Roarington

Antonio Ghini in conversation with Fritz Kaiser

About Petrol-Heads, the Metaverse, and the Future of Classic Cars

Antonio Ghini: The F1 Business Magazine honored you in their December 2023 edition as one of the world's top 20 petrol-heads—alongside famous figures like Lawrence Stroll, Bernie Ecclestone, Jay Leno, Ralph Lauren, and Patrick Dempsey.

We've known each other for about a decade, and I think you're not a typical petrol-head. You're a successful entrepreneur, investor, and philanthropist. With your Fritz Kaiser Group, you manage a business portfolio that includes a private bank, a renewable energy development company, real estate, and now you're developing a digital classic car world. Not to mention, you are a family man, a sportsman, a lover of design, art, and cars, a networker, and a futurist.

Let's start by talking about your earlier life and how this all began. You participated in the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games as an athlete in judo. What impact did that experience have on your professional life?

Fritz Kaiser: Participating in the Olympics is a dream and an incredible honor for any athlete. Judo truly shaped me in my early life and taught me some key lessons for both my personal and business life. You need goals and the discipline, focus, and hard work to achieve them. Your opponent may bring you down with an unexpected throw, but you must get back up and refuse to give up until you win. When you win, show humility, and when you lose, do so with your head held high, remaining confident.

Never giving up, staying grounded in success, and facing setbacks with resilience—these are qualities sports teach you. Success isn't just about strength but also about foresight, strategy, and staying focused under pressure. These are lessons you can carry into every aspect of life.

Antonio Ghini: In the 1990s, you were partners with Peter Sauber and Dietrich Mateschitz in the Red Bull Sauber Petronas Formula One team. You were a shareholder and Chairman of the company, playing a crucial role in securing sponsorships from Red Bull and Petronas—brands that are now giants in the global Formula One business.

Under your leadership, Sauber introduced the concept of manufacturer engine supply in collaboration with Ferrari, with the engines badged as Petronas. As someone with a background in finance, how did you find yourself in such a pivotal role in Formula One?

Fritz Kaiser: When Peter Sauber asked for my assistance during a critical moment for Sauber's future in 1995, I was able to convince Dietrich Mateschitz to join the team and create the Red Bull Sauber Formula One team. Dietrich had one condition—that I take responsibility for securing additional sponsors to fund the team. What really mattered in

this situation was building trust with both existing and potential business partners and developing a shared vision of what we could achieve together.

Formula One is both exhilarating and incredibly demanding. In the 90s, private teams still played a significant role, and there was one impresario—Bernie Ecclestone—who orchestrated the entire show. The pressure to innovate was relentless; every week, the car had to be improved just so it could perform at its best come race weekend. With global media constantly watching and reporting, staying calm under pressure was essential.

Formula One has always been a high-stakes venture—an exciting journey where people and brands come together to be part of a thrilling success story, driven by cutting-edge technology and larger-than-life heroes. This was a time in my life that I truly enjoyed, and it's gratifying to have left a small footprint in the world of Formula One.

Antonio Ghini: Do you remember when the young Finn, Kimi Räikkönen, was invited to test with your team and even managed to impress Michael Schumacher?

Fritz Kaiser: Räikkönen's manager recommended him to our Formula One team, and it quickly became clear that he was incredibly fast. Yes, it seemed even Michael Schumacher was impressed by the young Finn. Peter Sauber was responsible for selecting the drivers, and he signed Kimi for the season. That marked the beginning of Kimi's incredible Formula One career.

Antonio Ghini: You left Formula One in 2000 to focus on your other businesses, leaving the "Red Bull Sauber Petronas" team in a strong financial position. In an interview, you once mentioned that while running your finance business, you felt something was missing. Not long after, you fell in love with old cars, started collecting, and racing them. In 2013, you and Birgit even won the Morocco Rally with the Mercedes 300 SL Roadster. That was also the time when you founded The Classic Car Trust. Was this the result of businessman Kaiser or passionate Fritz?

Fritz Kaiser: I'd say it was a combination of both. The businessman in me understood that the market was going through a significant transition and needed support to ensure the continuation of this great story. At the same time, my personal passion played a big role in the decision to create the not-for-profit TCCT, The Classic Car Trust, to help provide the classic car world with a sustainable lifeline during a time of rapid change and generational shift.

