

RETROMOTIVE

ISSUE 14



FORD GT90

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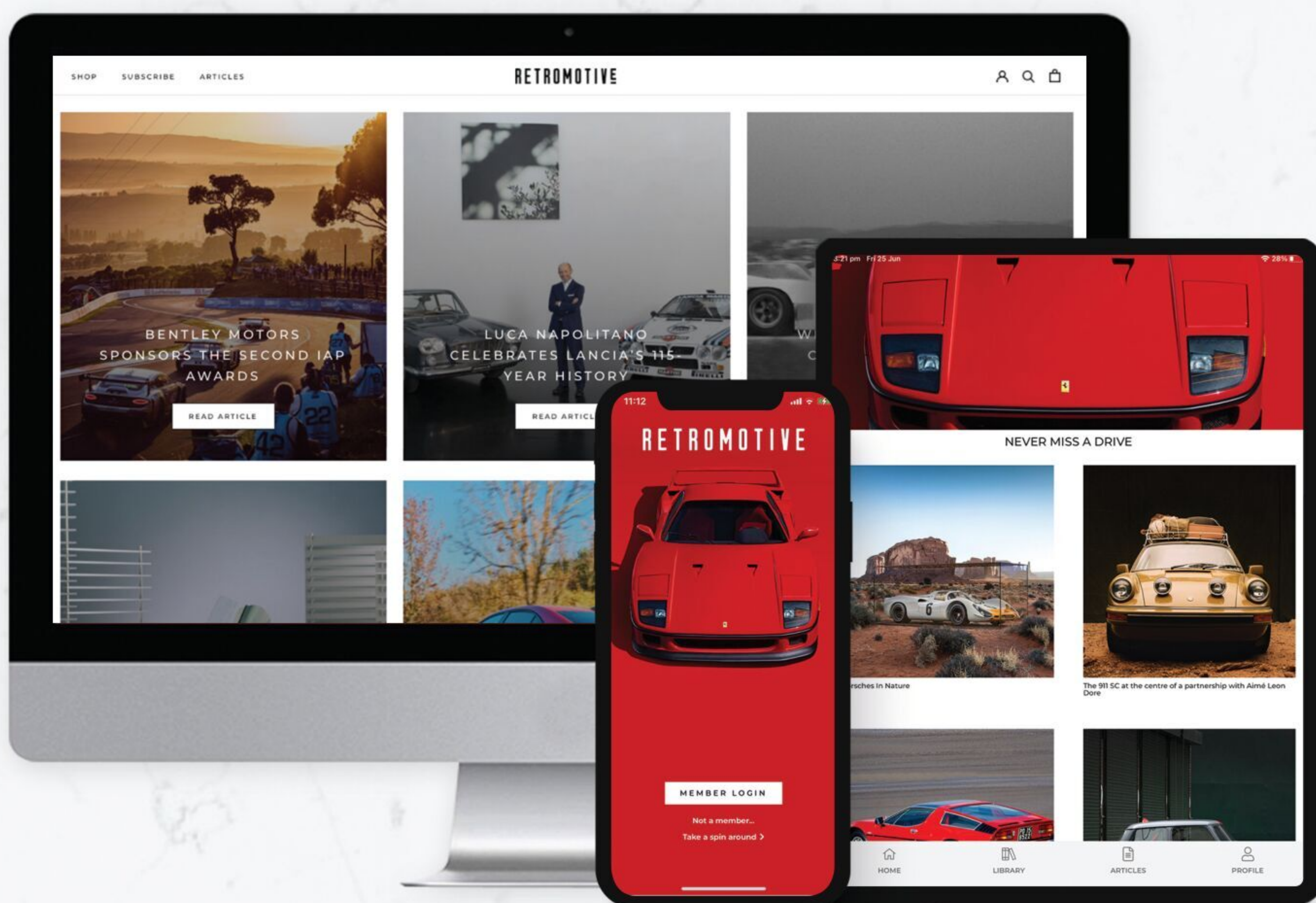
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ISSN 2209-0533

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Printed in the United Kingdom.

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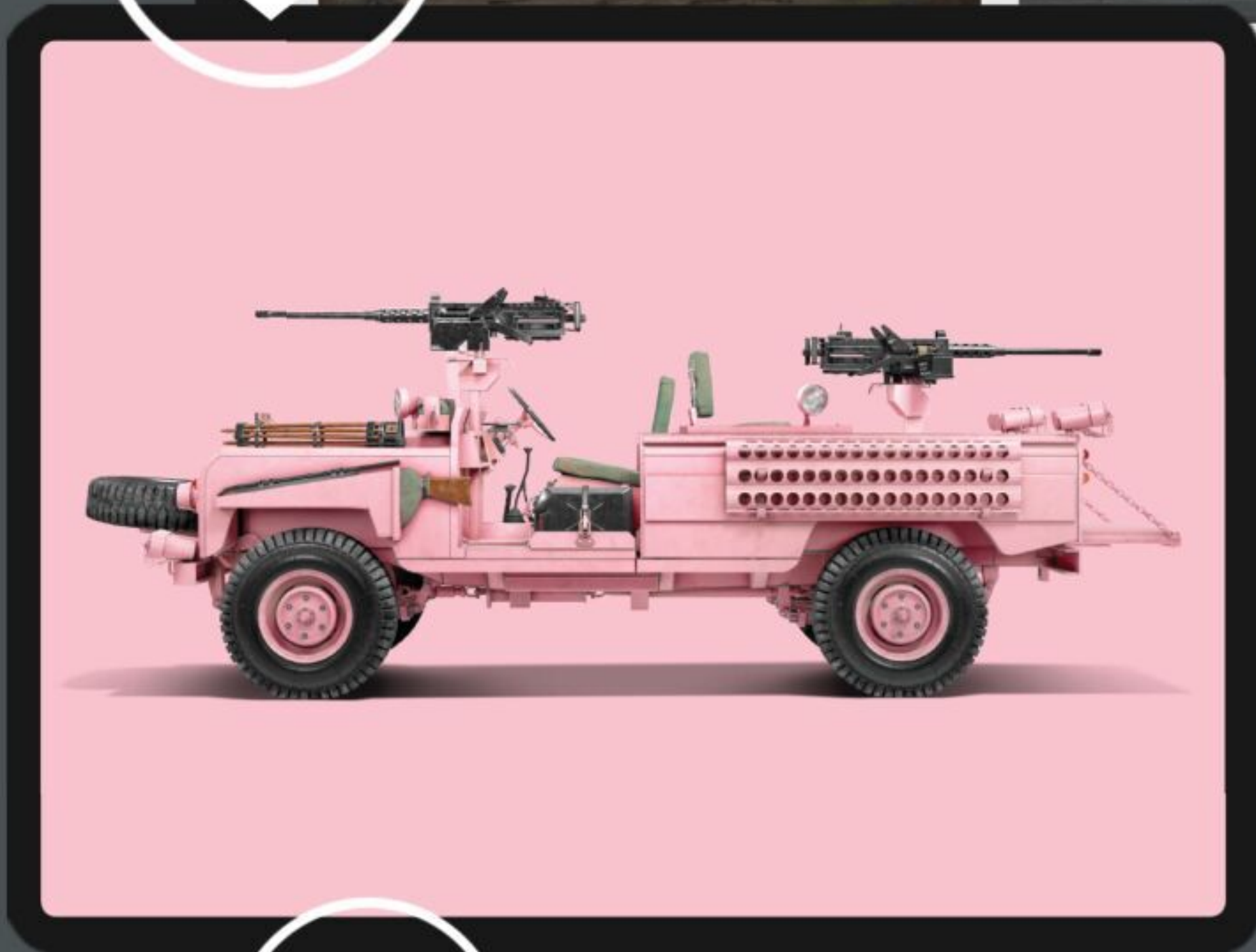
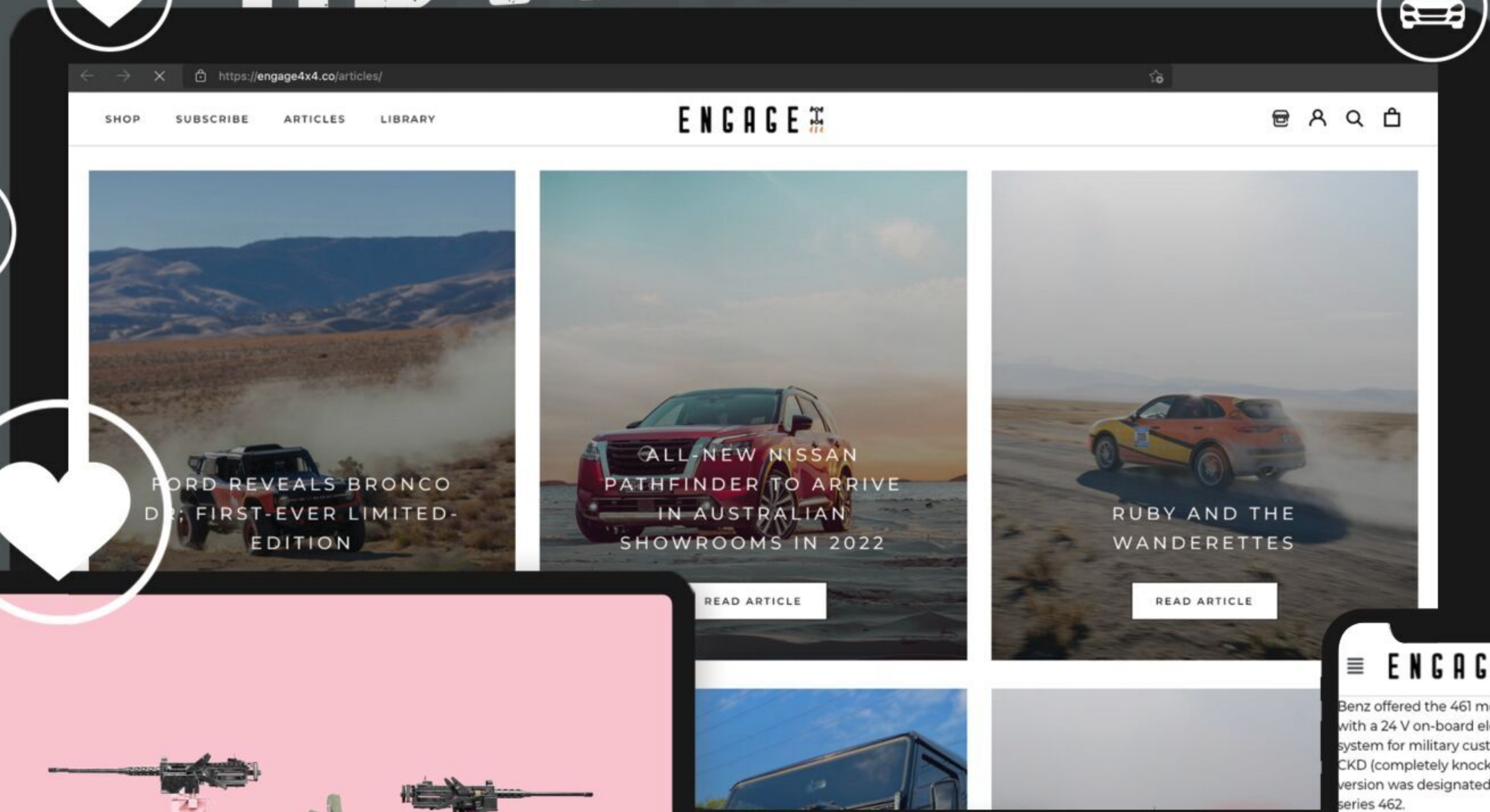


