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THEODORE TR1/1-R

Allen Brown



FOR REVIEW

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THEODORE TR1/1-R

Teddy Yip made several attempts to break into Formula 1, and this car is the resurrection of his first ever F1 car, the Theodore TR1. The car was entered for Eddie Cheever at the first two races of the 1978 season but suffered problems at both races and failed to qualify. It was then wrecked in an accident prior to the next GP, and although its monocoque was rebuilt, it was not used again.

Some years later it was destroyed in a workshop fire in Italy, and the few components that remained have been used as the basis of the resurrected car currently being completed in Italy.



Eddie Cheever in Theodore TR1/1 at the 1978 Argentine Grand Prix.

DRIVERS

Eddie Cheever was born in Phoenix, Arizona, but his family lived in Rome when he was a child, and his first experience of motor racing was in Italy. In 1973, as a 15-year-old, he won both the Italian and European Karting Championships, and he made his Formula 3 debut in 1975, driving a Modus M1 in the British championship. He won two races that season, and was snapped up by Rob Dennis's Project Four Racing to race in Formula 2 in 1976. His March 762 was written off in an accident at Enna, but a replacement Ralt RT1 suited him better, and he ended the season with a pole position in a Brands Hatch Group 8 race. Staying with Project Four for 1977, he raced a Ralt RT1-BMW, and took his first F2 victory at Rouen in June. Moving into F1 for 1978 was premature, and he returned to F2 with Project Four for the 1978 seasons, then moving to Osella's F2 team in 1980, when he won three races. He moved back into F1 in 1980 with Osella, then moved to Tyrrell for two seasons, then Talbot-Ligier, Renault, Alfa Romeo, Haas Lola, and finally Arrows. After F1, he spent six seasons in CART, adding 82 starts to his 132 F1 starts. He then moved into IRL where he ran his own team, and won the IRL's Indy 500 in 1998, although the race had lost some of its prestige by this time due to the CART/IRL split.

Keke Rosberg only drove this car for a matter of hours, wrecking it in a test session at Kyalami. He was almost ten years older than Cheever, and arrived in Formula 1 by a much more circuitous route. He raced in karting in Scandinavia in his late teens and early 20s, then Formula Vee in 1972, before moving up to the European Formula Super Vee Gold Cup in 1974. He was very successful in FSV 1975, and moved another step up the ladder to Formula 2 in 1976, with the Warsteiner Eurorace team. Already 27, he did not seem destined for the top, but he proved very fast in Formula Pacific, winning the New Zealand series in 1977 and 1978, which led to the Theodore opportunity. James Hunt's retirement opened up a place in the Wolf F1 team in 1979, and Alan Jones' retirement in 1982 led him to the Williams team and an utterly unexpected World Championship. He continued for four more seasons, winning a total of five Grand Prix, retiring at the end of the 1986 season.

THEODORE

Teddy Yip was born Yap Tete Fong in 1913 in Sumatra, then part of the Dutch East Indies. He studied in Holland, before settling in Hong Kong before World War II, where he worked as a salesman, then known as Yip Tak Lee, his Cantonese name. After a spell in Vietnam during the war, where he met and married his wife Susie Ho, great-niece of Robert Ho Tung, once one of Hong Kong's wealthiest men. Yip, now known as Teddy, was a talented salesman and deal maker, helped by his mastery of 12 languages, and his fortune first grew while working in Burma in the 1950s. He and Susie moved back to Hong Kong in 1954, but a few years later Susie decided that she and the children preferred to live in England, leaving the now affluent Teddy free to pursue his dreams in Asia, one of which was a new-found love of motor racing.

