproduktion hieß Milton Brown, der sich mit seinem Apollo GT einen Traum erfüllte. Die Firma ging nach wenigen Jahren pleite, mit seinem zweiten Unternehmen ist Brown aber inzwischen wieder in der Autobranche tätig.

Manche Ereignisse muss man einfach als Omen sehen. Als Buick im Herbst 1960 den neuen Special im populären „Compact“-Format lanciert, ist für Milton Brown klar – dies ist die Basis für den Flitzer, den er schon lange bauen wollte. Buick ist zu dieser Zeit wie die meisten anderen US-Großserienher-

steller nicht unbedingt für das sportive Handling seiner Straßenkreuzer bekannt. Der kompakte Special mit seinem 3,5-Liter-Leichtmetall-V8 (richtig – der gleiche Motor findet später auch Einzug in die Rover-Palette) gilt, verglichen mit den großen „Full-Size“-Modellen, als geradezu

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eigenes Auto zu bauen – das natürlich beim sportlich sein sollte. Gerade mit dem Studium fertig, ging der frischgebackene Ingenieur nach England, wo er bei dem kleinen Rennwagenhersteller Emeryson eine Anstellung fand. Zurück in Amerika macht er sich mit den auf der britischen Insel gesammelten Erfahrungen und jeder Menge Plänen im Kopf an die Ko-

tem Passagierraum steht mittlerweile als Organist bereit. Motor und Aufhängungen des Massenprodukts aus Detroit montiert. Milflings an sein selbst gefertigtes Chassis. Bleibt nur noch die Frage nach der Karosserie. Inzwischen – es ist 1961 – ist ein Auto auf dem Markt, dessen aufregende Form die Herzen der Kenner bisher schlagen lässt: der Jaguar der lange Motorhaube

äußeren Form erhält er von seinem Freund Ron Plescia, der unlängst sein Studium am Art Center College of Design im kalifornischen Pasadena beendet hatte. Ron baut ein Modell im Maßstab 1:4 und fertig Skizzen an, deren stilistische Anleihen dem Edlesten entnommen sind, was Europas Sportwagenbau zu bieten hat. Hier ein bisschen Jaguar E, da ein Hauch Ferrari 250 GT, dort etwas Aston Martin.

Chassis, das 1:4-Modell sowie die Zeichnungen an Frank Reiser, den Milt bereits 1960 beim Großen Preis von Monaco kennengelernt hatte – auf seiner Hochzeitsreise. Der in Ungarn geborene Kanadier Reiser betreibt zu jener Zeit ein Designstudio in Turin, das später als Hersteller von eigenen Sportwagen von sich reden machen wird. Contrazione Automobili Intermeccanica. Den Bau der Karosserie für Milt's Traum übernimmt Reiser's

IMPRESSIONI DI GUIDA

Apollo
«3500 GT» 1961

Educata
a Torino



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Educata a Torino

Voleva imitare le nostre supercar e a questo scopo fu mandata in Italia, affinché la carrozzeria fosse «corretta» da Scagliione. L'operazione riuscì in pieno: quando partecipò al film «Un Maggiolino tutto matto», dove «recitava» la parte della cattiva, tutti la presero per una Ferrari. Col cambio automatico, come questa, ne sono rimaste soltanto tre

di Isaac Hernández, foto di Mercurypress



IMPRESSIONI DI GUIDA

Apollo
«3500 GT» 1963

IL VERSO DEL CAVALLINO

Non è difficile individuare nelle linee dell'Apollo «3500 GT» espliciti richiami alla Ferrari «250 GT». La carrozzeria veniva realizzata in alluminio presso la Costruzione Automobili Intermecanica di Torino.

Per indicare un'automobile fuori dall'ordinario, negli Stati Uniti spesso si usa l'espressione «Non è la Buick di tuo padre», sottolineando in questo modo l'aspetto piuttosto anonimo e il temperamento non certo sportivo di molte Buick. Ma nell'autunno del '60 la General Motors presentò la Buick «Special», una vettura dalle dimensioni compatte, se paragonata agli standard americani dell'epoca, sufficientemente agile ed equipaggiata con un motore V8 realizzato in lega leggera. Fu

questo modello a indurre Milton Brown, ingegnere che aveva maturato una propria esperienza lavorando in Inghilterra presso il costruttore di auto da corsa Emeryson, a progettare una sua auto, un sogno colto nei tempi del liceo. Brown progettò un sedan con longheroni a sezione quadrata sul quale sarebbero poi stati montati i componenti della «Special». Acquistata quindi una Buick

