

Cars That Matter Ep 30 – Jay Beaver, Embraer, and Designing Luxury Pt.
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Speaker 1: From CurtCo Media.

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Jay Beaver: To the theme of this podcast, Cars That Matter, from an industry insider and many automotive design individuals can tell you about the reams of paper thrown away that had incredible designs on them. In a sense, you have this very noble, sacrificial, beautiful design or car that could hit the road. But it won't be forgotten because that production vehicle that was slapped onto that front wheel drive drivetrain, when it should have been rear wheel drive, became something. But the original, the car that really mattered, wasn't seen.

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Speaker 1: This is Cars That Matter.

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Robert Ross: Welcome to Cars That Matter. I'm Robert Ross. This episode, we're continuing our conversation with Jay Beaver, vice president of design operations with Embraer Jets. So without further ado, let's dive in. Jay, you're an interesting guy because you're proof that talent and innovation can cross pollinate different professional fields. But let's start at the beginning, talk about cars. Where'd you start?

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Jay Beaver: It's such a fun story. I think there is something that can benefit a lot of people because sometimes we have a mentality that we can't do something if we're not trained or degreed in a certain skillset. In that regard, I always had a dream of being a car designer, automotive designer. It started because of my uncle, Ed Richter, and his wife, Kay. They own Studebakers, some very rare Studebakers, like the Rockne. Knute Rockne, the famous Notre Dame football coach, and that particular Studebaker in '32 and '33, had a version with a rumble seat. The back of the seat would open up and you could sit back there. Well, he owns one, in original condition. They still drive it to this day. And I remember as a child going to their home and peeking in the garage, and not only was the Rockne there, but hiding around the corner, three cars wide, a Commander and another Studebaker from '33, in disheveled but yet Al Capone, gangster-looking, need to be restored in the shadows, beasts. And it was awe

inspiring. And he had since restored that Commander as well. Beautiful cars, that led to a journey of understanding Raymond Loewy and his influence with the Starliner and everything else that he did, outside of automotive.

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Robert Ross: Everything from the Coke bottle to steamships.

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Jay Beaver: The example of cross industry design capability and how they can learn from each other. So those automobiles and being so enthralled with the shapes and the forms and the mysterious nature of them, of course, because they were stuck in a garage, was always a thrill. Being in the Big Three capital, Detroit suburbs, knowing some uncles that worked for the car companies. And my mother worked for Crane Communications, and she was a key line artist which was related to graphic design, but page layout for making magazines.

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Robert Ross: Back before digital publishing, back when we had to use razor blades and wax.

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Jay Beaver: I've got some razor blade stories. She would come home and I'd see articles, and the early days of graphic storytelling with pie charts and that stuff, before the Mac really did it well for us, I got to watch all of that. And it was all related to automotive. But the interesting thing was I liked building model airplanes, World War II model airplanes. Give me a B-17, B-29, B-24, I would wreck them, get another kit and build it again. Sometimes melt holes in the side of them, sink them to a bottom of a [inaudible 00:03:24]. So aerospace was like the carnal thing inside waiting to come out, but it was going to be cars. So I did, I ended up in the car business. I used to take my mom's tape from those key lining page layout days, with Exacto blades, and pinstripe my 1957 Chevy Matchbox car. And that was six years old, I'm playing with Exacto blades if you can imagine that.

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Robert Ross: Better than matches, I guess, but maybe not much.

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Jay Beaver: Those always stayed with me. So from a graphics, you can make something look different, to designing a car, all of it. It's really about transportation design and being thrilled with things that move. So that was kind of the

start of it, but I couldn't afford design college. I would have loved to have gone to CCS. I spent a couple of summer classes in graphic and other types of design, like pottery. Couldn't stand pottery as a kid, but I was learning Pottery out of Detroit. I'm like, "Oh, why am I being exposed to this?" But then there was an incredible community college in Macomb County there, outside Detroit, and they had a great drafting program. My opportunity to get into the Big Three was through drafting. Oh, this is great. Fell in love with it in high school, and now I can have a career doing this? So went into drafting, CAD Design, hired at Ford Motor Company in 1993, as an intern doing CAD computer-aided design drafting, and 3D modeling.

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Robert Ross: And that's when that stuff was really just coming on board, it used to be guys had to draw.

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Jay Beaver: Yep.

