

A genuine Porsche at heart

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11/01/2018 At first, Alexander Fritz had just a rusty car in front of him, its origin unknown. Through painstaking work, he reconstructed not only the daring origin story of the “GDR Porsche”, but also restored the car itself.

At first glance, it looks just like an original Porsche 356 – a curvaceous sports car model from the 1950s. Only on second glance do you notice that this “Porsche” has a special feature: It is 30 centimetres longer, with four seats. This “Lindner Coupé” is a replica of the 356, built by two automotive engineering students in the former East Germany. 13 “Lindners” were manufactured as a mini-series by a body work company with the same name.

We can thank Alexander Fritz for the fact that one of these cars not only exists, but still functions. The Austrian devotes his free time to the restoration of classic cars. Some years ago, a friend drew his attention to an example of a “GDR Porsche”. Fritz was initially put off when he looked at the condition of the rusted, rotten coupé. But the story behind the car without an origin and of the automotive

engineering students Falk und Knut Reimann was just too fascinating for him to ignore.

The story begins in the early 1950s: The twin Reimann brothers dream of having their own Porsche. They know that owning such a thing in the GDR is an impossibility and begin building themselves a “Porsche”. With some outdated military technology, plenty of resourcefulness and thousands of man hours, they screw, bend and beat their way to their dream car, supported by the Lindner body makers.

The centrepiece: The engine

At the heart of every Porsche lies its engine. Although it is pointless for the twins to try and obtain parts for a sports car in the GDR, they don't give up. On one of their first trips in their new car they travel directly to the Porsche plant in Zuffenhausen, where their Porsche replica is met with scepticism and a fair amount of ridicule due to its feeble engine.

Ferry Porsche learns personally of the brothers' visit to the plant, and at first is not especially pleased about this brazen Porsche forgery. However, after some initial scepticism, he is won over out of respect for the brothers' tenacity. Ferry Porsche makes sure that the twins' car is appropriately kitted out, informing them in a letter that used Porsche parts will be sent to them via West Berlin: With original pistons, cylinders and carburettors, the Reimanns' coupé doesn't just look like a sports car, it also drives like one – at over 130 kilometres per hour.

From 1954 onwards, the brothers tour across Europe with their specially designed Porsche replica. Their travels come to an end in 1961 as Knut and Falk Reimann are jailed for two years in the Stasi prison Hohenschönhausen, after attempting to flee the GDR. Their “Porsche” is taken from them and remains forever lost.

But thanks to Alexander Fritz's chance discovery, one of the original 13 Lindner Coupés has now been restored to its former glory – and consequently also the history of the Reimann brothers and their incredible DIY Porsche construction project.

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