sospensioni per montarli sul telaio da lui costruito a mano. Per la carrozzeria contattò l'amico Ron Plescia, laureatosi presso l'«Art Center College of Design» di Pasadena: questi realizzò un modello in scala 1:4 e alcuni disegni di un'auto sportiva di gusto marcatamente europeo, le cui linee richiamavano in modo evidente la Ferrari «250 GT», ma anche la Jaguar «E-Type». Lo stesso Milton del resto era stato molto chiaro: il cofano della nuova vettura doveva misurare la stessa lunghezza di

quello della «E-Type». Brown e Plescia spedirono il telaio, il modello in scala e i disegni a Torino, dove Frank Reiner, un canadese di origine ungherese, aveva aperto uno studio di design, la Costruzione Automobili Intermecanica. Qui venne realizzato il primo prototipo della vettura, battezzata «Apollon». Negli Stati Uniti, il prototipo fu mostrato a Phil Vail, rivenditore Buick di Los Angeles che, entusiasta, ne ordinò subito 50 esemplari. Raccolti i fondi necessari, nacque la International Motor Cars Inc. e

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In the '60s, drivers De Adamich, Hezemans, Van Lennep and Stommelen entered the record books driving Alfa sports cars. Americans Mario Andretti and Peter Revson also drove for Alfa Romeo.

Today, Alfa is back in Formula One competition with two factory cars, 12-cylinder 3-liter ground-effects machines driven by Frenchman Patrick Depailler and Italian Bruno Giacomelli. The cars haven't won a race yet, but they are sure to. When they do, their victory will be as sweet as when Guiseppe Campari took the French GP for Alfa Romeo in 1924. Campari had been driving Alfas since 1920, when he won at Mugello, and he went on to become Italian champion in 1928 and again in 1931. A year later, on Sept. 10, 1932, he was killed racing an Alfa Romeo at Monza.

One of the cars Campari drove for



Alfa Romeo was a Janoderm Monza, built in 1931 and named after the Scuderia Ferrari driver when Enzo Ferrari was the team's entrant. The original 8C had a charged 2.3-liter straight-4 engine made out of two four-cylinder middle. It produced 180 horsepower with 10 pounds of supercharger. The Monza became an instant winner when Ferrari bored the engine to 2.6 liters and made a change to a braking system that rendered it much more controllable.

Sports Car Graphic took a hands-on feeling of Alfa Romeo's racing past. In 1931, the GP cars had a lot more muscle than today's GP cars as tough to drive as American Supermodifieds before power steering. The Monza's large-diameter steering wheel is inches from the driver's head. It's a good thing, since it takes much leverage to herd the car around Sears Point that you need to get your shoulder into steering with a straight-arm, fingers-and-wrist motion of today's GP cars came well after Campari's time.

The 8C is on a 2-rail chassis, the most basic structure known to the four wheels pointing in the same direction. The car has four semi-elliptical leaf springs and friction-type shock absorbers with stopping power provided by a strong leg and four 15 1/2-inch disc brakes inside 19-inch Borrani wheels. The Alfa will safely rev to 5500 rpm.

Using that rev limit, it will do 0-60 in 6.9 seconds and 0-100 in 24.1 seconds, about the same time it takes a Sprint Veloce coupe to get to 80 mph. Flat out, the Monza will do about 120 mph. Driving the car less than flat out is a trip backwards to another era. The pedals are arranged with the accelerator between the brake and clutch—common for 1931, confusing the foot in 1980. The Monza is like a 4-wheel Harley Davidson, giving lots of low-rev torque and power in an antiquated chassis. It sounds like a Harley.

Coming into a corner, the car begins to flex, the wheels jumpy and down, and braking feels like riding on a high-speed buckboard. In the corners, the car lurches and jerks and skids. The only way to control the bucking Alfa is with lots of muscle on the steering wheel. The 8C doesn't take the delicate touch required in today's F1 cars. The idea of fighting it around a corner is unthinkable.