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Robert Ross: So you were at the forefront of that new technology in many ways.

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Jay Beaver: Going back to the drawing real quick, I think the thing that helps me the most, even to this day, is understanding what a French curve can do, and a large spline. One of my projects at the college was to create an A-body car, GM car, body side, and three different views, projecting the points in three different orthographic views and make the arc continuously perfectly smooth, accelerated curves where necessary in all views, so that you could inevitably put that on aluminum plates. That was a hard way to go, but it was fun.

So then we get into Ford and they had their own homegrown computer system called the PDGS. And that was done on these Lundy tubes that were tube TVs, really, with light pens and we'd stroke the light pens on the screen and rotate things around, and there's a little keyboard tracking our time. Talk about hours disappearing quickly when you're building things. I couldn't have thought I could have ended up in a better career because I'm making something from nothing into 3D and having it show up on the road someday. So I really liked that approach to design and design engineering, though I hadn't had the opportunity to go to an actual industrial design or transportation design school like you'd find in Pasadena Art Center or CCS.

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Robert Ross: 15 years at Ford, man, that is a long time. And that was just the beginning. But obviously you've met a number of fascinating people, some of whom we've had on the program, as well. Proof that it's a very, very small world, the automotive industry.

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Jay Beaver: Taking advantage of learning from people and making sure that you always feel that you don't know it all, I think is what was important for me because every opportunity to meet somebody new and find a new way of executing a design or dealing with a new personality, because interpersonal skills as well are quite a challenge, in any industry. You could be incredibly talented and maybe nobody likes you.

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Robert Ross: Artists can be some of the most difficult people in the world.

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Jay Beaver: Right. So you have to be able to get along with people too, because design is not always easily accepted. It has to be sold sometimes. And if you can't explain the benefits, especially in an OEM or corporate environment, then you might be stuck on door handles the rest of your life. Coming up with a design is more than just the beauty of it and what it does for you emotionally looking at it. It's also being able to convince others of the longterm and let's say tertiary benefits of it, not just the first read, "I'm excited. Now tell me more about it." And you got nothing. So it's a bit of a sales job as well at times, and it takes a lot of that. That's what I think happened, most importantly, was going from that CAD design, learning descriptive geometry, understanding how things look in three dimensions, even though they're only 2D, allowed me really to understand what any car could look like in any view.

And that ended up being quite a concierge assistance to those who are really good designers like Henrik Fisker, and Freeman Thomas and David Woodhouse that's at Nissan now. And I mean, all of these guys I had a chance to work with and I really cherish the ability to help them bring their vehicles to life. From that CAD arena, getting into the design studios, supporting three-dimensional CAD surface development design on the exteriors was where I found suddenly myself in the design arena I always thought I wanted to be in, I always dreamed of. I just took a different road to get there.

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Robert Ross: Proof too that design is not a single handed exercise. It's not necessarily a matter of Ferdinand Porsche, grandson of the old man, sketching a 9/11 on a cocktail napkin.

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Jay Beaver: It is teamwork. It's never only just one person and the more the teams can be celebrated, the more everybody has an opportunity to enjoy the career and the project that they're working on. That was always the case at Ford. Ford Motor Company is a good family company, very different than others in the sense that they attracted talent that was also talent that cared about people. It wasn't just a machine pumping out designs. And in that regard, we always felt like a team. And I think that's why maybe I felt like I was a designer because they always gave me so much authority and credit when certain things were done right that it really builds you up and makes you feel like you're a part of it, versus an indentured servant that must do as I tell you and disappear into the closet when I'm done with you, kind of a thing.

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Robert Ross: Ford really continues to have that reputation, whether it's that ethos of being a family company from day one, but it just got a note the other day, they top the automotive industry in a so-called brand intimacy study. So they beat out every other brand, even including some motorcycle brands like Harley Davidson and so forth. Ford was at the top. So it really proves that there is a real genuine sense of intimacy or family or something about that blue oval that really resonates with people, whether they work there or whether they're behind the wheel of one.