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FRONT END

NATHAN DUFF

Welcome to Issue 14! Here at Retromotive, we love the JDM cars and culture movement. For me, it is the style, performance, and relative affordability of some truly-classic makes and models from my early 20s which have me constantly trawling the “classifieds” for a bargain. Sadly though, there are very few bargains left these days and some unicorns are starting to achieve sales figures which would not be out of place for a European marque. As my fellow Generation-X alumni and I hit our mid-life phase (let us not call it a crisis) many have started to seek out a slice of their long-lost youth – me included – and as such, JDM vehicles have been teetering on the edge of a boom. Who would have thought that a humble Subaru (OK, it is a 22b!) would go for over \$300,000? Yes, it is only one model, but it is the tide which raises all boats. Skylines and Supras are top dogs in terms of dollars and desires – largely thanks to pop-culture assimilation and their undeniable performance chops.

The thought of a JDM-focus special-edition magazine has been in the ideas sandbox for some time now. Originally, we wanted a special-edition magazine focused solely on JDM. However, when we started putting together stories, we realized that there are too many stories, cars, legends, and people to fit into a 144-page magazine. So, given the breadth of material and increasing interest in Japanese vehicles, we decided that a book is the only thing which will do this market justice; and, in doing so, we hope to educate and entertain readers about one of the most-innovative automotive markets in the

world.

We have taken a slightly-different approach to creating our first book: “Kickstarter” is a platform we have been interested in using for some time now and this seemed like the perfect project to start with. As I type this, we are just about ready to launch our campaign and you can look forward to some extended features from the book in upcoming issues of the magazine, too.

The book will delve into iconic models and their influence on global automotive and JDM culture. We will unearth hidden gems which you may not have heard about and look at the lineage of legendary marques and models. Given the scope of undertaking such a mammoth task, a diverse roster of Writers, Photographers, Designers, and Artists from around the globe will contribute to this book. It is our sincere hope that the successful launch of this book will allow us to continue to publish high-quality automotive-focus books in the future on topics like JDM.

It is the next logical step for us as a Magazine Publisher and we intend to apply the brand aesthetics and design philosophy from Retromotive magazines into coffee-table books. If you would like to support our next step into publishing, jump on our website for more information and links to the “JDM: Cars & Culture” coffee-table book. As always, we love to hear all of your feedback to make sure we are delivering the best possible experience to our audience: contact@retromotive.co

Cheers, Nathan 11-19-2021



When he is not out shooting classics or putting the magazine together, Nathan likes to pretend that he'll actually finish the series 3 Land Rover that still sits in his garage gathering dust. Follow Nathan on Instagram @retromotive_editor





FORD GT90

◉ WORDS **DAMION SMY** ◉ PHOTOGRAPHY **ZACH BREHL**



A white Ford GT90 concept car is shown from a low angle, highlighting its sharp, angular design. The car is parked on a grassy area next to a concrete wall. The background is a textured concrete wall with a horizontal joint. The car's front end is visible, showing the Ford logo on the grille and the distinctive hood openings.

It was to be America's first supercar. Ford had been designing vehicles based on its 'Aero' language since the 1980s: when the original Taurus saved the company from the increasingly confident – and better built – competition. By the mid-1990s, Aero was standard-operating procedure at the Ford design department – if it “ain't broke” ...

The design team were readying the proposals for senior management at Dearborn. James Hope, a young Designer who had started at the Detroit Car Maker less than two years earlier, did not expect his model would make the cut. See, Hope had missed the Aero memo. Or, more so, ignored it.

Instead, the young Designer was inspired by sharper designs – such as the F-117 stealth fighter: A radar-defying US-military secret until 1988, that saw acute angles and hard edges prioritized to fly undetected into enemy skies.

Working in Ford's Advanced Design center, Hope took the word “advanced” literally: producing stark, hard-edge renderings which jarred with the familiar Aero approach. Years later, Hope said: “I was told that, early on, if I was going to follow this angular-design direction, was I really working for the right company?”

Hope's GT90 proposal did not make the cut. It was not put up for consideration ... ditched in favor of – you guessed it – more-predictable Aero-style designs. Hope said: “Top leadership came in for a review. And they were like, ‘No, we don't want to see this anymore. You've been doing the same thing for 15 years, let's do something new.’”

The design team needed something – fast. That “something new” was Hope's straight-edge, angular design which was now thrust into contention. Instead of soft edges, Hope's GT90 was a showcase for set squares over French curves: a triangle-dominant ground-hugging supercar with a droopy nose, slim horizontal headlights, and a nod to the GT40 in two large hood openings – split by that recurring triangle theme. It won out – Aero was bunk!

Brent Hajek – who, decades on, owns the one-and-only 1995 GT90 Concept which he keeps at the Hajek Motorsport Museum in Oklahoma, United States – said: “When those guys designed and sketched this thing, they just nailed it! They didn't go too much on the retro thing and they didn't go overboard on the futuristic things. That's what makes this car quite possibly the most valuable Ford that was ever built.”

Hajek, who calls Edsel Ford



WAS IT POLARIZING? “ABSOLUTELY! AND INTERNALLY IN THE COMPANY, AS WELL. A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE REALLY AGAINST IT ... I HAD SOME PEOPLE, FRIENDS OF MINE, TELL ME HOW UGLY THAT CAR WAS, AT THE TIME, IN VERY BLUNT TERMS.

a close friend, acquired the GT90 from the Car Maker – following Ford’s 100th anniversary, back in 2003. He was drawn to the fact that it stood out markedly from everything else that he had seen. He is not wrong. The side of the car alone is enough to frighten a Production-Line Manager: deep carbon-fiber panels with a sharp, angular beltline rebelliously rising from the bottom of the front wheel and rising remarkably beyond the rear wheel. The front arch itself literally goes off on a tangent – like many a corporate meeting – while that waistline is criss-crossed with another “cut” in the opposite direction, the tinted glasshouse “floating” atop the crisp-white panel work. At the rear, the triangle-shape taillights and playfulness are clear: a large triangle hosts four smaller triangles – one for each exhaust outlet. To pop open the doors and clamber into the 45-inch-high GT90, there is a yellow ... yes, you guessed it, triangle! The doors themselves integrate into a triangle-theme roof: forming a canopy-style cockpit which is drenched in bright-blue trim and triangles

with chrome detailing. It is melodramatic at any angle.

While there are curves over the wheels, the only completed soft edges are on the Ford badges themselves. Without them, who would think this was car from Detroit in the mid 1990s? Hajek said: “People look at it and they think it’s obviously some contemporary car from overseas. No, this is a Ford, a damn near-30-year-old Ford folks – that’s nuts!”. Back then, it made contemporary rivals look decidedly old-fashion: the Bugatti EB110 looks almost agricultural; the Lamborghini Diablo cool, but conservative; even the smooth-edge Ferrari F50 looks instantly dated next to the futuristic Ford.

The GT90 Concept – a successor and celebration of the original GT40 – was the first step for “New Edge”. Hope said: “It was shocking and offensive to some people at Ford.” Was it polarizing? “Absolutely! and internally in the company, as well. A lot of people were really against it ... I had some people, friends of mine, tell me how











ugly that car was, at the time, in very blunt terms.”

Under that controversial skin was a Jaguar XJ220 aluminum chassis. At the time, Ford owned Jaguar: Its Premier Auto Group including Jaguar, Aston Martin, Jaguar-Land Rover and Volvo. The XJ220 – so named for its target 220-miles-per-hour top speed: knocking off the Ferrari F40 and Bugatti EB110 as the world’s fastest car. Though, the GT90 was made to take the title

back from the McLaren F1 (231 miles per hour), with a claimed top-speed of 253 miles per hour, the very speed that the Bugatti Veyron would reach a decade later as the world’s fastest production car. The GT90 was staggeringly ambitious inside and out. Return on investment at such high speed diminishes greatly: so, for the GT90 to reach such dizzying heights, the XJ220’s 3.5-liter twin-turbo V6 was ditched for a fresh Roush engine. Roush, legendary in Ford motorsport



circles for its NASCAR powertrains for many decades, fabricated the GT90's mid-mounted engine using two modular 4.6-liter V8s from the Lincoln Town Car – each with a pair of cylinders removed and de-stroked from 3.5 inches to three inches to create a single 5.9-liter 90-degree V12 ... and that was not enough: a quartet – yes, four Garrett T02 turbochargers – was fitted for a 720 horsepower and 660lbs-ft of torque output running up to eight psi of boost, that could

easily reach 900 horsepower if the boost was increased. The punch was fed through the XJ220's FFD-Ricardo five-speed manual to the rear wheels.

Hajek said: “This is the fastest baddest Ford GT which was ever built. If you look at it, the GT40s, what they had done, I mean, they had the 427s in them – they were badass, don't get me wrong – but they didn't have four turbochargers and 12 cylinders! If you look at the new GT today, it's half what this



***“I’VE GOT SEVEN-SECOND DRAG CARS, AND WE’VE SET
LAND SPEED RECORDS, WE KNOW WHAT’S BADASS —
AND THAT THING’S BADASS!”***

one is – it only had two turbos!”