Yip was a regular competitor in the Macau Grand Prix from the late 1950s onwards, but his profile would increase significantly when Yip and his business partner Henry Lee took over Macau's gambling franchise in 1962. Macau then boomed as a gambling destination, and some of Yip's casino-generated wealth was poured into a series of racing cars. Yip and Lee opened another hotel and casino in 1970, and Yip's racing exploits then spread further afield, racing in Australia, Singapore and the Philippines. It was at the Singapore GP in 1972 that he met Australian driver Vern Schuppan, and invited him to race at Macau. After Schuppan set pole at Macau, Yip funded him through the 1973 season in south-east Asia. Yip and his regular mechanic Ashok 'Ash' Vadgama created the first version of Theodore Racing in 1973, and backed Schuppan's British season in 1974, including racing the March 722 in Formula Atlantic, and racing Sid Taylor's Lola T332 in Formula 5000. Taylor and Yip immediately bonded over a bottle of Taylor's finest scotch whisky, and their partnership would last for the rest of Yip's life.

Not content with this rapid expansion of Theodore Racing, Yip then suggested Formula 1. Mo Nunn's struggling Team Ensign had just split from Nunn's partner and driver Rikki von Opel, and Yip provided the finance for Schuppan to take over the drive. The car was entered as a Theodore Ensign for Schuppan from the Belgian GP until the German in August, where Nunn and Yip temporarily fell out. In 1975, Schuppan focused on F5000, driving the Theodore Racing Lola in the UK series, and Taylor also took the car out to the F5000 Long Beach Grand Prix in September 1975, where Tony Brise impressed greatly in the car. At the Macau GP that November, Theodore Racing entered four cars, including a new Ralt RT1 for Schuppan, and the older March 722 for Australian Max Stewart. Schuppan won the Rothmans International Series in early 1976 in the Lola T332 for Theodore Racing, and Yip then backed Alan Jones in Formula 5000 in 1976, but the March 76A the team chose proved to be a disappointment. More success came for Theodore Racing at the end of 1976, when Schuppan won the Macau GP in Yip's Ralt RT1, at which point Yip expanded into Indy car racing, buying two old McLaren M16Cs for the 1977 Indy 500. Clay Regazzoni, who was racing for Ensign in F1 in 1977, was recruited for the Indy 500 project, but destroyed one of the McLarens in practice and was an early retirement from the race in the other.

Yip had also been entering the antiquated March 722 in Formula Pacific events in Asia in early 1977, and Formula 2 star Patrick Tambay won the Malaysian GP at Batu Tiga in April. With the Indy 500 project over, Yip turned his attention back to F1, and financed a new Ensign N177 for Tambay. Tambay was due to make his F1 debut in this car at his home French GP, but it was not ready in time so he was parachuted into the Surtees team, much to the annoyance of its jettisoned No 2 driver. The Ensign was ready for the British GP, so Tambay moved into that, and Yip eased Schuppan into the empty seat at Surtees. Tambay went very well in the new Ensign, comfortably outqualifying works driver Regazzoni at his first three races, qualifying seventh for the Austrian GP, and running in third place for most of the Dutch GP before running out of fuel with two laps to go. He scored five points, for two fifth places and a sixth place, equalling Regazzoni's points score for the season.

THEODORE TR1

After the constant upwards trajectory through 1977, the next step for Theodore Racing had to be to build their own car. The five points scored by Tambay in the Theodore Ensign were credited to Ensign, not to Theodore, so Yip's team would miss out on lucrative FOCA membership if it did not build its own car. The idea of Theodore running a F1 Ralt for Alan Jones had been mooted for 1977, before Jones went to Shadow, and that idea was now revived. However, this time it would be a Theodore F1 car, designed by Ralt's Ron Tauranac, but built and run by Theodore Racing.



Eddie Cheever in Theodore TR1/1 at the 1978 Brazil Grand Prix.

With the success of the Ralt RT1 in Formula 3, Ralt were in the process of expanding, moving into the former Brabham factory at Byfleet Road, New Haw in October 1977. Ralt's former workshop at Snelgar Road in Woking now became the new home of Theodore Racing, who were already hard at work on their F1 car. Len Bailey was brought in to run the design team in Woking, where the new car was fabricated. The first monocoque was built by Theodore mechanics at Maurice Gomm's nearby workshop. Given the great success of the Ralt RT1 design in junior formulae, it was no surprise that the Theodore TR1 followed the same lines. It was a highly conventional monocoque with water radiators in front of the back wheels, and an oil radiator in the nose. Suspension was outboard, which was rare by this time in F1, and the car did not impress F1 commentators, being variously described as 'craggy', 'bulbous' and 'tubby'.