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Jay Beaver: Having lived that, I quickly realized when I joined Embraer, I'll skip ahead a little bit here, when I joined Embraer and found out Brazilians are very passionate. They're very family oriented also. And the company of Embraer has a lot of similar characteristics of that of Ford. Though it's not family owned, I think the overall national character and feel comes through that way. Prior to 2005, when the 2005 Mustang that was properly resurrected from the ashes of what it was in [inaudible 00:09:21]. We're in the design studios, they're building number two off of South field in Dearborn, Michigan. I remember that to this day, we were trying to figure out what should that Mustang be? We literally scanned a BMW 3 Series Coupe, machined it into clay, and then re-sketched, re-scraped manually in the clay

Mustang lines on a 3 Series BMW Coupe, because that smaller proportion was really what the original Mustang was. It was a smaller car. It wasn't a big car.

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Robert Ross: And by the way, that 3 Series was just the right size back then.

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Jay Beaver: Just right size, yep. I mean, the company is the Mustang. It is the F-150, it is Bronco, which we're now seeing today, the excitement coming back. So that program, I was leading the engineering design development team for the exterior modeling and interior modeling. So anything that they did in the clay, we had to reproduce it 3-dimensionally in the computer, re-machine it out with these big five-axis tourist mills, make sure that we did just as good as the clay modelers and then back and forth. And that's really the process. But the point I'm trying to bring up is, going through that amazing point in my life, being on the Mustang program and bringing it back, watching it change to the 298, which was the Lincoln LS platform. And the whole reason that that Mustang shifted from the smaller purpose to a larger body of vehicle was because of sharing top hats.

Let's put more vehicles on the underpinnings. Oh, by the way, the Lincoln LS is rear wheel drive and it's independent rear suspension. And it's not that bolt-in phony one that we have in the Cobra, today ON the Fox body. It's a true independent IRS.

Okay, so the car's going to get bigger now. So now it's Ford Thunderbird T-Bird size, because the T-Bird was also on that same platform. That's all happening in that same design studio. Oh boy, there was outcry. "The car is getting too big. It can't be this way." It wasn't about numbers anymore. People were passionate about the car, rightfully so. At Embraer, the reason I can make this correlation is when we redesigned the Phenom 300 interior to the 300E that we have today, that same passion came out. This is Brazil's pride and joy is Embraer, the enterprise of Brazilian aerospace.

It's the only aerospace company. It's not like the United States, we have many aerospace companies.

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Robert Ross: That's right.

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Jay Beaver: And the Phenom, the most delivered private jet in the world, small or large, this is their Mustang.

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Robert Ross: That's your 300E, is that right?

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Jay Beaver: That's the 300E, and they're passionate about it. But what happened, just like with the Mustangs that we see on the road today, or any of these cars that have a soul because they mean something, they're worth the investment, that Phenom became that. It became bigger than the mission because the individuals across the company working on it knew the Phenom needed to live up to its name, because it's not a nomenclature of numbers. It has a name. Phenom. It's LeBron James with wings. It should do something that others can't. It's phenomenal. You can't do less and then not have it be a Phenom. So it deserved and demanded the best.

And it is the best. It's an incredible airplane, but it takes a team, back to your earlier point. A lot of engineers, designers, executives that make the right decision come together to do that. So I think that's what's really exciting about the crossover between different industries is every industry has their queen. Like the 747 was the queen of the skies. That airplane has a history. It has a story behind it in every possible way, from starting as a cargo plane and ending up being a passenger plane, but has so much muscle and horsepower now it could almost do the speed of sound, because it's really over engineered for passengers.

I mean, there's so many cool stories, and that's what I'm hoping to bring out in our discussion today is some of these inside stories that a lot of people don't hear about, but yet are in and out of industries that we all work in. And also to encourage everyone to appreciate that there are talents and skills they have that may not even be appreciated in the industry they're in, but switch it to another one, oh man. Now you're a rocket scientist. You appreciate it a whole lot more. So really, really cherish the opportunities like that to cross over.

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Robert Ross: We're going to take a short break, Jay, but we'll be right back.

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Robert Ross: We're back with Jay Beaver. Jay, apart from modeling automotive exteriors, you've got deeply involved in the interior design process. You're a various authentically driven guy. As I understand it, you were able to bring a lot of those automotive interior design aspects, the language of auto interiors as it were, to the aviation industry. And you went to Gulfstream next, and I'm not exactly the kind of guy that flies private, but I've had an opportunity to hitch a ride on a couple of occasions. Well above my pay grade. But when I have, I've typically noticed that most of the aircraft private jets look like something out of a Sears and Roebuck furniture showroom. The aesthetic sensibilities are definitely not to the level of something as costly and as esoteric and refined as that jet would be imagined to be. I mean, the people owning and flying these jets are people who drive the finest automobiles in the world.