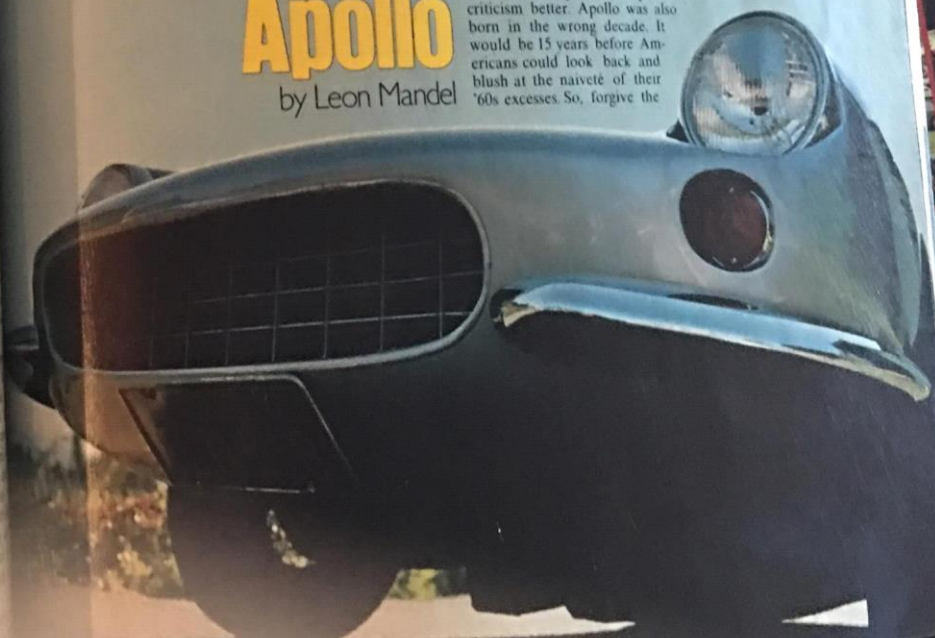


The Sun Finally Shines on Apollo

by Leon Mandel

Born a bastard, made an orphan, reported missing in action, Oakland's automotive child achieves respectability at last

Apollo's first mistake was its choice of a birthplace. Gertrude Stein once said of Oakland, "There is no there there," and the California automotive elite couldn't have put their Apollonic criticism better. Apollo was also born in the wrong decade. It would be 15 years before Americans could look back and blush at the naivete of their '60s excesses. So, forgive the



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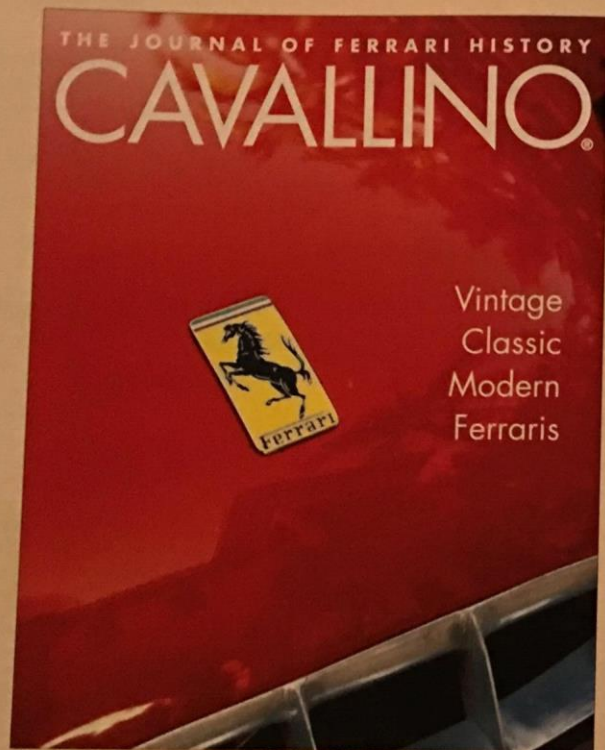
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Apollo Reunion



Denny Paul's 500GT
Apollo at the 2004
Concorso Italiano

Apollos have their day in the sun

Article and photos from Robert Northrup

On the green in 2006, the Concorso Italiano is proud to sponsor the Apollo GT reunion: a celebration of one of the earliest—and best—marriages of Italian style with American muscle and reliability. However, many are unaware of this Ferrari contender, 88 examples of which were built—by hand—in Italy and assembled in Oakland, California during 1963-65.

In 1960, a trio of Northern California twenty-somethings saw that imported sports cars had a major deficiency; while they were admired by enthusiasts for their exotic styling and hot performance, (especially the Italians), imported sports cars had also developed a nasty reputation for being less than trustworthy.

Indeed, it was a very brave man who dared to drive his Jaguar or Alfa Romeo too far from home; it could break down at the worst possible moment. A cross-country trip was out of the question.

Commuting to work was also a questionable activity, as anyone who's seen an old Jag in five o'clock traffic can attest. And if it was a Ferrari? Never.

So, Milt Brown, Ron Plescia, and Ned Davis combined their resources to create a fast, powerful grand turismo in the Italian tradition, but with the room, reliability, and serviceability of a Buick.

In high school, Brown and Plescia had already "designed" dozens of such cars (when they should have been studying!). After college, Brown took his enthusiasm to Europe where he worked as an engineer for Emerson, a small race car builder in England. There he gained valuable experience designing chassis and suspensions. During his free time, he searched for a possible coachbuilder for this Euro-American grand touring car.

Back in the States, Ron Plescia, newly matriculated from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, was honing his skills as a product designer.

Partner number three, Ned Davis, held a business degree from the University of California at Berkeley and had his hand in a number of small enterprises. As a small business owner, Davis learned all about

Apollo Reunion

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