

Fun California Dune Buggies Remastered by Meyers Manx CEO & Designer, Freeman Thomas

Lynn Walford · Feb 14 2023



Meyers Manx dune buggies are back - remastered by automotive designer Freeman Thomas. Meyers Manx CEO, Thomas, reveals how he plans to revive the brand and the good times through new kits and the electric Manx 2.0.

Bruce Meyers created the Meyers Manx dune buggy kit in 1964, using Volkswagen Beetle parts and adding a sculpted fiberglass open-air body. The vehicles were pop culture icons - driven by Elvis and Steve McQueen. Meanwhile, Thomas grew up travelling the world, ending up a teenager in Southern California.

"I surfed. I would not call myself a surfer. But living in Huntington Beach, I had a lot of old Beetles, but I never had a Meyers Manx or a dune buggy growing up," says Thomas.

Thomas went to ArtCenter College of Design after a stint in the air force. He then worked designing for major automakers: Porsche, Volkswagen (working on the refresh of the Beetle), Audi, and left Daimler Chrysler in 2005. He retired as the Director of Global Advanced Design at Ford in 2017. Then he designed high-performance sports cars based on Porsche for RUF.

Thomas met venture capitalist Phillip Sarofim, owner of Trousdale Ventures, when he was designing for RUF.

In 2019, he saw a Meyers Manx in the Santa Monica Mountains.

"My wife, daughter, and I were up in the Santa Monica Mountains. We were coming out of one of the canyons, and I saw a Meyers Manx. I commented to them and said, 'Wow, you know, I'm still so smitten by this creation of Bruce Meyers,'" he says.

He called Sarofim, who suggested he phone Bruce Meyers who invited them to visit. They went to just talk to Meyers and the conversation shifted to buying the company.

"Bruce looked at me. He said, you are the only person I want to sell the company to. I think that he felt I would be very respectful to his legacy and history."

"I think he also felt very close to Phillip - both he and his wife Winnie because Phillip is such a kind soul and wants to do the right thing. And Phillip was a Meyers Manx enthusiast before we went down there," he adds.

It took a while to negotiate the sale to Trousdale Ventures in 2020, just before Meyers passed away at the age of 94 shy of his 95th birthday.



Remastering Meyers Manx Kits

After buying the company, Thomas became CEO. He began two projects, refreshing the Meyers Manx kit, the classic side of the company and creating the electric Meyers Manx 2.0.

He called the original Meyers Manx endearing with bug eyes and a smile bar in the front.

"There is no other concept or vehicle that makes you smile and is so playful, yet it is so serious," said Thomas.

"We wanted to take the original Meyers Manx and remaster it because it had a lot of issues and pain points with assembling. We did not want to change anything and how it looked in the size or anything. We wanted to change how it came together- so it is simpler and a better experience for enthusiasts and customers. We are now in production, and then will bring back all the parts and pieces that were available in the 60s, so you can build this time machine to be exactly the way it was and but better, much better," says Thomas.

The new kits are based on the original air-cooled Beetle engine and pan with a fibreglass body. The body is cast in a mould with a gel coat and solid colour or metal flake.

"It creates a super durable finish that lasts years and years and years. And we have original Meyers Manxes from the 60s with their original gel coat in beautiful condition," he explains.

He adds there is a newly available exhaust system, remastered from the original sidewinder exhaust from the 1960s.

There are more plans for future kits.

"We are going to reintroduce the Manxter kit - the four-seat Meyers Manx."



Manx 2.0

Thomas began working on the design of the Manx 2.0 electric before the acquisition.

"I shared images with Bruce. He loved it because he could see that as an industrial designer, the integrating of all the parts and pieces to make it a truly finished product all the way through and especially the rear," says Thomas

The Manx 2.0 does not have that Volkswagen motor hanging out the back anymore. There is now storage space. The electric motor is so compact and the weight distribution is better, he says.

"There's a lot of design solutions we had to come up with and even the taillights."

The tail lights are LED but maintain the look of the original. The Manx 2.0 has an aluminium monocoque chassis, independent suspension, disc brakes, three-point seat belts, electric steering assist, air conditioning and heat.