They know what a Bentley interior smells like, looks like, how a hinge works, how a glove box opens and shuts, what a door feels like. And then the poor devil gets in his \$10 million jet, he probably feels like he's slumming it. So it sounds to me like you were able to maybe bring a new kind of aesthetic sensibility to the whole private aviation arena.

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Jay Beaver: It's an inside out story. So at Ford, I was in the advanced product development studio in Irvine, California. And that was back in the days with Freeman Thomas and those guys, Henrik. One design director named Kris Thomason, He and I really got to befriend each other and appreciate each other's skill sets. And Chris was a really well-trained consumer product and graphic designer as well. So he really brought different spin to design than just the flame curves and the lines and all the stuff that we've always fallen in love with over the years. Gulfstream was looking for automotive design for their new program. Secret program, nobody knew what it was at the time, this was 2007. And they had contacted Kris and Kris had accepted the position and he had asked me to join him. So I'm like, "Okay, this is interesting. It's East Coast, I've got family over there, maybe that could be a good move too. But I love planes, I was building them as a kid. This might be the transition I was looking for."

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Robert Ross: And by the way, Gulfstream isn't exactly chopped liver.

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Jay Beaver: No. So I went with Chris, they listened to Chris

and said, " Yeah, we should bring Jay on too," So I joined and he and I were given a SEAL team six, so to speak, from internally. And they said, " We are soon to announce the G650. It's going to be our new flagship. And we know we need to do something different. It can't just be a G550 interior, grownup and fatter inside of a 650. There's something missing, and we don't know what it is." That's what it was. We're going to bring automotive design, but it's not going to be making a car interior inside of an aircraft because an aircraft interior is environmental design. It should feel like furniture. It should look comfortable and it should not be taking your attention away from conversation, relaxation.

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Robert Ross: And plus, it's got a whole load of regulations and certifications that make it pretty complex equation, huh?

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Jay Beaver: And that turned into the secret sauce for me because I spoke the engineering language. I knew how to make what they wanted happen and I didn't need their support. So I could convince them sell on the design because I had already figured it out three- dimensionally and figured out how to put it together, and they appreciated that. So the execution of automotive, when someone says, " Oh, I need automotive design in an airplane." What you need is craftsmanship. You need the tooling. You need the execution of automotive, which is so good, but you still want to feel like an environment. And there's a lot you can do with that. Rather than building the interior out in XYZ crate cabinetry type designs you might find in any cabinetry shop, we're going to use tooling. Let's cut three- dimensional tools and create carbon fiber substrates with shape to them, that flow and compliment, that are gapped properly. And then when you're sitting in this aircraft for 10 hours, 12 hours, rather than being underwhelmed by the fact that you can see parts behind parts, or hinges that look like piano hinges-

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Robert Ross: Or worse yet, hear them squeaking together.

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Jay Beaver: Exactly, because they haven't been gapped properly. All of that stuff meant something to Gulfstream because they were an engineering company. Aerospace is engineering. As much as they're sexy, beautiful shapes and styles and designs, that's needed for airflow and aerodynamics and lift and all that good stuff. But on the interior, it's really about how things go together properly in a low volume tooling

environment. Which is another thing from automotive I was able to bring over is I've met a lot of the companies in California, like Metal Crafters and Aria, these companies that are masters at creating high-volume tooling look and low-volume cost in toolings. We use very much a show card kind of a build process for tooling in aerospace for these interiors, and it's worked magically.

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Robert Ross: Well, obviously it worked well enough that Gulfstream delivered what I guess remains one of the private aviation flagships, their 650, and gave you an opportunity to move to an even greater set of challenges with Embraer.

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Jay Beaver: That was a special day. It was disruptive because I really liked working for Gulfstream. It was the cream of the crop and the longest, farthest flying, fastest jets and all that good stuff. But we were always intimidated by Embraer, and that was because Embraer started the transportation industrial design revolution within private jet aerospace because they went off and hired BMW design works in the early 2000s.