The stories surrounding the GT90 from media – who drove it with the wastegates intentionally jammed open to somewhat lessen its ferocity – vary. Most famously, Jeremy Clarkson raved about the road-going stealth while driving it appropriately around La Sarthe at Le Mans, saying, “This could be the cleverest most-exciting car ever ... America’s first supercar, and they’ve nailed it!”.

Hajek is one of the few mortals beyond that select media group to have actually driven it; and as part of an even smaller number in its ultimate guise with fully-functioning wastegates. “I’ll tell you what, when it starts spooling up, hang on! Man, that thing ... there’s a lot of stories about it saying it wasn’t that badass, but it is! I’ve got seven-second drag cars, and we’ve set Land Speed Records, we know what’s badass – and that thing’s badass!”

On the Detroit stand in January, 1995 – where it was lucky to be after being damaged in shipping only days before; then, failed to start up when it was supposed to be driven onto the stand during its reveal – Ford was

vague on whether the GT90 would go into production. Still, it suggested an estimated \$150,000 price – the price you’ll see it on *Gran Turismo II* and *Need4Speed II*: The GT90’s polarizing looks saw it become a gaming legend and 1990s pin-up.

For Ford, it would be a huge risk to apply such a dramatically-different look to critical volume products – such as the Focus – yet the GT90 paved the way for its New Edge design and successful brand reinvention. Hope said: “The GT90 started out, and always remained, basically, a study. One of the main reasons was to test a new design language. You test the market reaction and you get people used to it – the shock or new direction change starts to get adapted and accepted.”

No one at Ford ever asked James Hope if he was working in the right place again. From his controversial sketches, the GT90 set the design direction of one of the world’s largest car companies for the 15 years. From a single concept – the GT90 – to millions of sales, New Edge had arrived in showrooms and driveways across the world. Sadly, the GT90 itself did not.



TOTEM GT

WORDS COLIN FABRI IMAGES PATRICK CURTET





Restomods are an exciting development and modernization of classic cars. They have been around since the first hot rods appeared and have taken many forms being adopted by the aftermarket companies; as well as, some incredible one-offs being built in backyard sheds around the world. More recently, restomods have evolved further and emerged as, essentially, new vehicles in their own right. We only need to look at the largest car manufacturers and their adoption of the restomod concept for “new millennium” versions of their original classics. Best of those are undoubtedly the 2005 Ford GT retro version of the original late 1960s GT40, Fiats’ 124 Spider, the Mini Cooper, and, more recently, Renaults’ Alpine A110 – just to name a few.

The restomod recipe is simple – take a classic car, restore it, and, at the same time, modify it to how it may look if it was designed today. Importantly, make it better in terms of the handling and the performance. Add creature comforts and inject the reliability expected for a modern vehicle. Therefore, the restomod concept is well defined; however, it has predominantly been performed with the transplanting

of modern combustion engines. Totem Automobili has taken the restomod concept to the limit of current thinking and beyond with its release of their Totem GT: a fully-electric restomod of the classic 1960s Alfa Giulia GT.

The Totem GT is the brainchild of Riccardo Quaggio: an Italian Car Designer who has worked for companies such as Honda and Alfa Romeo. Riccardo (or Richard) has always loved classic cars, “they have more passion inside; whereas, modern cars are designed from a marketing point of view: only to sell – there is no soul inside anymore”. Richard chose the Alfa as the platform for the GT based on his personal experience of owning a variety of Alfa models. “Alfas are important to me: I believe they were one of the best brands in the 1960s and 1970s, and very innovative. I currently own a yellow 147 and Giulia GT, of course. I like the Alfa styling: It is iconic and can be suitably modified – much like the 911. The Totem GT is a modern reinterpretation of the past.”

The inspiration for the design came from the 1960s Alfa Giulia GTA model. The “A” stood for *Alleggerita* and simply means “lightweight” in Italian. The GTA models







THE RESTOMOD RECIPE IS SIMPLE – TAKE A CLASSIC CAR, RESTORE IT, AND, AT THE SAME TIME, MODIFY IT TO HOW IT MAY LOOK IF IT WERE DESIGNED TODAY. IMPORTANTLY, MAKE IT BETTER IN TERMS OF THE HANDLING AND THE PERFORMANCE.

were produced by Alfa's racing division, Autodelta, and were a car developed for competition – while closely resembling the road-going version. Richard and the team at Totem Automobili have been faithful to the GTA concept: using light-weight materials to create the racing-like body style which you see here.

The first release vehicle from Totem Automobili will be based on a donor chassis from an Alfa Giulia GT which was part of the Alfa 105/115 series of coupes. This series was produced between 1963 and 1977; however, Richard and the team are focusing on the second series cars – the GT Junior 1300/1600 produced between 1970 and 1975. Once the donor vehicle is sourced, the conversion process starts with the disassembly and stripping of all the external panels. While being based on the Alfa Giulia, only five percent of the original car is kept – mainly some components in the chassis to simplify compliance. The new parts of the chassis are part carbon-fiber monocoque and part special steel, known as 15CDV6. 15CDV6 is a chromium-vanadium stainless-steel

alloy supplied in tube form which is easily welded and has high strength-to-weight ratio. Richard's use of light-weight materials and modern-suspension design in his Totem GT is comprehensive. "At the front axle, we designed new double wishbone suspension from billet aluminum; at the rear, we incorporated new double wishbones connected to a new rear sub-frame, that supports the electric motor and is inline with the rear axle."

The newly-designed exterior panels are beautifully formed and create a stunning mix of old and new. Almost everything is carbon fiber here. A carbon-fiber roof, carbon doors, carbon bonnet and boot, carbon fenders, carbon wheel arches, and carbon bumpers: with an all-up panel weight of 209 pounds. There is no mistaking the DNA from the original Alfa is still visible; however, it is enhanced by a modern look with larger and more-purposeful dimensions. The lines are much cleaner with the relocation of the front and rear bumpers to behind the bodywork and LED lighting replaces old-style bulb and light panels to bring it all up-to-date.





I LIKE THE ALFA STYLING: IT IS ICONIC AND CAN BE SUITABLY MODIFIED — MUCH LIKE THE 911. THE TOTEM GT IS A MODERN REINTERPRETATION OF THE PAST.

Widened wheel arches enclose stunning race-inspired wheels – now wrapped in low-profile 40 series tires, that give the GT a stance which impresses from every angle. From the rear of the car, the view is the perfect mix of original details and modern influence. An integrated diffuser which hints of a distant Italian cousin enhances the race-ready look.

Open the bonnet and you discover the control unit and cooling systems which connect to the battery array stored under and behind the seats. The under-bonnet area is a work of art with beautiful aluminum components and stunning attention to detail. The engine is in the middle position just ahead of the rear wheels and weight balance front to rear is ideal. Also, the battery-pack case is constructed from aluminum and in a honeycomb formation for strength and weight reduction.

The interior is more of a departure from the original with custom seats, high-tech minimalist dash, and a combination of luxury materials to give one no doubt that this is a significantly-higher quality product than the original Alfa it was based upon. This is a hand-crafted car after all.

The Totem GT is significantly larger than the original. It is 5.5 inches longer, eight inches wider than the Giulia; however, it is 2.4 inches lower – creating its more purposeful stance. Incredibly, the car is a mere 640 pounds heavier, that is impressive considering the larger overall dimensions and battery array required.

Totem Automobili is no backyard operation with an engineering team of 21, who are based in Turin, Italy, and a separate production team of nine Craftsmen, who are based in Venice, Italy. Nearly everything is produced by Totem Automobili – including the chassis modifications, the body panels, and battery packs. Collaborations with companies – like Sabelt for the seats and McFly technologies for the innovative sound system – are key to the high-quality final product.

The electric engine produces 518 horsepower, up to 811lbs-ft of torque, and electronic control allowing three efficiency settings from mild to wild. Power comes from a battery array, that is relatively light at 992 pounds. The battery cells are submerged in an engineered fluid which keeps the batteries at a constant cooled





WITH OVER 500 HORSEPOWER AND A WEIGHT OF AROUND 220 STONE, THE ACCELERATION IS AROUND THREE SECONDS FOR THE RUN TO 60 MILES PER HOUR WITH THE TOTEM GT CONTINUING TO PULL ALL THE WAY TO A TOP SPEED LIMIT OF 140 MILES PER HOUR.

temperature allowing continuous power to the motor. The expected range of the Totem GT is around 250 miles.

Much thought went into designing the Electric GT to enable it to capture the soul of the original car. The car has a start button which, when pressed, unleashes the sound of a throaty race-inspired engine exploding into life. Then, the car settles into a lumpy sonorous idle indistinguishable from a cammed petrol engine. This is all made possible by a tailor-made external sound system which creates a combustion-like soundtrack matching the revs and performance of a combustion engine and pairs that to the driving style of the customer.

Innovation is everywhere you look. Inside, you might be surprised to see a conventional gear lever. This has been added to the electric car and shifting which sequentially, and cleverly, modifies the torque curve of the electric motor to simulate a conventional manual gearbox. Combine this with the external sound system and you have an electric car which revs up and accepts gear changes as a combustion-engine version would.

Performance of the GT is – pardon the pun – electric. With over 500 horsepower and a weight of around 220 stone, the

acceleration is around three seconds for the run to 60 miles per hour with the Totem GT continuing to pull all the way to a top speed limit of 140 miles per hour. Electric powertrains are well known to provide maximum torque from standstill and acceleration is really only limited by tire traction, so the sophisticated launch control and traction systems built in are essential. A total of 20 Totem GTs are planned – with the first seven having been started in August of this year and delivery is expected in 2022. Each vehicle is customizable: the color of the car, interior finish, textures, and materials will reflect the spirit and soul of the customer. Custom technology, quality, and performance of this standard does not come cheap, and they are expected to sell for around \$502,390.

The Totem GT is perhaps the best of both worlds and may well be the most advanced restomod of today. While I, like many of you, mourn the loss of the sound and Driver involvement of today's typical electric vehicles, Richard and his team have focussed on preserving these soulful traits with the Totem GT – and giving me hope for the future.

Richard said that he is planning a new model launch later this year, so watch out for more from this innovate company.





