

# Orange appeal

*It's a Lincoln yet it doesn't look like something your typical 1950s fedora-wearer would drive. No, this is the Boano-bodied Turin showcar, and it tells a colourful tale*

WORDS Robert Coucher // PHOTOGRAPHY Dirk de Jager



IN THE FIFTIES America was enjoying a post-war bonanza thanks to its industry, which had burgeoned by supplying the international military machine. More jobs meant more money and a booming economy. But while the US was rich and vigorous, Europe, and especially Britain, was not faring as well – Prime Minister Gordon Brown finally paid the Americans back the British war debt as recently as 2006 – so the whole ‘export or die’ notion was in full swing.

Before World War Two, Italian styling houses had established themselves as the pre-eminent designers and coachbuilders and, by the 1950s, they were keen to offer their services to the ever-expanding American auto industry behemoths. Motown could churn out vast numbers of automobiles at affordable prices to satisfy the local market and, while some American styling was very adventurous and even outrageous, US manufacturers were keen to draw upon the Italians’ skill for their show cars. You can just imagine the Big Swingers in their ➔





boardrooms showing off to their alter-egos down the road at the next vast manufacturing plant. Like Cuban cigars, Swiss wristwatches, English suits and French furniture, the auto industry bosses just had to have a littl' ol' Italian styling house jumping to their demands.

And so it was: Chrysler had Ghia, Packard had Bertone and Hudson landed Carrozzeria Touring. On top of that Chevrolet was doing exciting things with its swanky Motorama events, with the original Corvette first seen in 1953. As for Ford, its pug-ugly Edsel series was a dismal failure thanks to boss Henry Ford II's styling interference, particularly with its very peculiar nose treatment. Although Ford was well-known for his taste in European design, he had a unique sense of automotive styling, so it is no real surprise he chose the somewhat obscure and avant-garde Carrozzeria Boano Torino to add a halo effect to Ford's upmarket Lincoln range. The result was rolled out onto the turntable of the 1955 Turin motor show – and this is it!

In 1955 young Gian Paolo Boano was in his early 20s but had been designing cars alongside his father Felice Mario Boano for several years, first at Ghia, then at Carrozzeria Boano Torino. By all accounts Gian Paolo was a bit of a playboy and enjoyed life to the full. As he later said, 'I have always lived with enthusiasm. I was able to fulfil all my desires.'

Sounds like he had life waxed, so having the *chutzpah* to produce a design concept for Henry Ford II was never going to faze the young Italian.

A friend of Boano had worked with the Ford Motor Company and he suggested that Carrozzeria Boano produce a car based in a Lincoln chassis for the Turin motor show. The Boanos were accustomed to working with overseas clients. When at Ghia they had enjoyed considerable success building show cars for Chrysler.

In 1955 Boano took delivery of Lincoln chassis number 58WA10902, and was charged with the task of producing a complete showcar in time for that year's Turin international motor show – the pre-eminent showcase for Italian coachbuilders.

The running chassis featured a 225bhp 341ci pushrod V8 with a single four-barrel carburettor, four-speed automatic transmission, independent front suspension with coil springs and dampers and a live rear axle with leaf springs and four-wheel drum brakes. What you might call a cooking specification, then... but not for long!

Named the Indianapolis, the project was typical of Italian coachbuilders of the era. It began with little more than large-scale sketches, sheet metal and tubing and that unsuspecting chassis. Clearly the jet-set age

had an influence on the outcome. The finished styling includes an extended drooping nose, which has no visible cooling air intake, and is flanked by vertical quad headlights and features a large chrome bumper. The front wings extend back into the doors and end with three shrouded chrome faux-tailpipes, balanced by tall air intakes in the forward edges of the rear wings with five chrome supporting strips.

The chrome wheels are half-covered by the curved wings and are shod with the obligatory whitewall tyres. The Indianapolis's stance is rakish, helped by the neat lowline hardtop roofline, with radically curved front and rear windcreens and even more chrome finishing strips.

Finished in correct and original nuclear orange, the coachwork is liberally covered in badges: the name LINCOLN adorns the nose, there are chequered flags on the front wings, and script on the hardtop proudly announces 'Exclusive Study by Boano Torino'. If you miss those, there are more Carrozzeria Boano Torino badges elsewhere, as well as others that proclaim simply Boano. Just in case.

The interior is a riot of colours, featuring the original-looking cream and black upholstery (another nod to racing's chequered flag), and the dashboard features a clever body-coloured cover that can be closed to hide the sci-fi

instruments. The slim steering wheel is huge in diameter and the gearshift lever is located on the steering column.

While not exactly beautiful or elegantly discreet, the Indianapolis is certainly striking and extremely futuristic for 1955. As a one-off show car it does its thing dramatically. The startling orange hue helps but this is one very arresting piece of kit. The Boano even made the cover of the November 1955 edition of *Auto Age* magazine, which asked the question: 'Is this the Next Lincoln?' These days, top-line concours events are well over-subscribed but, with the Lincoln Indianapolis Boano, entry has never been a problem.