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Robert Ross: I remember seeing that prototype interior. In fact, we had [Verina Cluse 00:18:45] on the program early on. Again, proof that it's a very, very small world in the design community. That was a bold move to hire an independent third party design firm to tackle that challenge.

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Jay Beaver: Very smart move too, because they were breaking into a piranha infested market. When you talk about customer loyalty, oh man, it's hard to break somebody out of their private aircraft ownership because you have a flight department involved. You've got maintenance departments involved. You've got stockpiles of parts in your hangar involved to service the airplanes. It's a crossover that costs a lot of money, and you have to re-type certify your pilots to do a new platform. So here Embraer was coming out of Brazil, successful commercial aircraft, 80% of the world regionally is flying on Embraer products and they don't even know it, and they're about to break into the secret world of private jets and try to take on the gorillas.

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Robert Ross: It's like trying to take over the Jack Daniels market.

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Jay Beaver: Oh, yeah. The F-150, the loyalty is there. So having BMW support them with that design was very appropriate because it gave them a cachet, gave them a label. "Okay, this private jet from Embraer is Phenom, is going to be built like a BMW. Interesting. All right, that's a change. It's not the OEM's cabinetry shop. It's an outside design company that we all appreciate." And it got them a lot of attention and it was a right thing to do. Well, that attention got Gulfstream thinking, and that's why Chris and I ended up at Gulfstream was because they were going to do the BMW thing again, or Nissan Design America I believe they quoted with, and they realize, "No, we want this internal because if we hire the consultancy, the consultancy knows what we're doing and therefore our intellectual property and our ideas won't be as much of a surprise, and maybe some of the stuff that we do in a joint development way ends up in somebody else's hands because we don't own it."

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Robert Ross: And it's inevitable that that happens anyway, because people are working on multiple projects at once. It's like when Pininfarina used to work with Ferrari and Maserati and any number of other car makers, all these departments have been brought in-house now.

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Jay Beaver: And there's value to that. It provides an X factor. If you're sure of what you've got and that you can do it better, and leveraging the talent and the knowledge within the company to create an X factor, you don't need to have a consultancy because you know what to do. That's what Embraer wanted. Now they knew what it was like to design through consultancy, and that's a hire and fire process. BMW was not involved when I joined the company because they were already gone off doing something else. What happened was engineering took over and, bless their hearts, they made a great engineered product. But when you don't have the design policemen involved to help nurture the changes that come, because the changes do come, it's called joint development. We need to see what those changes are, and then go back to the drawing board on some of those and readjust it so it works with the theme and create the plan, versus cutting a hole and sticking something in there to resolve it. Though it's very robust and strong, it's not part of the design. So it became somewhat disconnected. They opened up a position to find a vice president of interior design, and an executive recruiter contacted me and told me about the position. I met with Embraer and quickly found out that they really had an ambition to do things different and were

passionate for design. And really, it's rare that you end up with a leadership team position as a designer. We're usually shunned. We don't need any free thinkers here. We don't need out of the box thinking here.

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Robert Ross: I've seen how a lot of the automotive OEMs treat their designers. Sometimes they don't even want you to publish their name. I mean, these guys, they don't want to make them superstars because they could be superstars. That's why so many of these guys end up on their own, they eventually jump ship and say, "You know what? I'm going to start my own company."

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Jay Beaver: In that regard, rather than start my own company, because there's a whole bunch of other stresses there. "The grass is greener on the other side." Well, you don't know the water bill. And then you find out if it's not so ... the wrong green is being grown, we're losing the other kind of green that we want to hold on to, [inaudible 00:22:20]. And some people do it very successfully. Like Eddie Sato, Sato Studios. He's fantastic, and he's a great friend and has done incredible things. So that relationship found itself coming to life at Embraer, so when I joined Embraer as VP of Interior Design, in a leadership position that comes with some authority, to be honest. And when you have an idea, not that you're yelling at people and being a tyrant, but when you want to sell an idea, it kind of helps when you're up on top.

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Robert Ross: That's right.