New BP British F3 champion Derek Daly gave the car its first test at Goodwood on 16 December. On a bitterly cold day, Daly completed 60 laps and got down to a time of 1m 8.6s, regarded as very impressive given that it was his first experience of a Formula 1 car. Daly did not yet have the 'Grade A' licence required to race in F1, and rumours for the Theodore's driver in the opening race of the 1978 season in Argentina included Japanese hopeful Masahiro Hasemi, regular Renault driver Jean-Pierre Jabouille, Michel Leclère who had impressed in F2 in 1975 and 1976, and Jean-Pierre Jarier, who had recently upset his employers in the ATS F1 team. In the end, ATS patched up their differences with Jarier, and Hasemi's sponsor pulled out, so Eddie Cheever was chosen, the 19-year-old American having gone well in one of Ron Dennis's Formula 2 Ralt-BMWs in 1977. It was reported at the time that, as long as he qualified in Argentina, Cheever would break Ricardo Rodriguez' record to become the youngest driver to start a World Championship Grand Prix. However, he actually turned 20 a few days before his debut, so somebody had done their sums wrong.

In Argentina, Eddie Cheever suffered a multitude of issues, including a fuel problem, difficulties selecting second gear and then an engine failure after an oil plug came adrift. When the replacement engine was down on power, he had no chance of qualifying, and ended last but one on the time sheets, only Divina Galica's Hesketh 308E being slower. The car ran better at the Brazilian Grand Prix, but Cheever was unable to get the handling to his satisfaction, and again failed to qualify. This time he had two cars behind him: an out-of-sorts Vittorio Brambilla in a Surtees TS19, and Galica who was clearly out of her depth. Arturo Merzario's home built creation "Merzario A1", for all its reputation as one of the slowest F1 cars of all time, outqualified the Theodore comfortably at both races. After this, Cheever gratefully accepted the invitation to take over from Galica as No 1 driver at Hesketh.



Eddie Cheever in Theodore TR1/1 at the 1978 Argentine Grand Prix.

While Cheever had been struggling in South America, Finnish driver Keke Rosberg had been dominating the New Zealand Formula Pacific championship in one of Fred Opert's Chevron B39s. He had been expecting to race a Kojima in F1 in 1978, but that project had been dropped after Japan's GP was cancelled. Opert and Rosberg visited Woking in February, and a deal was agreed for Rosberg to drive the Theodore at the South African Grand Prix, and potentially for the rest of the season. A cracked bulkhead had been found on the Theodore when it returned from South America, and this was being repaired. Revised rear suspension was also fitted, the back end of the car was significantly stiffened, and a new nose section was added with a revised oil cooler.

There was a major tyre testing session at Kyalami the week before the South African race, and Rosberg immediately had the Theodore going much quicker. Like Cheever, he was throwing the Theodore around like a F2 car, but by the end of his second day of testing, he had recorded a time faster than the new Martini MK23, the new ATS HS1, and significantly faster than Cheever in the Hesketh. The car clearly was not handling as it should, but Rosberg impressed onlookers with his car control. Unfortunately, on the Saturday a brake pad flew out and Rosberg crashed heavily as he attempted to slow for Kyalami's notorious Sunset bend. The car mowed down three rows of catch fencing before hitting the barrier, but the final collision was described as a gentle tap. Nonetheless, the tub was badly bent, and Vince Higgins, back at Theodore's base in Woking, had to quickly complete the second monocoque and flew out with it to South Africa. It was built up by the team into the second TR1, chassis TR1/2, in time for the race weekend. Rosberg went very well in the new car in official practice, finishing the first session 19th fastest, but was unable to improve in the second session after his engine blew. He lined up 23rd on the grid, ahead of one of Rupert Keegan's Surtees, the Merzario and Cheever's Hesketh. The Martini and both Shadows failed to qualify, so it was encouraging progress for a small and still evidently disorganised team. A week later, Rosberg signed to drive the Theodore for the rest of the season.