CITROËN SM

★ WORDS COLIN FABRI

★ IMAGES ALEJANDRO ARRETURETA | CARPHILES





I am going to address the elephant in the room up-front. Citroën can make some pretty unusual, a little weird, “out there”, call them what you want, designs, and the Citroën DS is a classic example of this and is a strangely-popular vehicle. The DS model is the one you see driving around occasionally; you first look at the car – perhaps, no doubt with mixed emotions – then, look to the Driver and always wonder what they must know which you do not. Do not get me wrong, for me, it is not a like or dislike thing. Instead, as in the art world, where an artist has not conformed to the idea of trying to make something everyone will like: rather, they intend to evoke an emotion – good or bad – just not indifferent. Perhaps, these thoughts are simply born out of the fact that it literally does not look like any other sort of car you would see on the road.

Now, take a close look at the Citroën SM. It is clearly closely related to the DS and is also not shy in making its own styling statement. It is like I would expect the concept version of a new model to look like – you know the ones unveiled at the motor shows promising cutting-edge design and features – yet, by production-release time, get typically watered down to ensure no one is offended – the buying public or the regulatory bodies. Except, in the case of the Citroën SM, what looks like the show-stopping concept is actually the production version!

The SM design started in 1961 and was always intended



*MY PASSION FOR CITROËN STARTED WHEN
MY DAD ARRIVED HOME WITH HIS FIRST
ONE: A 1974 “GS BREAK” IN A COLOR
CALLED “BLEU CAMARGUE”*

to be a high-performance sports variant of the popular DS model. The design process took a staggering nine years and moved from being a modified DS design to a completely-new engineered vehicle. During the design period, in 1968, Citroën purchased Maserati – predominately for their high-performance engine technology. Then, the Maserati V6 engine was integrated into the newly-designed chassis to complete the final production of the SM. The Quad cam V6 engine had a relatively small capacity of 2.7 liters; however, combined with the slippery aerodynamic shape of the SM, was quicker accelerating and had a higher top speed than its competitors. As a comparison with the Mercedes 450 SLC of the time, the SM accelerated to 60 miles per hour one second quicker and had a top speed of 137 miles per hour: almost 12 miles higher than the Mercedes, despite it having a 1.2-gallon V8.

Today, Citroën SMs are rare and their owners are passionate. Robert has owned his for 15 years. “My passion for Citroën started when my dad arrived home with his first one: a 1974 ‘GS Break’ in a color called ‘Bleu Camargue’. I was six years old. There was only one Citroën in my village before and that was a 2CV. The GS stood out like something from another planet. It fell to sleep by dropping to the ground at night and lifted again when started. My mates were fighting to get a ride in it when my Dad picked me up from football practise. I started collecting brochures and car magazines; and, later, as my interest turned toward design and engineering, it was the perfect combination of these professions which kept Citroën in the front of my mind for a long time.”

There are other cars also referenced as ahead of their time, but no



THE SM DOES NOT SO MUCH AS HAVE RIDE; RATHER, IT GLIDES OR FLOATS ALONG THE ROAD, WHILE ITS PNEUMATIC SUSPENSION CONSTANTLY LEVELS. IT IS AN EERIE FEELING – BUMPS WHICH ARE VISIBLE ON THE ROAD, BUT NOT FELT BY THE DRIVER.

better statement could be applied to the Citroën SM. Even today it feels retro-futuristic; but, in its day, it must have seemed like it had come back from the future. Inside is a comfortable place to be: the seats are one piece and supportive; the steering wheel is futuristic with a one-point mount and adjusts for both reach and rake – in 1970! The steering is absolutely unique and has two turns lock-to-lock with power assistance which is modulated by road speed. The steering can be turned by the fingertips and cornering is achieved by the slightest turn – that requires some getting used to. For example, a right-hand turn requires just one-quarter of a turn of the wheel. The brakes are hydraulic and, this time, adjusted automatically by weight in the rear of the car. Instead of a conventional car pitching forward under brakes, the SM gracefully lowers evenly – squatting at all four corners. Strangely, the brake pedal is not a pedal; Instead, it is a rubber button on the floor in the space the brake pedal should be. Add to this, the self-leveling headlights which turn with the steering, a fully-hydraulic suspension which can be raised or lowered by the driver, windscreen wipers which can sense rain speed – the list goes on. Those windscreen wipers were, of course, designed well before we had electronics for actual rain sensors and the computing power needed to interpret the data, so the clever Citroën boffins designed a system which changed speed dependent on current drain from the electric motor. The more rain, the less friction from the wipers on the window, and the less current drain: so the motor circuit would be allowed to speed up. Simple, yet effective. The forward-thinking





design and execution of these radical driving features is a stunning achievement for a car which is now 50-years old.

Robert said: “I’ve been dreaming and sketching up cars for as long as I can remember. I was going to be a Car Designer – who wasn’t! At the age of 12, I was allowed to drive in a farm field for the first time with one of my cousins: I was hooked.”

The SM was built as the ultimate grand tourer. Cruising at 124 miles per hour is effortless and comfortable. The SM does not so much as have ride; rather, it glides or floats along the road, while its pneumatic suspension constantly levels. It is an eerie feeling – bumps which are visible on the road, but not felt by the Driver.

Visually, the SM is more artwork than typical car design: the design has a flow to it. It looks smooth from the front bumper all the way through to the rear hatch, where seemingly complex and varying-angled panels meet harmoniously to gather at the rear. The rear employs a ‘Kamm’ tail design, where the rear of the car is cut off, with a vertical surface for aerodynamic efficiency. The Kamm tail was designed by Wunibald Kamm in the 1930s; and, in the SM’s case, contributes to excellent fuel efficiency. Against the likes of its competitors, the SM used 30 percent less fuel than rivals – such as the 450 SLC Mercedes – and a staggering 50 percent less than a Jensen Interceptor: while achieving similar acceleration times and greater top speeds.

The large window area, combined with fine pillars, extends all the way across the rear seats – giving all passengers excellent visibility. At rest, the pneumatic suspension relaxes, almost completely hiding the rear wheels and adding to the futuristic feel of hovering. From all sides, the design is unique. It is hard to spot any design influences from other manufacturers. It is easy to overuse the word “unusual”



*ALTHOUGH, THE SM IS FRONT-WHEEL-DRIVE, THE
ENGINE IS UNUSUAL BECAUSE IT IS MOUNTED
FULLY BEHIND THE FRONT WHEELS –
TECHNICALLY MAKING THIS
A MID-ENGINE CAR.*

when describing the Citroën SM because it literally is in every way. For example, take the frontal area, six individual headlights and the number plate are all covered by one massive cover extending the total width of the car. The fine details are everywhere. The Citroën emblem integrated into the bonnet vent, the bonnet bulges, and hides the busy parts of the windscreen wipers, the work of art which is the stereo system embedded into the center console. Everywhere you look, there is something new to see, seemingly designed by someone who has never seen a conventional car before.

Although, the SM is front-wheel-drive, the engine is unusual because it is mounted fully behind the front wheels – technically making this a mid-engine car. The relatively-small Maserati V6 is hidden in the engine bay by a multitude of strange cannisters, pumps, and pressure devices – all with their own mystery roles. I am sure that there is a flux capacitor in there somewhere, as well, and all hidden beneath a bonnet made from aircraft-grade aluminum.

Robert said: “I first set eyes on this Citroën SM when a guy who I knew showed up in it in front of my office window, back in 2006. He had just imported it from Sweden and found the model a bit too complex for his taste. We decided to swap cars and he took my near-perfect CX2400IE prestige as the trade.”

The SM had a comparatively-short lifespan – being a casualty of Citroën’s bankruptcy woes in 1974. At that time, Peugeot took over ownership, sold off Maserati, and, in 1975, ceased production of this unique, and now timeless, classic. The Citroën SM has been described as the “Concorde for the road”, and I can not think of a better analogy. Both these fascinating modes of transport are French, both are ahead of their time, and both provide evocative memories for those who knew them. Once seen, the Citroën SM cannot be forgotten – design with emotion at its best.



RUF CTR YELLOWBIRD

✦ WORDS IAIN CURRY ✦ IMAGES IAN WOOD







It was the viral video for a generation. And it was a proper video, too: VHS. None of your instant-click YouTube spoon-feeding. It was a bootleg VHS, brought to my house by a fellow Car Enthusiast with those tell-tale teenage words: “You gotta see this!”

“Faszination on the Nürburgring,” said the cover. Google it now, grab a cuppa, and set aside 20 minutes of your life. The rest of this article will make more sense once you have.

For me, back in 1992, there was the familiar clunk as the tape loaded in the VCR: the reels started spinning, and the fuzzy color images appeared on my parents’ anvil of a 1980s television. “Sometimes we like to play with our cars,” it began. “Today, we’d like to invite you to join us.”

Good God! Here was a bright-yellow wide-body Porsche 911 being flung around the most terrifying of race-tracks in Germany’s Eifel mountains. Except, it was not quite a Porsche. The badges said “RUF”. You could tell it was modified, but in a clean purposeful manner.

A 911 Turbo-style tea-tray rear wing was in situ, but there was no mad ugly extra aero. There were a few extra cooling vents – a perfectly-good idea because this thing tore up its rear rubber in billows of drifty smoke. It was, quite simply, brutally beautiful.

The car was RUF’s CTR Yellowbird, and this short film – produced by the German Tuner in 1987 – is probably the most-convincing promotional video in fast-car history. Much of it was filmed inside the cabin: This was the masterstroke. At the controls was Test Driver Stefan Roser: driving like a man who had been told that he has got 15 minutes to live, so he may as well engage full “send it” mode.

His was a drifting masterclass. Chucking it sideways at every opportunity, exploring the absolute limits of the track at dizzying speeds, and dispatching of slower Ring traffic – as if they were on a sight-seeing tour. It is a proper analog driving experience. Like witnessing the best in-car stuff from Ayrton Senna, Walter Röhrl, or Ari Vatanen. You know, the geniuses.

While Roser seemingly dices with death every armful of opposite lock, you cannot help noticing our Hero Pilot is dressed as if he is off to just grab a pack of smokes from the corner shop.