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Jay Beaver: So some of these ideas were a little bit easier to push through, but they were ideas that Embraer appreciated because it's also an engineering company with the family spirit of Ford, and a passion for design, and a history of doing things first that nobody knows about because they haven't marketed well enough. So here I saw marketing opportunities. We can design something fresh. We're going to do it internally. We've got resources. Call the world's best aerospace engineers that have come out of a country that should not be making airplanes because perception is reality, and Brazilians should not be making airplanes, the Europeans and the United States should be making them. Germans shouldn't be making Porsches because Germans aren't sexy, but Italians are, so Italians ... all those perceptions could be busted, which is called opportunity, and the ability to form

a team and have things that really need change and help, but can apply all of these things I learned from Gulfstream and Ford and the auto industry and drafting and CAD. It all came together. It all came together. It's been a wild ride.

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Robert Ross: What a great story, and obviously the ride's not over. We're going to take a quick break, but we'll be right back.

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Speaker 1: A Moment of Your Time. New podcast from CurtCo Media.

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Speaker 4: Currently 21 years old, and today [crosstalk 00:23:50].

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Speaker 5: Felt like magic extended from her fingertips down to the base of my soul-

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Speaker 6: You have to take care of yourself because the world needs you and your [inaudible 00:23:57]-

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Speaker 7: Trust me, every do-gooder that asked about me was ready to spit on my dream.

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Speaker 8: Her fingers were facing.

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Speaker 9: You feel like your purpose and your worth is really being crushed-

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Speaker 10: Going to stop me from playing the piano.

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Speaker 11: She buys walkie talkies, wonders to whom she should give the second device.

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Speaker 12: Pets don't love humans. We never did. We never will. We just find [crosstalk 00:24:12].

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Speaker 13: The beauty of rock climbing is that you can only

focus on what's right in front of you.

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Speaker 14: And so our American life begins.

00:24:21

Speaker 1: We may need to stay apart, but let's create, together. Available on all podcast platforms. Submit your piece at CurtCo.com/AMomentofYourTime.

00:24:29

Robert Ross: We're back with Jay Beaver, Vice-President of Design Operations with Embraer Executive Jets. Of course, I'm dying to find out some of the secrets from your automotive past, some of the cars that never quite made it out of the nest or never hatched out of the egg. Are there any stories you can tell there?

00:24:49

Jay Beaver: I'm glad you asked because to the theme of this podcast, Cars That Matter, from an industry insider and many automotive design individuals can tell you about the reams of paper thrown away that had incredible designs on them, but it was the right car for the wrong time. And it didn't see the light of day, but then became something else, inspired something else that did hit the road. So in a sense, you have this very noble, sacrificial, beautiful design or car that could hit the road. But it won't be forgotten because those who know that production vehicle that was slapped onto that front wheel drive drivetrain, when it should have been rear wheel drive, became something. But the original, the car that really mattered, wasn't seen.

There was a lot of Lincolns in my past when we were working with the Lincoln design teams there in Irvine, California, with Marek Reichman and David Woodhouse. Marek.

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Robert Ross: Yeah, he's at Aston Martin now, doing some great things.

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Jay Beaver: Yes. Gerry McGovern, head of Land Rover Design as well. He was Marek and David's boss, and I learned a lot from the British sensitivity to style and luxury. And we had some really good Lincolns. They had come up with some really good rear wheel drive Lincolns, but the decisions internally, for the right reasons of carrying over engineering and platforms and drivetrains, turned into, "Well, we own Volvo Car at the time, Volvo Car company. Well, I think the D-platform from Volvo, the S80, would make a better

underpinning for the new Ford Taurus than something else, or for a new Lincoln MKS." No, we clearly had concept vehicles out of these Lincolns, but there were other Lincoln designs internally that never saw the light of day that became the sacrificial inspirations for what inevitably ended up on, let's say, the wrong bones.

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Robert Ross: Sure. I understand.

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Jay Beaver: The one that I'm very fond of is, there's a designer at Ford named Bernard. Bernard was incredibly talented. He sketched up a little B- car, back in early 2000s. Of course we were in love with the Mini Cooper, that retro- infused reinvention.

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Robert Ross: Sure. Frank Stephenson's design. That was really a brilliant interpretation of the original Mini.

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Jay Beaver: And Freeman Thomas with the Audi TT. When Freeman came into the studio, we got to talk about that and learn with him. And in that timeframe with Freeman, and prior to Freeman, was Henrik Fisker. Bernie, we called him, came up with this really cool ... we call it the B- rod. Remember the monitor and the Merrimack, the very first summary had this.

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Robert Ross: Of course, yeah.