Following its successful showing at the Turin show, the Indianapolis was then shipped to America and delivered directly to Henry Ford II. The urban myth is that he gave it to his friend, the famous actor Errol Flynn, but that cannot be substantiated. It passed through several hands before going into the 20-year ownership of well-respected Packard collector Thomas Kerr. He remains the Indianapolis's longest-term owner and was responsible for its resurrection after the car suffered fire damage and was partly dismantled following an incomplete restoration attempt.

Thomas Kerr finally got around to thinking about restoring the Indianapolis and, as is his wont, decided to do it properly, because he



Above and left Jet-age styling is a pure flight of fancy, featuring scoops and nozzles galore that do nothing except look the part; interior colour scheme nods towards the chequered flag; 225bhp V8 lurks beneath nuclear orange bodywork.





recognised the car’s significance. Kerr handed the project to his favoured restorer Jim Cox of Sussex Motor and Coachworks in Pennsylvania, the brief being to return the Indianapolis, ‘...to the way Gian Paolo Boano would (should) have built it in 1955, had he had the time.’


As you will understand, show-cars were built to last for the duration of a show. While they weren’t thrown together as such, they were hurriedly assembled to perform a singular, immobile function: looking good. Jim Cox’s task was made difficult because the Indianapolis was a one-off, so he had no frame of reference. It was also a very rushed job by Boano to get the car completed in double-quick time. The car had then been fire-damaged and a good deal of it arrived at his workshop in boxes. A serious challenge.

Two years later Cox had the Indianapolis restored to a better state than ever. Originally it had its bonnet release clamps constructed of Quaker State oil cans that were bent to fit and painted. The driver’s side wing was an inch-and-a-half longer than the passenger’s, the roof was askew and the bonnet misaligned. And lashings of lead-loading had been used to make everything line up. Half a 55-gallon drum’s worth, in fact! Jim Cox did a superb

restoration and now the Lincoln Indianapolis Boano is correct and on the button.

Under normal circumstances, you probably don’t really want to drive a show car, an automobile whose function is to park itself in prime position and look amazing. But this Lincoln was so improved, it took part in and completed the Pebble Beach Tour d’Elegance in 2001 and went on to collect top honours in the Post-War Custom Coachwork class. It won more awards at the Amelia Island Concours as well as the Greenwich Concours in 2003, where it received the Most Outstanding Lincoln award.

In the ownership of collectors Paul and Chris Andrews, the Indianapolis completed the 2013 Tour d’Elegance and was awarded the prestigious Lincoln Trophy when Lincoln was the featured marque at Pebble Beach.

Gian Paolo Boano had only five months to construct this car and he did a superb job of creating a fanciful, outlandish, exuberant and flamboyant showpiece. But the Indianapolis today is more than that. It is now a properly engineered and restored automobile that will be welcome at every great concours event. And you can even drive it there and back. The dilettante showgirl is now also a domestic goddess. Ah, of this dreams are made. 

BUY IT YOURSELF!

*The Lincoln is part of a collection for sale by RM Sotheby’s*

**THIS LINCOLN INDIANAPOLIS** by Boano is part of the Andrews Collection to be auctioned by RM Sotheby’s on 2 May in Fort Worth, Texas. Well-known auto enthusiast and collector Paul Andrews and his son Chris have amassed a superb collection of concours cars over the years. Their museum houses 100, all in excellent condition. But the Andrews have now decided that the maintenance of so many cars is too much and that it is time to slim the collection down to about 15 or 20.

‘When you get down to it, the most fun you can have in a car is using it how it’s meant to be used... on the road,’ says Paul. ‘We want to get down to a smaller number of cars that we very much enjoy driving and that we can take on events with the family. There are many events we’d like to try and, in order to do that, we need to focus on a more manageable collection.’

In total some 75 cars from the Andrews Collection will be auctioned, as well as a wide assortment of automobilia. Highlights of the sale include the famous Ethel Mars 1935 Duesenberg Model SJ Town car, a 1962 Ferrari 400 Superamerica SWB Cabriolet and an authentic 1963 Shelby 289 Competition Cobra. See [www.rmauctions.com](http://www.rmauctions.com).

1955 LINCOLN INDIANAPOLIS BOANO

**ENGINE** 5588cc ‘Y-block’ V8, OHV, four-barrel carburettor **POWER** 225bhp @ 5000rpm **TORQUE** 260lb ft @ 3500rpm **TRANSMISSION** Four-speed automatic, rear-wheel drive **STEERING** Recirculating ball **SUSPENSION** Front: double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers. Rear: live axle, leaf springs, telescopic dampers **BRAKES** Drums **WEIGHT** c1600kg **PERFORMANCE** Top speed c90mph