No helmet, a plain black t-shirt, 1980s stonewashed jeans, and white socks under brown loafers. In a car which basically redefines the term “a handful” and had recently been confirmed as the fastest production car you could buy (213 miles per hour) – besting even Porsche’s own 959 supercar. Roser was the ultimate understated German badass.

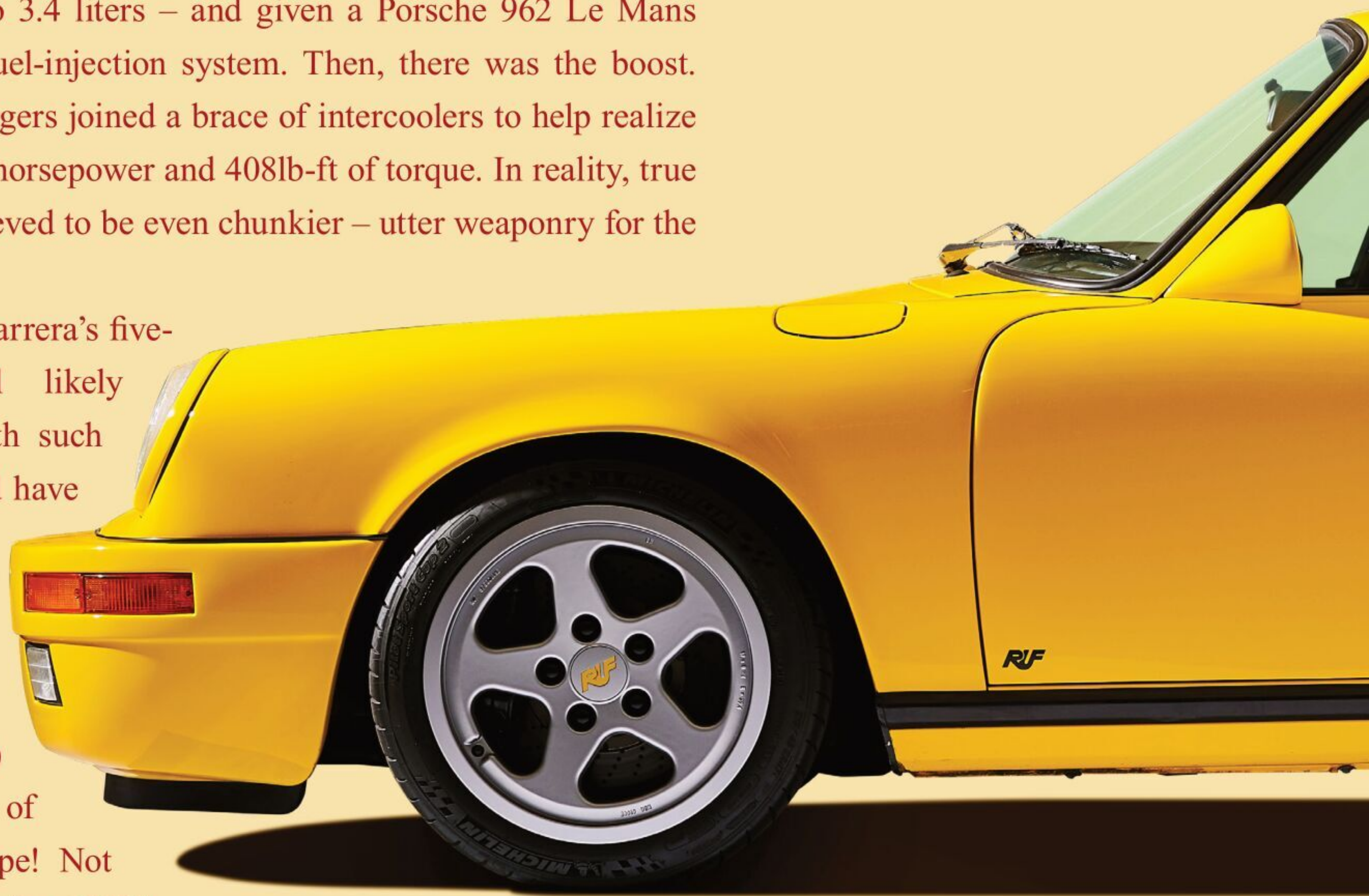
What was this incredible RUF? America’s Road & Track crew had nicknamed it “Yellowbird” to reflect how it flew across the landscape – simply adding to the car’s myth. Just 29 were built (not all are yellow, by the way), based on the Porsche 911 Carrera 3.2.

Its flat-six engine was bored out to four inches - upping displacement to 3.4 liters – and given a Porsche 962 Le Mans racer’s DME fuel-injection system. Then, there was the boost. Twin-turbochargers joined a brace of intercoolers to help realize an official 463 horsepower and 408lb-ft of torque. In reality, true figures are believed to be even chunkier – utter weaponry for the age!

With the 911 Carrera’s five-speed manual likely to implode with such power, it would have been logical to sling in the bomb-proof Porsche 930’s (911 Turbo) four-speed of the day ... nope! Not enough cogs for RUF!

Instead, the tuner developed its own dog-leg five-speed, adding its own ratios to help hit that record-breaking top speed. Not that acceleration suffered much. Independent tests saw the Yellowbird clear 60 miles per hour in around four-seconds.

Its 13-inch Brembo brakes came from a Porsche 959; suspension was fettled; performance Dunlop tires wrapped 17-inch RUF Speedline alloys. As you will see, Roser had few problems thinning down the 255/40ZR17 rears.





The CTR had a kerb weight of just 2,535 pounds – helped by the Carrera 3.2's body being lighter and slippier than a 930 Turbo's. RUF added aerodynamic fiberglass bumpers and aluminum body panels: while drag was cut by using tiny side mirrors and de-guttering the roof.

The interior was stripped and given a pair of Recaro buckets and roll cage, but the view over Roser's shoulder as he rips up the Nürburgring shows a very familiar dash. Aside from "RUF" on the uber-plain steering wheel, the dials are bog-standard 1980s 911. The little gear stick sticks out of its rubber boot in a manner which reminds me of a mini school bus – simpler times.

I shudder to think how much duller the video would have been had Roser been tapping away at steering wheel paddles. However, one concession would have been giving the poor Driver a decent short-throw manual. Moving from third to fourth sees his arm almost changing time zones – such is the length of the throw. But it just adds to the involvement. With the turbo flat-six screaming away, Roser stirs through the gears as quickly as possible, so he can get two hands back on the wheel – he needs to! It is a mix of him deliberately flicking the tiller rapidly to sling out the rear end; then, fighting for control as he gets on the power, the engine (after a healthy dose of lag) coming on boost, and the flying Yellowbird wanting to fly off into the scenery. Through the Karussell, Roser is basically having a fist fight with the steering wheel.

These days, electric wizardry means that practically anyone can drive such mad performance cars. Some even have modes which drift themselves: making you look like a hero! But, without those aids, the vast majority would be rearranging body panels quicker than you could say "snap oversteer". The RUF CTR? Drift mode only came courtesy of a keen right foot.

When racing game *Gran Turismo 2* came out, in 1999, my go-to in the garage was the RUF CTR Yellowbird – it cost 370,000 credits, since you ask. "What's a RUF?" was the typical question to those who had not been enlightened by that VHS. Other 20-something Motoring Journalists? Well, they always picked a RUF, too.

In 2017, RUF introduced a 30th-anniversary CTR homage to the 1987 cars. It was shown at the Geneva Motor Show that year, that I just happened to be covering. Beside the new car, there it was ... a real 1987 Yellowbird. A quarter-of-a-century after first seeing that video, here I was – beside my four-wheel hero! It all felt very *déjà vu* when I grabbed another Journalist and, in teenage tones, said: "You gotta see this!"









PURVIS EUREKA SPORT

• WORDS DAMION SMY • PHOTOGRAPHY NATHAN DUFF





It was an act of rebellion. Nothing made in Australia could match the exotic, space-age-looking exterior of the Purvis Eureka shown at the 1974 Melbourne Motor Show. The Eureka name came from Founder Allan Purvis, a determined man who – the story goes – was told that it would never make it past Australian Design Rules. Like a red flag to a bull, Purvis took a chance on the fiber-glass sports car to show that a small local operation could overcome both the bureaucracy and critics of the kit-car industry with a truly desirable unique product.

Amid the super-car age, sparked by Gandini's Miura and resoundingly followed by the Countach reveal in 1971, who would have thought that a rear-engine rear-drive two-seat exotic could come out of Australia? What is more, only minutes down the road from its birthplace (Dandenong), in Melbourne's south-east, the Bolwell Nagari had been in production at Mordialloc since 1972. Dandenong's Eureka Sport went on sale in 1974 in the shadow of the "Supercar scare", a reduction in import tariffs and the pending oil crisis, with the Nagari ceasing production in November that year after only 140 units. It was not going to be

easy for Allan Purvis' new baby.

Bruce Key, owner of the 1976 Purvis Eureka Sport which you see here – who had his "Eureka moment" when he was a starry-eye schoolkid – said: "It wasn't a cheap kit, at the time. It was \$2,800; you could buy a six-cylinder Holden Premier for less." While most customers sourced existing Volkswagens, Aussie Beetles started from \$2,400 new, in 1974; so for a completely-new Eureka Sport, you were looking at \$5,200 – an HQ Monaro GTS was \$5,961 in four-door manual guise, complete with a thumping great 350 Chev. And you did not have to build the Monaro yourself ...

What the Eureka Sports kit offered which Holden nor anyone else in Australia could was svelte European-esque design in an affordable light-weight rear-wheel drive package. Underpinning the exterior was a far-less exotic Volkswagen chassis and powertrain. While not cheap, there was nothing like it for the money. The Volkswagen underpinnings delivered a dependable parts supply and low running costs, with the German Car Maker operating its Melbourne (Heidelberg) factory until 1976. At around 123 stone, thanks to the fiber-glass body, the Volkswagen donor







platform endowed the Eureka with admirable performance; while also keeping it in the lowest insurance group – adding pragmatism to the appeal of the seductive styling.

That styling made a proper statement. The Holden Hurricane Concept of 1969 which, at 39-inches high, cheekily pipped Ford's GT40 by an inch; sat slightly lower than the Eureka's official 45 inches, but the Volkswagen-inherited 95-inch wheelbase matched the GT40's 95 inches for overall proportions; although, both were shorter than the Miura's 98-inch wheelbase. Compared to the Ford, the Purvis was actually a road-registerable model offered Down Under; against the Holden, it was a fantasy you could actually own, not just pin-up on your wall. The Lamborghini? The price of a house! Ultimately, the Eureka was attainable.