"It is going to have an optional hardtop and optional doors. You'll be able to drive it year-round. You'll be able to charge it at home or at most charging stations."

"We're doing everything to make the structure strong, because I want to be able to feel good about having my daughter drive the Manx 2.0," he says.



The California Lifestyle Legacy

Software is in development. In the production model, the gauge/screen will be wirelessly connected. It may have external cameras to record rides. The company will make sure everything is tested. It will be tested by DOT, EPA and CARB, he says.

"We have thousands of deposits already."

The Manx 2.0 falls under the Low Volume Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Act-- a maximum of 325 vehicles can be built a year. The company is still accepting \$500 deposits and the price has not been set for the final production models.

"We're going through the build and materials. With inflation and everything else, pricing is a moving target right now. We are figuring out at the right point when to announce the pricing, once we have figured everything out."

The company aims to create fun experiences and express the California lifestyle legacy.

"We're not going to create appliances. We're going to create human experiences and times that make us feel good," says Thomas.

He further muses, "Bruce Meyers was an innovator and a maverick. He really pushed the envelope. He created something so unique, so brand new, and we're in control over that. That's why it makes it fun. We have that legacy. It's the only true California vehicle brand. There have been other vehicles that have been built and created in California, but none expressed the California lifestyle philosophy and the pop culture that happens here."

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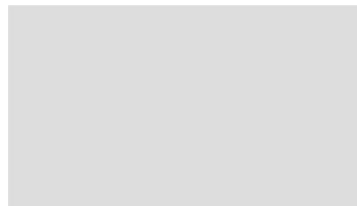
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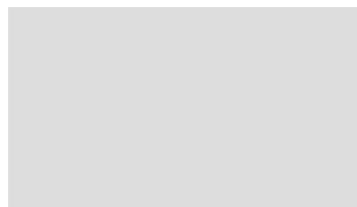
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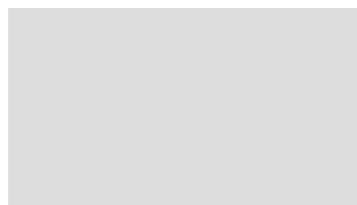
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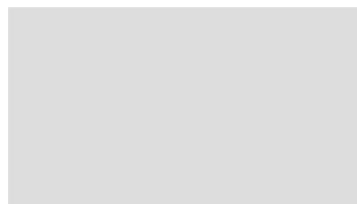
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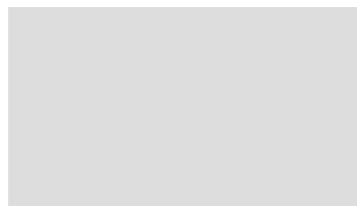
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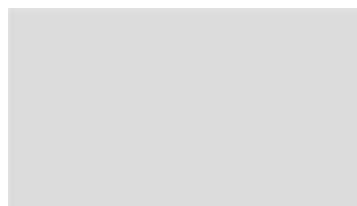
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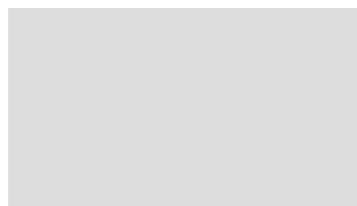
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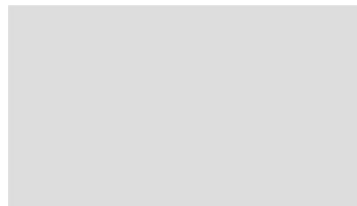
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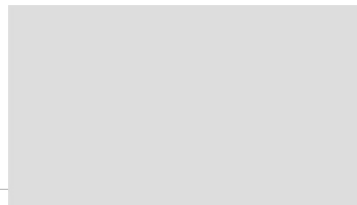
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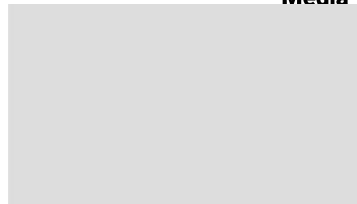
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