

McGill News

The Most Beautiful Car in the World

Some people collect stamps or models," says Clyde Kwok, BEng'61, MEng'62, PhD'67. "My interest has always been cars. This is my hobby."

But aside from those philatelists hunting down rare and high-priced stamp specimens, Kwok's hobby is in a bigger league than most collectors ever dream of. The retired Concordia University professor of mechanical engineering has had an abiding love of Porsche automobile design since he was a young engineer, and over the past two decades has turned that appreciation into his own exotic car design company, the Montreal-based **Wingho Auto Classique**.

Kwok and his team design cars that would make Henry Ford blush, and their latest, the futuristic W3 Triposto, wouldn't look out of place if Batman himself swung in behind the wheel. As it is, one often finds Kwok's son racing his father's vehicles: Hugh Kwok joined in his father's passion when he decided they could turn a hobby into a business -- plus he gets to drive the coolest cars in town.

"My son is on the marketing side," says Clyde Kwok, "and he loves racing cars. He tests the cars for racing and he promotes them. We do club racing and vintage racing in Quebec, Ontario and in the U.S. Of course, for a father it's very gratifying to have a son who wants to work with you."



The Triposto is built on a Porsche 911 chassis, with a 1988 Porsche six-cylinder engine and a gearbox from the latest generation 915 series. Kwok and his team concentrated on design and aerodynamics, the engineering professor's specialty. Much of the chassis is rebuilt, however, and the sci-fi "skin" of the vehicle is painstakingly designed for maximum aerodynamic efficiency, but also for style, by some of Quebec's top young automotive and industrial designers recruited by Kwok.

The **Wingho** cars -- which include two earlier Porsche-based models, the Spyder and the Spexter -- have garnered high praise at exhibitions and in collector magazines, and the Triposto was named the "most beautiful car in the world" at a Toronto auto show.

The Kwoks build prototype models only, for shows and racing. One of their designs ended up in the movie *Black Moon Rising*, with Tommy Lee Jones. "Another film production last year in Montreal wanted to use the Triposto," says Clyde. "We were happy and honoured. But they said 'we need two cars -- one to crash.' I had to tell them we only have one.

"As a result, we're at a crossroads. If people want to crash our car, we could make it into a mould so we can reproduce them. But in building a car, you have immense liability. Some guy goes and kills himself and you can be sued for everything. This is something I don't want in my retirement. I'd prefer to continue building one-off concept vehicles that go on exhibition and eventually end up in museums."

If you absolutely had to have a Triposto, Kwok could perhaps be convinced to build one. But you'll need some serious disposable income: the prototype is insured for \$250,000. Kwok says it's hard to put a price on their cars, each one handmade, but buyers would be looking at \$100,000 minimum.

"A car like this certainly attracts attention," he says cheerfully.

