

CLASSIC DRIVER

Maserati Boomerang - the eccentric icon that keeps coming back

Lead

"The Boomerang was perhaps the most irrational car Italdesign has ever built. Here, the move towards ever-more graphic shapes went too far: the Boomerang may be pleasing as a shape, but from an aerodynamic standpoint it is a contradiction in terms."

Child of the revolution, 1972



For admirers of bold 1970s concept cars, the above statement about the 1972 Maserati Boomerang might seem a little harsh – even disrespectful. But the Lord himself had spoken: its creator, Giorgetto Giugiaro, had envisioned a wheeled wedge straight from the future, whether he was retrospectively unimpressed or not. It was revealed in 1972 much to the astonishment of Turin Motor Show-goers, even though they might have been desensitised to the radical design by its appearance in epowood form a year earlier. Now, after passing through a number of (seemingly equally eccentric) owners since then, it will go up for auction on 5 September 2015 at Bonhams' inaugural sale at the Chantilly Arts & Elegance.

Testing the limits of feasibility



Giugiaro was in his mid-30s when he created the tapered design triumph. Before then, he had already created such classics as the [Maserati Ghibli](#) and [De Tomaso Mangusta](#). The Boomerang was based on [Bora](#) underpinnings – a car whose angular silhouette already incorporated less-extreme Giugiaro trademarks – but the Italian's

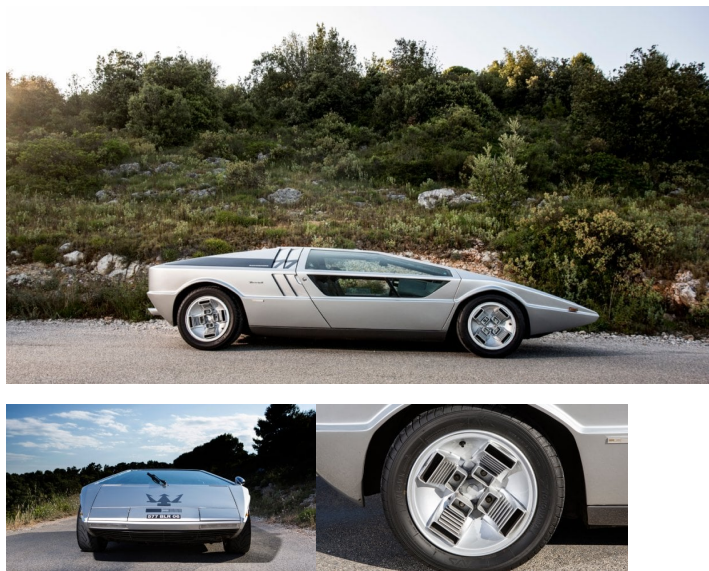
intention this time around was to push the limits of feasibility as far as possible. He'd had some practice, too, penning the Alfa Romeo Caimano and Iguana studies, along with the VW-Porsche Tapiro.

Suited to everyday use



Borrowing its 4.7-litre, mid-mounted V8 from the Bora, the Boomerang boasts a generous glasshouse with angular side windows and a remarkably flat windscreen that tilts by only 13 degrees. Rather than scissor doors or gullwings, however, the Boomerang's shallow doors are surprisingly conventional, being hinged on the side in the usual way. Giugiaro wanted the concept – unlike so many one-offs – to be genuinely roadworthy and capable of everyday use. This didn't prevent the car from being spectacularly innovative, with such touches as the steering wheel that appears at the end of a large cylinder emerging from the dashboard. Contained in the front face of the cylinder are the main instruments and switches – a design that primarily aimed to protect the driver in the event of an accident. With more than 300HP and a top speed of almost 300km/h, modern drivers would not be disappointed by the performance of Giugiaro's concept. One owner describes how, even after many years of ownership, he'd climb out of the Boomerang with a huge grin on his face – every time.

Inspiration for the VW Golf



The space-shuttle geometry of the Maserati Boomerang sparked enthusiasm and inspired many other car designs – as you can see all too clearly in the lines of the [Lamborghini Countach](#). Indeed, Giugiaro himself played with the potential of this form language, with both the [Lotus Esprit](#) and [De Lorean DMC-12](#) being variations on the theme – two models that, thanks to Hollywood ('For Your Eyes Only' and 'Back to the Future'), have achieved cult status. If, however, you look closely at the Boomerang, you can – with a little imagination – dimly perceive the shape of the successor to the [Beetle](#), the first [Volkswagen Golf](#). Part of Giugiaro's genius is that he not only mastered the art of creating dream cars, but the small, practical cars for the masses (such as the [Fiat Panda](#)) that also flowed from his pen.

A wedge returns





What did Giugiaro have in mind when he named his concept ‘Boomerang’? When you hurl this wedge into the wild blue yonder, it doesn’t return, surely? Yet, in its more than 40-year history, that is exactly what this unique car has done, time and again. After appearing at many motor shows in the early 1970s, it disappeared into private ownership and didn’t reappear until 1980 (a German enthusiast discovered it in Spain). At the 1990 Bagatelle Concours, it was reunited with its creator – where Giugiaro was delighted to leave his autograph on the car’s rear panel. Since then, the Boomerang has appeared (and won awards) at a great many world-class events, including Pebble Beach, the Christie’s auction at Rétromobile in Paris – and last year it was admired in Chantilly. And this year, the car’s current owner has decided that it’s time the Boomerang found a new, younger companion to continue its history. It will be offered for sale at Bonhams’ first Chantilly auction.

Photos: Bonhams

Gallery