Antonio Ghini: As the passionate Fritz, you've driven the Mille Miglia several times, in your Porsche 550 or your Gullwing. Once, we did it together at your invitation—me, with my wife Cristina, in the wonderful Lancia Aurelia B24 Spider America from your collection. It was a magnificent experience. I believe the Mille Miglia is your favorite race...

Fritz Kaiser: Enzo Ferrari called the Mille Miglia "the most beautiful race in the world" and "the people's race." It truly is something special when thousands of kids, grandparents, and Italians cheer from the sides of the roads and through towns as you pass by. This "rolling museum" of tradition is simply unique and, yes, a favorite event. We look forward to collaborating with them again for the good of these wonderful cars from yesteryear.

Antonio Ghini: We both share a deep respect for automotive history as a valuable cultural legacy of the last century, one that deserves a fair future—much like the arts. You

entrusted me with the responsibility of serving as Chief Editor of TCCT's publication, The Key, and together, we aim to give automotive history and passion a lifeline in the new information age, as we experience a generational shift. This journey has led to the creation of Roarington—the classic car MetaLand. Let's talk about how it all began.

Fritz Kaiser: With the annual publication The Key, we share our market analysis and forward-thinking insights with the collector and business community. Many of our friends eagerly await each new edition, featuring the top 100 collectors, market insights, and unique feature stories. The Key has become a highly recognized publication, and you should be proud of what you've accomplished as Chief Editor.

Through the TCCT Forum, we bring together collectors, industry leaders, and experts to discuss the future of classic cars. The World Economic Forum in Davos, where I was a member for about 15 years, serves as the role model for these gatherings. In 2019, we held our Forum at the FIA headquarters in Paris, co-hosted by its president Jean Todt, where we concluded that we need to "promote old cars with young people." Since then, we've explored eSports, the emerging metaverse with digital twins, and, more recently, developments in AI.

Today, we have the most stunning high-tech simulators designed by Pininfarina and Zagato, allowing people to drive digital twins of dream cars from yesteryear on iconic tracks and scenic roads. You can drive for fun, in training sessions, or compete with friends. And with Roarington, we have created a digital overlay of the real classic car world, where you can explore, race, and experience the joy of these classic machines in an entirely new way—bridging the past and future of automotive passion.

Antonio Ghini: There was significant technological development behind Roarington before the platform launched in mid-2023. How has it been received, and what business success have you seen so far? And looking ahead, where do you see Roarington in 10 years?

Fritz Kaiser: Roarington has been very well received, especially by classic car enthusiasts who appreciate the fusion of heritage and cutting-edge technology. In 2023, we welcomed Pininfarina and Zagato into the digital world of Roarington. We also partnered with MAUTO, the Italian National Car Museum, to showcase important cars in the Roarington Exhibition Center and offer new experiences at their museum in Turin using Roarington simulators. By 2024, we expect to reach 12 million visitors, and Mercedes-Benz Heritage has just announced plans to launch its digital museum in Roarington. We're also excited to welcome Kimi Räikkönen as a Roarington Ambassador, helping to further build and promote our Classic MetaLand. And there are more important partnerships to be announced in the coming months.

In 10 years, I see Roarington as the leading digital ecosystem for classic car lovers—a place where people can connect, trade, race, and experience cars from different eras in an immersive luxury lifestyle environment. It will not only preserve the legacy of these iconic machines but inspire future generations to engage with them in ways we can't fully imagine yet. Roarington will continue to be where tradition meets innovation, keeping the classic car world alive and thriving in the digital age.

About Fritz Kaiser:
An entrepreneur, investor, and philanthropist from the Principality of Liechtenstein, Fritz Kaiser played a key role as a partner in the Red Bull Sauber Petronas Formula One team. He is the founder of The Classic Car Trust (TCCT) and Roarington, where he focuses on preserving classic car heritage and driving it into the digital future.

About Antonio Ghini:
A Gran Signore in motorsports communication with a long and distinguished career. He was responsible for Ferrari's brand for some 2 decades, was an advisor to Lamborghini and many others. Today he is the Chief Editor of the TCCT yearbook, The Key, he writes books and works as a journalist.