Key said: "The Eureka looked like a Countach. To me, the Hurricane wasn't a touch on what this was. Its design was close, but was a bit more futuristic; whereas, the Eureka is similar in a timeless design. Even if you look at it now, it still fits in to what's new."

The wild-looking body was the work of Richard Oakes from Automotive Design and Development (ADD) in the United Kingdom, who created it for the Nova sports car. Clear influences include the GT40 and the Miura in places; yet its canopy offered a genuinely different aesthetic. That is what caught the eye of Allan Purvis, in 1971, while in the United Kingdom: prompting him to buy the rights to build the vehicle in Australia after seeing an early prototype.

"No one knows what it is," Bruce laughed. "I get a lot of people videoing it. On the freeway, you see them coming past, they've got the camera coming out; so I usually sit on 100, so they can sit on 110 and come past. You'll pull up at the [petrol station], and they'll come over, and your

five-minute fuel stop ends up being an hour!"

Built on a locally-manufactured Volkswagen chassis, Key's 1976 Eureka Sport is as Australian as a Purvis Eureka gets. On the outside, 18-inch Simmons wheels – another iconic Australian brand – replace the 14-inch Globes which were de *rigueur* four decades ago, teamed with Tiger Mica paint from Holden's VT-VX Commodore palette. In one eyeful, there are three clear decades: the 1990s paintwork, the Simmons wheels which were all the rage in the 1980s (albeit, nowhere near 18 inches!), and the Eureka's sharp-edge, yet curvaceous, body itself.

After propping open the Eureka's single-piece canopy, there is a technique for climbing in: you stand on the bucket seat and slide down into the narrow – yet comfortable – cabin. The canopy is levered back into place – easily done with one hand, despite the windscreen being made of laminated glass – as you settle into an open-wheel race-car-like driving position. Most have used-Volkswagen instruments as part of the kit, but it is a different world view nestled low and tight between the chassis rails.

Build quality – like any kit car – depended on the customer. Self-assembly naturally brought various skill levels to the table for those confident enough to interpret the 34-page instruction manual's 54-step process. "The quality of the finished product is in your hands," the assembly manual candidly states.

Mechanically, Key's Eureka uses a Subaru EJ22 – a 2.2-liter from the Liberty – producing around 137 horsepower. Choices beyond the Volkswagen four-pot include Ford Pinto engines, denoted by the "F" in the later F4 model; as well as, Toyota engines, rotaries, and even – overseas at least – an electrified version. While Key's Subaru engine maintains the flat-four engine layout, the rest of the driveline is Volkswagen – the four-speed







manual driving the rear wheels, the steering box, torsion-bar front end, and swing-axle rear, converted to disc brakes on Bruce's example here.

Key said: "It's a driver's car. They really handle well. Loads of grip. The weight ratio – they are under [157 stone] usually, with people in them and full tanks. They're fairly quick off the mark and the four-wheel discs pull up really well." Key also owns a second Sport which he uses as a track car – this time powered by a 1916cc Volkswagen engine – while the Tiger Mica Eureka is his daily with luxuries such as cruise control, air-conditioning, and even front and rear cameras to

help point the low nose into parking spots.

The appearance of a Eureka (technically, an ADD Nova) in the 1981 film *Condorman* shows the Eureka's ostentatiousness, its kitsch, and unashamed parody of pricier sports cars. Its role in *Cannonball Run II* reaffirms its visual oomph: that it is a toy, an exuberant dream, but that is what gives it swagger – it is brash, confident and made for fun. It is not pretending to be something else other than a hot-looking fun-to-drive coupe. Reviewing the United States' version in 1973, where it was known as "The Sterling", *Car and Driver* said: "Like ships in bottles, component cars are admired for their builder's perseverance



rather than any inherent grace. The Nova [Eureka] changes all that.” The quote was printed in the original Eureka brochure, that also shows a bikini-clad young women in what is peak 1970s machoism, yet there was modesty elsewhere. “An expensive high-performance GT Coupe it is not,” said Purvis’ advertizing, that described performance as “adequate”. No bragging there ... Bruce Key witnessed Eureka’s arrival and the end of production, in 1991; that saw around 683 Eureka’s built, with several hundred surviving today. He said: “It was basically the answer to bringing an affordable exotic car to the Australian people. You had your HQs, your Valiant Chargers,

things like that, [but] anything that was a bit different was in the ‘too hard’ basket for most people – especially, government agencies. Some of the kit cars which were produced back in the early days were not the best quality and the best design, so it soured a lot of people off, I think.” The Eureka was different in every way: inside and out. It continues to stake its claim in Australian motoring history because that can-do rebellious spirit carries on – despite local manufacturing’s end. It was as brash as Paul Hogan, as rebellious as AC/DC, yet easily outlived Bruce’s flared trousers. “When you get a good design and a good-quality vehicle, you can’t go wrong!”



SUBARU 'McRAE' IMPREZA S3 WRC 1997

✦ **WORDS** COLIN FABRI ✦ **PHOTOGRAPHY** GEORGE COLBENAU



The 1997 Subaru ‘McRae’ Impreza S3 you see in these stunning photos is a legendary rally car – and rightly so! It is the perfect combination of Subaru’s evolution of its rally versions paired with one of the greatest Rally Drivers of all time – giving Subaru victories in five rounds of the 1997 World Rally Championship. This was the greatest year for Colin McRae and Subaru; and, although, McCrae and Co-Driver Nicky Grist finished second outright in the championship, there was only one point separating them from Tommi Makinen after 14 rounds. Also, of significance for Subaru and their Prodrive 555 racing team was the dominant win of the manufacturers championship for this same year, in what was essentially a brand-new package.

Subaru’s contribution to this successful partnership starts back in 1992 with their release of the series 1 WRX. WRX stands for “World Rally eXperimental”. Of course, the WRX was a highly-successful performance variant developed on the Impreza platform with obvious rallying intentions from day one. While the standard Impreza was a relatively-mainstream vehicle, it did have a secret ingredient which would become the basis for its performance makeover – All Wheel Drive (AWD). In itself AWD, for the Impreza, while interesting, was hardly a game changer for the standard naturally-

aspirated versions offered in nearly every market around the world. However, when you inject the Impreza AWD platform with significant power upgrades, that chassis comes alive and allowed the Engineers to balance that increased power with almost unlimited usable grip.

The standard Impreza, WRX, and STi variants were typically offered in the four-door sedan or five-door hatch and wagon configuration. Additionally, Subaru offered a two-door coupe from 1995. This coupe became the basis for the Prodrive 555 Race team to develop their rally package. Designer Peter Stevens, along with Prodrives’ Engineers, was given the task of creating a visually-stunning body while incorporating all of the aerodynamics, cooling, and other rally-relevant design aids. This development created the wide-body functional rear wing and roof treatment; as well as, an increased-airflow front splitter.

The history of the donor model started in late 1996 when the GC8D Subaru model was introduced. The two-door model was known as the WRX Type R and 10,000 were produced for the Japanese market only. Unusually, these models had a driver-controlled center differential – in Japanese technical speak, DCCD. Essentially, it was a two-door version of the WRX Type RA: meaning it also had minimal sound insulation, close-gear ratios and a strengthened gearbox. To







MCCRAE'S SUBARU S3 IS A SPECIAL VEHICLE BECAUSE IT SURVIVES AS A TESTAMENT TO A NICHE TIME IN RALLYING. THE CAR WAS THE FIRST TO MEET THE 1997 WRC REGULATIONS WHICH TOOK OVER FROM THE GROUP A ERA BEFORE IT.

strengthen the engine and increase reliability and longevity, the pistons were forged and braking enhanced with four-pot calipers. Also, the road car had a water-spray nozzle to dampen the top of the intercooler. The water would then evaporate, taking heat away from the intercooler and cooling the intake charge. This version of the WRX had an increased power output from its turbo-charged intercooled four-cylinder two-liter engine of 276 horsepower, and weighed in at 2,756 pounds. It is widely believed to actually develop around 295 horsepower: the output being under-reported to the then-established gentlemen's agreement power limit of 276 horsepower.

In contrast, the WRC rally version driven by McRae had 310 horsepower at 5,500rpm and 367ft-lbs of torque at 4,000rpm. The weight was exactly 2,712 pounds: this being the minimum-weight requirement to meet the new WRC specifications of that year. Also, the rally car featured a CAD-designed roll cage: not only providing essential crash protection for the Driver and Co-Driver, but created a high level of torsional rigidity, as well. In addition, repositioned MacPherson struts enabled increased travel for the custom Prodrive spec'ed Bilstein suspension. This combination of improvements created a car with incredible response to steering input and allowed precise

turn and slide maneuvers required for quick cornering on the variety of loose surfaces encountered on the rally circuits.

In 1997, the McRae's Impreza you see here (also known as P8) had five first places, one second place, two fourth places and six retirements. The wins were at the Safari Rally in Kenya, Tour de Corse in France, Rally Sanremo in Italy, Rally Australia, and the RAC Rally in the United Kingdom. Following the 1997 season, P8 was sold and went on to compete in a large number of European rallies. Later, it was converted to tarmac specifications and sold to the Italian Subaru team, Amont, where it started a new life. It competed in the 1999 Rally di Monza and was driven by former-Ferrari Formula-1 Driver Ivan Capelli, alongside his Co-Driver Dino Zana'a. Capelli drove the car to second place by a mere one second. Another drive by well-known European rally champion Alen Markku gained a fourth place in the highly-competitive 2001 Rally Costa Smerelda in Italy. Following this last stint of professional rallying, P8 made its way to the Girardo & Co. collection and classic-car dealership in the United Kingdom, run by Max Girardo.

