

Dymaxion: How the 30s car with its strange design changed the face of the entire car industry

A line of cars exists only three models, has greatly affected the evolution of the design background

If you've never heard of the name Buckminster Fuller, you've probably seen at least some of his work - the famous geodetic structure has been reimagined in many ways around the world.

Fuller is a versatile designer and inventor. In 1933, he created the first prototype of the Dymaxion car. A car shaped like a zeppelin and can run 50 km with every 4 liters of gasoline. Although the Dymaxion was not well known and little known, it created a revolution in design.

Fuller's philosophy of designing a Dymaxion lies in sustainability, technology and people-centeredness. According to architect Norman Foster, this is *"the focus of today's architecture"*.

"Bucky's impact is huge," Foster said, working with Fuller for a decade before he died in 1983. The Dymaxion has created a fan base of so many different types of people: people car enthusiasts, architecture nerds and environmentalists. The 2011 documentary, entitled *"The Last Dymaxion: Reviving the Buckminster Fuller Dream"*, has a lot of footage that fans are constantly praising for the aesthetics and heritage that the car leave.



The Dymaxion doesn't look like a normal car, especially when placed next to similar cars of its time. Large cars produced in the 1920s and 1930s were square and bulky. The reason for this difference is because Fuller envisioned the prototype (he purposely didn't call it "a car") not only able to move on land but also in the air and underwater. Oddly enough, it only has three wheels, a rear engine and a compartment big enough for a dozen people or a picnic inside.

This thrilling idea made the most famous people of American society at that time full of interest, including Amelia Earheart, Henry Ford and Isamu Noguchi. However, because of a scandalous accident that occurred in 1933 at the World Exhibition in Chicago, only three Dymaxions were created.

At that time, the press gave Dymaxion the name "monster car". Commissioner of South Chicago, because he wanted to see this "monster", he drove very close and unfortunately crashed into the Model One Dymaxion.

The car immediately flipped over, killing the driver and injuring the passengers. In the passenger there is a famous Scottish spy and a minister of the French government. Based on Fuller's design book, the commissioner's car was removed before the police arrived, so the Dymaxion was blamed entirely on the accident.



Fuller realized that the Dymaxion would need a lot of improvement before being mass produced. So he put the car aside and focused on other projects (including a Dymaxion-style house, bathroom, map, etc.). The Model Dymaxion Model Three was decomposed to recycle metal in the 1950s. Model One was repaired after the accident, but was soon set ablaze by another accident that occurred while refueling.

Form Two was thought to be completely missing, until 1968, when a group of engineering students in Arizona found it bare on a field. The farmer who owned Model Two bought it a few years ago for just \$ 1 and used it as a chicken coop for many years. He happily resold it for \$ 3,000 and earned a big profit.

Finally, the only surviving Dymaxion was purchased by tycoon Bill Harrah, who had a huge collection of exotic cars. Later his collection became a World Automobile Museum located in Reno City, Nevada, USA. Currently, the Dymaxion looks exactly like what Fuller had imagined. Over time, the museum has restored the chassis and curved panels, which have eroded over time due to neglect (and because of chicken droppings).

In the words of the museum's director, Jackie Frady, the appearance of the Dymaxion was completely revised: *"We are working on how it works, trying to imitate Fuller design, in the hope of being able to make it run again"*.

Norman Foster is much more fortunate than creating a Dymaxion version for himself. He successfully built one in 2011 based on the design of Model Two. *"The car is a very beautiful object. I really want to own it, touch it and admire its beauty like others enjoy a sculpture,"* Foster said.



Norman Foster inside the Dymaxion he built

Foster was so fixated on Fuller's design that he called his product the fourth Dymaxion, not just an imitation. *"Everything (inside the car) that had not been made since 1934, was recreated in the same manner and material that Bucky would have used at the time,"* Foster said.

At present, the Dymaxion may be just a collector, but its legacy has left a mark in the contemporary world. It has *"promoted research projects to design a new line of urban vehicles for the future,"* according to Foster.

The obvious similarity is that at Tesla, it has successfully merged traditional vehicle design with sustainable technology (Fuller's bold personality also clearly echoes on Tesla's famous founder Elon Musk.). Fuller 's Dymaxion project is *"in line with Google's current research on how to convert ordinary cars into manned vehicles , "* according to Foster.

Fuller's legacy is also evident on other three-wheeler projects. Like Zaha Hadid's hydrogen-powered Z-car, or the ill-fated Aptera electric car.

But the most relevant thing at the moment is Fuller's dedication to sustainable design. *"Bucky is one of those rare individuals who will influence the perspective of another's world,"* Foster said.

"He is an example of morality and conscience, always warning of the fragility of the planet and our responsibility to protect it . His initiatives still amaze people because bold thinking behind them. "

According to CNN

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