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Jay Beaver: And the union side had this submarine and it had that three box look, had a little turd on top, and then the front back. Well, Bernie had created this bold little B- car that was better than a Mini Cooper and better than ... it's hard to say, because it wasn't retro of anything. It was unique. It was bold, it was exactly what Ford needed, because at the time there was a European influence coming in and the Ford Focus turned into a Fiesta, and it's a B- car for Brazil, and it's got all these weird, crazy fast ... they called it flame design lines.

And we're like, "No, this can't be, we need the B- rod that Bernie has been sketching." So we went through and we modeled it out for him without permission from anyone, the design engineering team. We worked with Bernie and actually rendered out and executed this incredible B- car on platform, on chassis, new top hat, carry over underpinnings. It was

okay, because the way it was rounded off on the front, from the top it had a pill shape with some nice flares coming off. So it wasn't just a perfect square and top view, like most cars are. And inside, there was a three box design. We had a two door, we had a four door, modular removable panels, fenders and quarter pounds would be pulled off and customized with new different fender panels and quarter panels. We built in all the weld joints and everything you can imagine. Because we thought, "Okay, if we can't get the design pushed through, maybe because it's already engineered, they'll think they have no choice."

So, Peter Horbury, at the time another great design lead I worked for. Peter was in charge of Volvo cars, I think, and he still carried over with Volvo into when the Chinese owners bought it. But Peter liked it as well. We had the chance to present it to him, but it was too late. The decisions had already been made on the other vehicle, but that car mattered because it proved that with the right amount of energy, you can get people to do things, and you don't have to tell them to. Like that Mustang project, like that Phenom 300E project. When it's right, it's right. But sometimes they don't make the light of day. I think Pixar should make another Cars movie about all the cars that matter, that nobody got to see, and bring them to life in this sort of [crosstalk 00:29:07].

Ooh, we got to be a magic fairy tale. I'd love it. A fairy tale for adult car lovers.

00:29:12

Robert Ross: Exactly. All the cars that were meant to be finally get the light of day and end up on the Hollywood screen in an animated satire.

00:29:19

Jay Beaver: Jay, it sounds like you had an awful lot of fun at Ford and in the car business, but it sounds like you're having maybe even more fun now expanding the reach and breadth of your design sensibilities and doing it with a company that gives you the latitude to really explore some uncharted waters.

00:29:34

Robert Ross: It is. I think if more companies open up, like the tech companies in Silicon Valley, they get a lot of credit for being very liberal with their employees and nourishing creativity and having what is not so much a corporate life. Even companies that are very engineered and deliberate because they have to be for safety reasons, like Embraer, there's a lot you can do with your employees. And even if there's not a program in place to do something,

good leaders can inspire their people to come up with stuff on their free time even, or if there's some dead time in between programs.

00:30:01

Jay Beaver: Isn't it true? Some of the best ideas have come out of the skunkworks, so to speak. I know the Lamborghini Miura was basically a project that the Lara and (Stanzani) and Bob Wallace put together when the old man wasn't looking. And they took it to him and said, "We have to build this car." It turned out to be Lamborghini's most important car ever.

00:30:17

Robert Ross: And the surprise and delight of a team of people who weren't expected to come up with something incredible, because they weren't the sexy SEAL Team Six, skunkworks team. They're just really talented people that want to prove that they can do something different. And there's so much of that unleashed talent sitting in these cubicles around this country and in these businesses that are waiting to have an excuse to do something amazing. So let them loose, come up with stuff. Most are working from home right now, and if the future is working from home a lot, then there's maybe some extra time to do some neat things.

00:30:49

Jay Beaver: This is really a great conversation and obviously an open invitation to come back and join us anytime, because I have an idea that you'll have a lot more to talk about in the coming year. Look forward to having you back on the show. Jay, thank you very much.

00:31:02

Robert Ross: No, thank you, Robert. It's been a pleasure.

00:31:05

Jay Beaver: Come back next time as we continue to talk about the passions that drive us and the passions we drive.

This episode of Cars That Matter was hosted by Robert Ross, produced by Chris Porter, edited by Chris Porter, sound engineering by Michael Kennedy, theme song by Celeste [inaudible 00:31:31], additional music and sound like Chris Porter. Please like, subscribe, and share this podcast. I'm Robert Ross, and thanks for listening.

00:31:44

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