RACE RESULTS

Event	Circuit	Date	Driver	Result
Argentinian Grand Prix	Buenos Aires	15 Jan 1978	Eddie Cheever	Did not qualify
Brazilian Grand Prix	Brasilia	29 Jan 1978	Eddie Cheever	Did not qualify
Tyre testing session	Kyalami	25 Feb 1978	Keke Rosberg	Accident

When the team returned to England, TR1/2 was rebuilt by workshop manager Alan McCall with what team member David Hanna recalls as “lots of gussets and doublers”. The damaged monocoque from TR1/1 was evidently rebuilt as well, but with the team only running a single car, it would not be needed again.

The next outing for the team was the non-championship International Trophy at Silverstone, where Rosberg again attracted praise for his outstanding reactions and ability. He was predictably much slower than the leading runners, but had the car in much the same company as at Kyalami, ahead of the new Martini, the Ensign, and most of the privateers. He qualified 11th on the 16-car grid but the weather had turned foul overnight and it was raining heavily when the F1 cars lined up for the race. Niki Lauda would not even start in the conditions, and pole sitter Ronnie Peterson elected to start from the pitlane. F1 debutant Derek Daly had now taken over the Hesketh drive and as wiser heads tiptoed round the opening lap, he rocketed past everyone and led until he hit a huge puddle at Abbey and skated off, losing three places. Four other drivers spun on that first lap, including Rosberg, but he was able to continue. Others soon exited, including highly experienced drivers Mario Andretti and Jackie Ickx, and by lap seven Daly was back in the lead with Rosberg now second. Daly was again going too quickly, unable to see his pit board telling him how much his lead was growing, and after four laps in the lead his race ended with the Hesketh embedded in the catch fencing. That left just five cars on the track, and only two, Keke Rosberg and Emerson Fittipaldi, were anywhere near each other. For the remainder of the 40-lap race, it was really just an opportunity to compare Keke’s flair with Emerson’s neatness. Emerson closed towards the end, but Rosberg kept his nerve and took a completely improbably victory.

So did this mean the Theodore was now a competitive F1 car? No, definitely not. With the arrival of so many new teams for 1978, the non-FOCA members had to take part in a “pre-qualifying” session prior to each Grand Prix, with only the quickest being allowed to join the FOCA members for official practice. At the Long Beach Grand Prix, Rosberg and Daly, two of the race leaders at Silverstone two weeks before, could not even get through the pre-qualifying session. At the next race, in Monaco, both missed out again, as did the Martini and the Merzario. Rosberg did pre-qualify in Belgium, but was slowest but one in official qualifying and went home without a race again. Hesketh withdrew from F1 at this stage, meaning only one car needed to be eliminated through pre-qualifying. At the Spanish GP, that one car was Rosberg’s Theodore, slowest of all in pre-qualifying, and Yip finally pulled the plug. Rosberg joined the ATS team at the Swedish and French Grands Prix while Yip negotiated the purchase of two 1977 Wolfs to run for the rest of the season. The Finn’s reputation remained undamaged throughout all of this: he was leading the North American Formula Atlantic championship, and won the Donington F2 race the weekend between his two ATS outings.

RETIREMENT

As the Hesketh 308Es were immediately snapped up for the British F1 series, it would have been a surprise if there had not been some interest in acquiring the Theodore TR1. The British series expanded in 1979 with continuing sponsorship from Aurora AFX, and significant interest was reported in Italy, where Giacomo Agostini and “Gimax” would be running Williams FW06s, and Lella



The two Theodore TR1 monocoques in Vincenzo Di Rosa's workshop.

Lombardi was rumoured to be putting together a team. Marco Capoferri was then racing an elderly Cosworth DFV-powered Lola T286 in Group 5 races, sharing with Renzo Zorzi, and he entered the opening race of the Aurora championship in what was described as a Ralt F1. While this could possibly have been an attempt to attach his own Cosworth DFV F1 engine to a F2 Ralt RT1, it is much more likely to be the Tauranac-designed Theodore TR1. A week or so later, Capoferri and Zorzi were reported to have tested the Theodore and a 1977 Wolf in Italy. However, nothing more was heard of the project.