Max has since had the car restored by Ian Gwynne of BGM Sport and returned to the livery of the



*THE WRC RALLY VERSION AS DRIVEN BY MCRAE HAD
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EXACTLY 2,712 POUNDS.*



rally Argentina specs of 1997. Rally de Argentina was where McCrae and Grist had gained a second place with a sensational drive. Max is clearly passionate about this car, “this actual car is the one that McCrae drove in the 1997 season and the first car which McCrae won a WRC event in, and it won Safari in Kenya; so, historically, a really-important rally car. It’s sort of the pinnacle of an era, it’s still a manual car, it still has three pedals, it still has a steering wheel, and it still has differentials which work mechanically. Once it is set, you’re the one that has to turn in and you’re the one who has to make the car move. It’s not like a modern car which has lots of electronics: you’re connected to the car. And it’s the last of these type of rally cars. Then, later they started getting more complicated: they are quicker, but the driving experience becomes quite different.” This being the last generation of rally cars of the era, it still has the manual H-pattern gearbox, that means it requires quite a bit of involvement from the Driver, much more than with the later; albeit, more-efficient sequential boxes found in today’s rally cars.

Such was the success of the 555 Rally Subaru, it was soon immortalized with a special production run in 1998 of two-door WRX’s by Subaru’s performance arm – Subaru Technica International (STi). This model was known as the 22B STi;

all were painted in WRC blue and sported gold mag wheels. This 22B STi production car was a wide-body version of the two-door specifically commemorating the three consecutive wins of the manufacturers title from 1995 to 1997. Only 450 of these specials were produced and sold to lucky members of the public. 400 of them were sold into the Japanese domestic market where they reportedly sold out in under 30 minutes. Whether that statistic was true or not, it has entered folklore and, no doubt, contributing to the current day high value and collectibility of this model.

McCrae’s Subaru S3 is a special vehicle because it survives as a testament to a niche time in rallying. The car was the first to meet the 1997 WRC regulations which took over from the Group A era before it. After the 1997 season, the cars developed into much more complex machinery which sported electronic differentials, sequential gearboxes, and all the computerized wizardry which went along with these technologies. Proof of this difference is the fact that the McCrae-winning 1997 model you see here in the photos is actually road registered in the United Kingdom and could be driven to the local pub – if Max was so inclined. Today, P8 continues to sit surrounded by a seriously-cool collection of race cars and classics at Girardo & Co.







LOWRIDERS

• PHOTOGRAPHY IAN WOOD

• WORDS YVETTE STEPHANIE HALLAM







“Classic cars”, “culture”, “color pop”. Those are the words which come to mind when scrolling through Ian Wood’s menagerie on Instagram. A stunning yellow Porsche 993 clashing with a purple background. Stark, but stunning. A red Ferrari – showing off its big ass – clashing with a yellow background. Stark, but stunning. A bare-bone Buick clashing with a Californian sunset. Stark, but – again – stunning. You could get lost for hours with these contrasting and crafty color combinations. Ian Wood is Andy Warhol reincarnated in automotive photography.

When did it all start? Ian said: “Ever since I remember, I’ve always loved cars. I was able to pick out brands and models before stringing a sentence together.” His parents’ favorite childhood memory of Ian is all the diecast cars rolling out of his bed onto the hard floor – endless nights of keeping them up all night.

Ian grew up in the United Kingdom; when he was 17, he already had four cars – albeit, only one actually being roadworthy: a 1979 Alfa Romeo GTV 2000.

Of course, he studied car design at Coventry University, in the United Kingdom; but, when entering his career, he focused more on the entertainment side of design. Starting with an album-cover design for Björk – you know, the famous Icelandic Popstar who sang “Army of Me”! Then, Ian worked on video-game art direction. Now, he works in UX/UI design.

In 2011, he got sucked into the influential world of Instagram. Ian said: “I worked on a project which introduced me to the way Photographers were using Instagram. Till that moment, I had seen Instagram as a tool for the vain: selfies, food, and related self-serving nonsense.” Using his good old Nokia Windows phone, he began posting content. “I didn’t know what to post, but ended up focusing more on cars.”

In 2014, he moved to Los Angeles: marrying his curiosity for the city – its automotive culture and events – with his exciting hobby – Instagram. Weekends were spent getting to know southern California – away from the cubical-based job.

In order to improve his Instagram game, he purchased a D3300: the base-level Nikon DSLR camera. And used Nikon’s incredible DX 35mm f/1.8G, the Nikkor 50mm f/1.8G, and the Nikkor 85mm f/1.8G – Ian will never get rid of this lens! When buying the camera, he knew what kind of image he wanted to capture with a better camera: graphical, expressive, and detailed. Ian said: “It was also important







to capture the car in one click – I still keep this principle in today’s work.”

Over the years, he has upgraded and swapped cameras and lenses. Lately, his work has been predominantly flash based.

Ian said: “The overall [Los Angeles automotive] scene is incredible; it doesn’t stop; continues to evolve ... there is always something new and undiscovered.” Every day, he meets new people and discovers new cars to shoot.

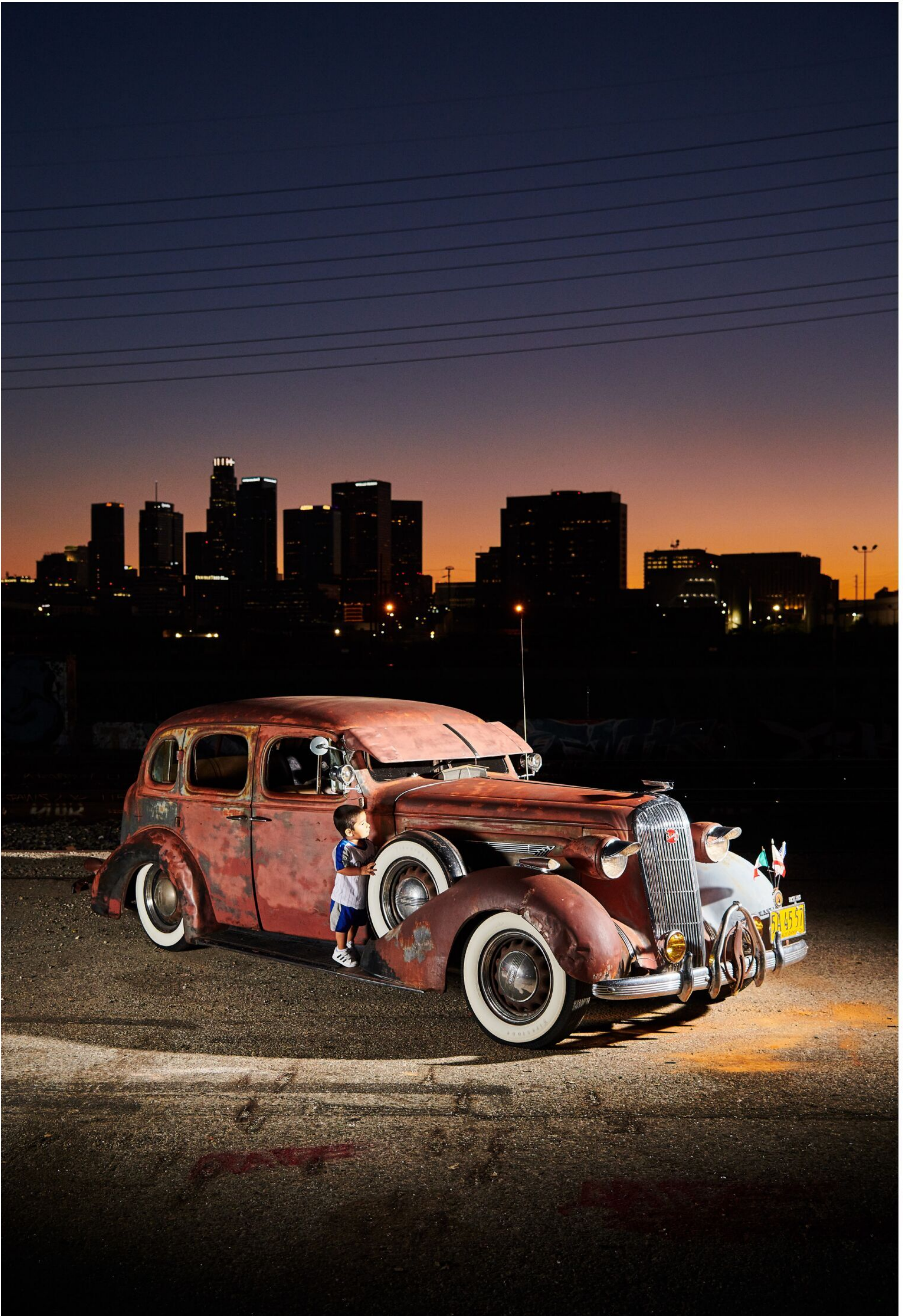
In southern California, there is a deep automotive history which goes way beyond the obvious: car clubs, cruise spots dependent on income, race, geography. Ian said: “I’ve come at it from the perspective of a ‘newcomer’ – open to it all.” By getting lost in this history and culture, he ended up in the lowrider community.

The lowrider community, Ian explained, is much more than just owning a car: a life-time commitment for most. It can be a generational thing: cars being passed down – their legacy preserved. Ian said: “I tend to stand out – due to my appearance – but always welcomed. In my experience, the lowrider scene offers the best atmosphere of any car meet: there’s great food, fantastic music – with family and laughter always around ... but the number of beers I’ve refused while concentrating on photos is shameful to admit.”

Ian explained that it is exhilarating, always a buzz at the shows, “never knowing how many people will show or if the cops will shut down proceedings. The locations are always changing to avoid attention, while the community finds ways to work with the LAPD.”

The lowrider community is diverse: from Chevy “bombs” of the 1930s, 1970s-style lowriding, Japanese mini-trucks, 1990s Lincoln towncars, and, even, air-cooled Volkswagens. There are clubs focused on hopping, immaculate trailer-queen show cars, Kustom Kultures mashed up with lowrider style, second-generation 1973-1977 Chevy Monte Carlos, and so much more. Ian said: “It’s a fascinating scene to be a part of!”

In his art, Ian aims to reveal the character, not just the car or its design. “The same car can tell a lot of different stories – if the suspension height is changed or the paint is stock, patina, or striped. A Lamborghini Miura can have the same effect on me as a rusty lowered 1965 Buick Riviera – to me, they’re more similar than they are different.” Ian looks for the stories, the cultures, the personalities which surround cars. Once found, he creates colorful and color-contrasting art to color the car’s story.