According to Massimo Pollini's research, most of the assets of the Theodore TR1 project were bought by Maurizio Flammini via Cesare Gariboldi. Gariboldi was the boss of Genoa Racing, who was instrumental in the connection between March Engineering and Leyton House in the late 1980s, running the resulting F1 team until he died in a road accident in early 1989. Gariboldi had worked in F3 in the mid-1970s and his former chief mechanic Giorgio Gualino recalls a plan to update Flammini's ancient Formula 2 March 742 with Theodore parts. However, Gariboldi also worked as a consultant with other teams and it is distinctly possible that he was planning to run the Theodore for Capoferri in 1979, before a test session is likely to have shown up the car's lack of speed.

The Theodores were acquired from Gariboldi in 1980 or 1981 by Pierre de Siebenthal, a well-known collector of Ferraris and other cars, based in the suburbs of Lausanne, Switzerland. He sent both cars to Vincenzo Di Rosa, a

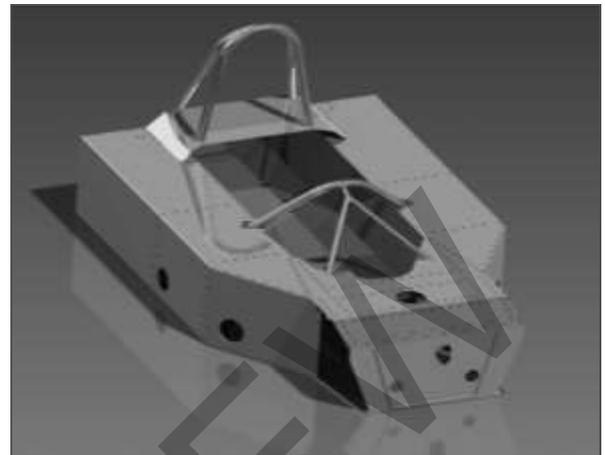


Two photographs of Vincenzo di Rosa's workshop, from which the above close-up is taken. De Rosa is the man who appears in both of the pictures. The wheels on the Formula Panda in the foreground date these pictures to between 1986 and 1989.

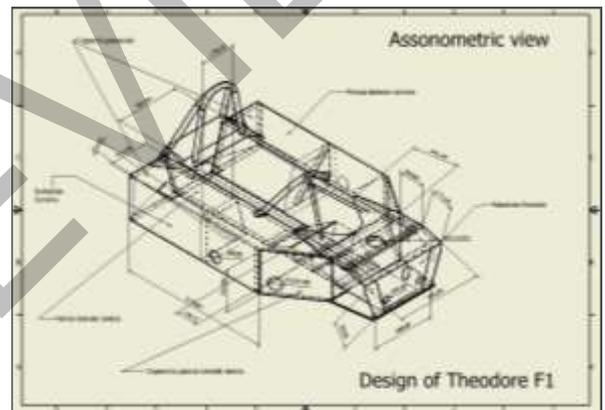
mechanic who regularly worked for him, to do the restoration. The two cars can be easily distinguished in the photographs here, taken at Di Rosa's workshop in the late 1980s, by the plates on the front of the monocoque to widen the front suspension pickups. The car on the left is TR1/2, as used by Rosberg from the South African GP onwards, and the other is the repaired and presumably reskinned monocoque from TR1/1, as used by Cheever in the two South American races. The earlier car was incomplete, and Di Rosa sent it to Autotecnica Conrero in Turin for assembly and to prepare the gearbox. There was later a dispute between De Siebenthal and Conrero over the bill, and the car remained with Conrero until a deal was done with Gianni Anzeloni to buy the car, and thus settle De Siebenthal's bill.

Anzeloni was an established collector of F1 cars, and the Theodore joined a Fittipaldi F7 and a March 701 in his collection. At a later date there was a fire at Anzeloni's workshop in Montichiari, and the Theodore was effectively destroyed, together with an Osella PA5 sports car. Other cars were damaged, including a Lola T290, which Anzeloni later sold to father and son collectors Flavio and Matteo Tullio. The Tullios also acquired all that was left of the first Theodore, but with the tub having been consumed in the fire, there really was very little to hand over. The second Theodore, chassis TR1/2 which was still largely complete, was sold separately, and by 2008 had been fully rebuilt and was being raced by Luciano Quaggia. A year or two later, Quaggia's mechanic, Mario Villa, also acquired the remains of TR1/1 from Flavio and Matteo, and these were sold on to Marco Fumagalli in 2016.

Fumagalli took the project to Massimo Pollini, a former Race Engineer at AF Corse and other F3000 and F3 teams, and now boss of restoration company Protech at Senna Comasco in northern Italy. Pollini had to first prepare drawings for a new monocoque, and based these on an engineering study of Mario Villa's sister car conducted by Alessio Fortunato, a post-graduate Mechanical Engineering student at the Politecnico di Milano in 2013-2014. Fortunato's work included a very detailed 3D model of the car. The construction of the monocoque was entrusted to a company based near Pavia that specialises in the restoration of Bugattis and other major marques. The monocoque was delivered to Pollini's workshop in April 2017, and work continued to build up the car over the summer.



Alessio Fortunato's computer model



Completed drawings of the Theodore monocoque.



Work continuing on the Theodore in October 2017

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

For a long time, this car was believed to have been destroyed in Keke Rosberg's accident in South Africa in 1978, and it was only when pictures emerged of the two Theodore TR1 monocoques side by side in Vincenzo Di Rosa's workshop did it become clear that its monocoque had survived. Efforts to complete the car then ground to a halt in a dispute over a bill, and then finally the car was destroyed by fire. Flavio Tullio acquired all that survived of the car, and although he never thought of this as "a car", it is clear that those few parts grant a degree of continuity to the new car currently being built in Italy, which can reasonably be claimed to be a resurrection of Theodore TR1/1, or at least its successor.

In 1987, Denis Jenkinson, the doyen of motor racing writers, wrote his "Directory of Historic Racing Cars", and in it he introduced a set of terms: 'Original', 'Genuine', 'Authentic', 'Resurrection', 'Re-construction', 'Facsimile' and others. His definition of 'Facsimile' is what we now tend to call 'Replica', a word reserved by Jenks for a Facsimile built by the original people or factory. This Theodore does not fit his first three definitions as it has not existed continuously, but he describes the case of a 'Resurrection' where "such components that still exist were gathered up to form the basis of a new car", and that "a new chassis and new body were required". This Theodore TR1 meets his definition and can rightly be regarded as TR1/1-R, the resurrection of TR1/1.

OWNERS

1. Theodore Racing (Reading, Berkshire) 1978
2. Cesare Gariboldi ([Genoa?], Italy) 1979?
3. Pierre de Siebenthal (Lausanne, Switzerland) 1980 or 1981
4. Giovanni Anzeloni (Brescia, Italy) [date unknown]

Then remains of car sold to:

5. Flavio Tullio (Padova, Italy) 2003
6. Mario Villa (Seveso, Italy) October 2009
7. Marco Fumagalli (Seregno, Italy) 2016

SOURCES

1. Motoring News (10 Nov 1977 p20)
2. Daly tests the Theodore (Autosport 22/29 Dec 1977 p7)
3. Motor Sport, Autosport, Sport Auto and Autocourse race reports 1978
4. Marco Capoferri enters "Ralt F1" at Zolder (Autosport 5 Apr 1979 p9)
5. Capoferri and Zorzi testing in Italy (Autosport 12 Apr 1979 p3)
6. David Hanna (Letters page, Motor Sport, September 2008, p38)
7. Bill of sale from Flavio Tullio to Mario Villa, 23 October 2009
8. Matteo Tullio (October 2017)
9. Vincenzo Di Rosa, via conversation with Massimo Pollini (October 2017)

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