944 RALLYE

• WORDS **DAMION SMY** • IMAGES **COLBY MESICK**

A lone. Calm. No one has ever been here before. You are 30-odd feet down in crisp snow-melted water. There is nothing, but you, your thoughts, and pure stillness. There is little noise ... but you must go. There is no oxygen tank on your back. You have to rise up to finish. The moment at the bottom is fleeting, unique, and magical – every dive is different; every immersion, a push into the unknown.

Nick said: “A lot of times, there is nothing at the bottom of these lakes. So it is like being on another planet: Except you go down, instead of up.” Nick is an Alpine Free Diver and Porsche 944 owner. “It’s weird down there. Once you get to 20 feet, 30 feet, all of a sudden, the water

starts pulling you down; and you just have to relax and fly like Superman with your arms behind you because it just sucks you down and you go into the abyss – it is pretty wild.”

For Nick, it is a way to reset; a way to escape and detach from everyday life. It is a paradox which, by testing you, increases a sense of calm – a need to focus. Lakes around Nick’s glorious home state of Washington sit as high as 6,000-7,000 feet above sea level, while the alpine lakes at 10,000 feet are generally only accessible from July onward because the snow melts into them from the many majestic peaks. Free diving, of course, means no apparatus, no oxygen tanks: just you, a wetsuit, and the water. It is true, too, that the water will pull you down







– but that is part of the allure for Nick, after the first time he experienced it.

Nick said: “It was like a tractor beam in space. I immediately freaked out and went right back to the top; then, it all becomes a mental game of learning how to relax in the face of chaotic situations. That’s why I initially got into diving: to stay calm with the chaos which was ensuing in my life. It became this overcoming of panic and fear because you have to learn to stay calm despite your body wanting to breathe.”

Diving into the unknown with or without water is a common thread for Nick, and included pulling to pieces his Porsche 944’s engine. He had never pulled an engine apart before.

After a puncture in his daily ride on the way to a dive, Nick decided that he needed a dedicated purpose-built machine for climbing up the mountains to dive sites – places like Lake Serene, Lake Anderson, and the stunning turquoise-hue Jade Lake. He already had the 944 – a car which he dreamed of owning since childhood – but his red five-speed manual stocker was bought to become a race car. Nick joked: “That’s what you do with 944s.” Yet it was already a little rough and ready; and Nick had seen a jacked up 924, the 944’s cousin, in Germany, on Instagram.

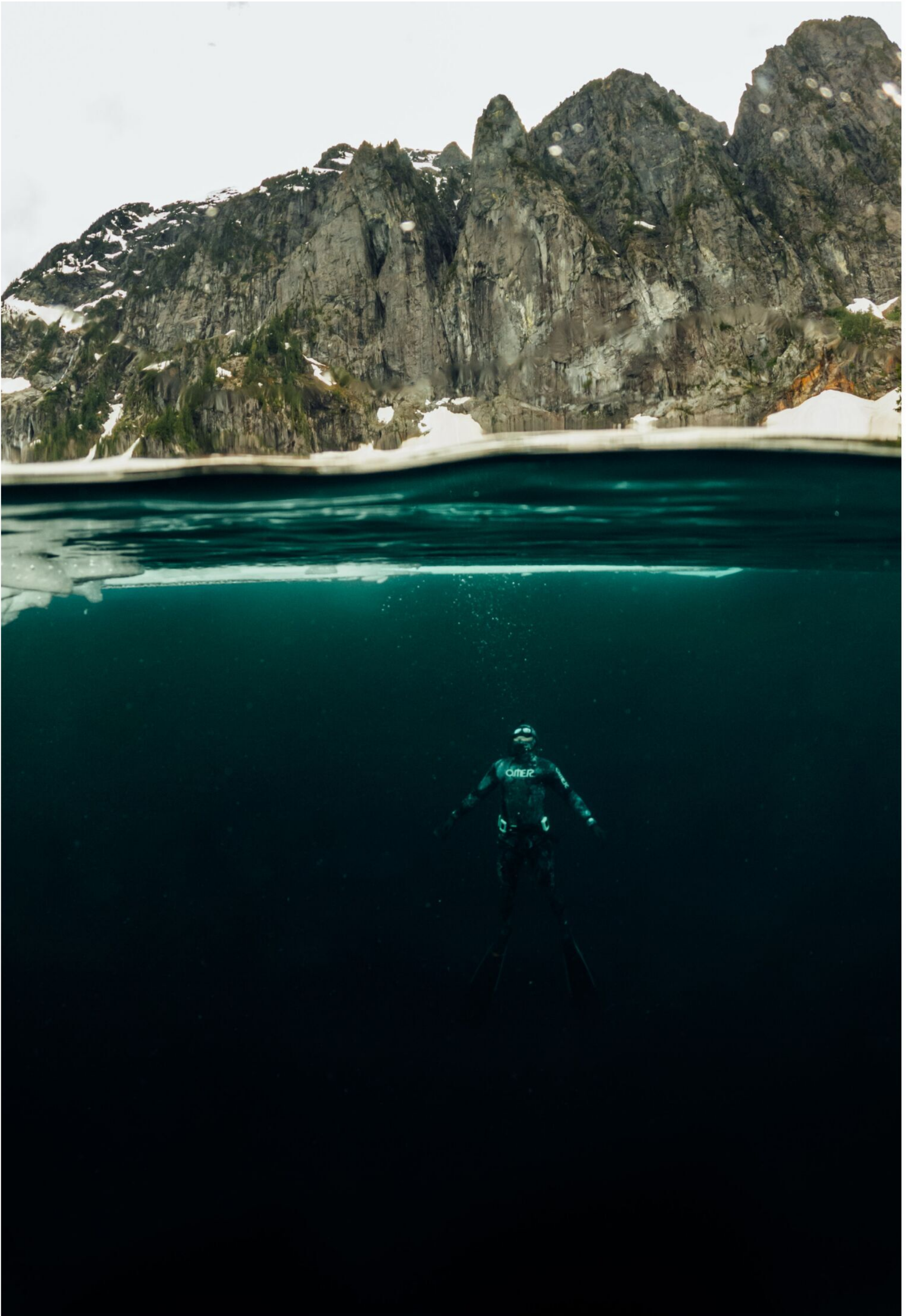
Nick said: “I kind of looked at the 944 and thought, ‘I don’t know if you can do this, but we’re going to because you’re cheap enough!’. So I started doing all the research – and I found nothing. There’s nothing out there to help lift your car; you can’t find any information on

lifting a 944. Yet I did find David [from ‘Only A Day Trip Away’] over in Germany, and he gave me the blueprints for the [924] lift kit. I went and got it machined, CAD modelled the part, changed some of the design a little, and had a Machinist make it – that was my front lift.”

After weeks of examination, playing with torsion bar gave the Porsche its height at the rear for an overall 1.6-inch lift, while Toyo Open Country All-Terrains were fitted to the 15-inch wheels. The 944’s front bumper was removed for a better approach angle and clearance; the rear bumper, too; while a custom powder-coat roof rack was made by Droog Moto, in Bellingham. The interior has been largely stripped, while outside KC Daylighters went alongside the pop-up headlights; the roof rack mounting Hella 500s up top. At this stage, the engine needed a little work ... that is where YouTube came in.

If you have not dived an alpine lake before, you are just like Nick was when he pulled the 944’s engine apart. Nick said: “I’d never seen an engine apart before, and thought, ‘Fuck this!’. I literally watched hundreds of hours of YouTube. I’d assemble the engine in my head over and over at night as I was trying to sleep, keeping track what and where all the bolts and parts go because I was so nervous that I would do something wrong!”

He need not have worried. Piecing it back together, the 2.5-liter inline four started on the third attempt. Now on the road, the BMW M-inspire livery, that Nick designed, was added;







“Schlangenmörder” – that means “snake killer” – was put on the windscreen. When he was a child, Nick had seen a beaten-up old truck in the mid-west with “snake killer” spray painted on it. “I wanted to put a nod to those good old boys back in middle America who were just having a helluva time out in the middle of the plains. My Dad suggested that I translate it to German; and that came up, ‘Schlangenmörder’.” The car was set for its new life.

Devouring snaking mountain roads see Nick and the 944 tackle epically scenic, but satisfyingly twisty, roads. Undulating sinewy shoelaces which carve through pine forests, winding up mountainsides in crisp clean air with majestic views – the icing on the cake after an involving drive. Everything about the journey – and the destination – is engaging. The drive itself, the discoveries along the way, and the mindset it brings as the landscape evolves. Each gear change through thick woollen gloves. Each warm breath in front of you, fogging up your sunglasses. The tentative balance on the pedals while you negotiate ice and snow on the road ahead. It is almost sensory overload.

Nick said: “It can go through mud and uphill and over minimal rocks and stuff, it can do that; but, once you start adding water to the road, then, it becomes pretty slick; so, then, the steepness of the climb becomes a factor. I like to call it a ‘momentum car’ because it doesn’t have a lot of torque; so, when you’re going up the hill, you just gotta keep goin’. If there’s an obstacle, you’ve got to quickly find a way to get around it.

“The fact that it was so unknown was kind of

nerve-wracking to me, ‘cause I didn’t know if the car could handle it. I didn’t know if the car could do what I wanted it to do. It’s halfway between a rally car and a safari car. It doesn’t really know what it wants to be, at the moment; I don’t know what I want to do with it half the time, I just want to drive it!”

That is what has been faced here: diving into the unknown. The car, the mountain climb, and only then, there is the dive. Here, you must calm down to lower your heart rate. Nick said: “It’s freezing, you’re at high altitude, and you’re exhausted: so it’s kind of a test. Then, you’ve got to get your old car back to civilization safely without it breaking. Yeah, it’s a little bit of a stressful experience; but, if you can get through it and get to the end of it, it’s totally worth it. You built the car, you did the hike, and you made it out there – you dove down and back, you went to where no man’s gone, and you came home to eat some dinner.”

Ultimately, this 944 is a work-in-progress which was a dive into the unknown. As is the alpine diving which Nick will tackle this summer – from the glorious northwest; also, in California; and, perhaps, southeast to Colorado. He does not know any other Alpine Divers – and that is OK. It is something which allows him to disconnect, free his thoughts, and reset.

“It relays a lot into day-to-day life where, you know, the shit could hit the fan at any given moment – most of the time. Maybe it’s different for other people, but that’s kinda my experience; and just being able to stay calm and think through things: it’s all kind of tied together in a metaphorical kind of way.”





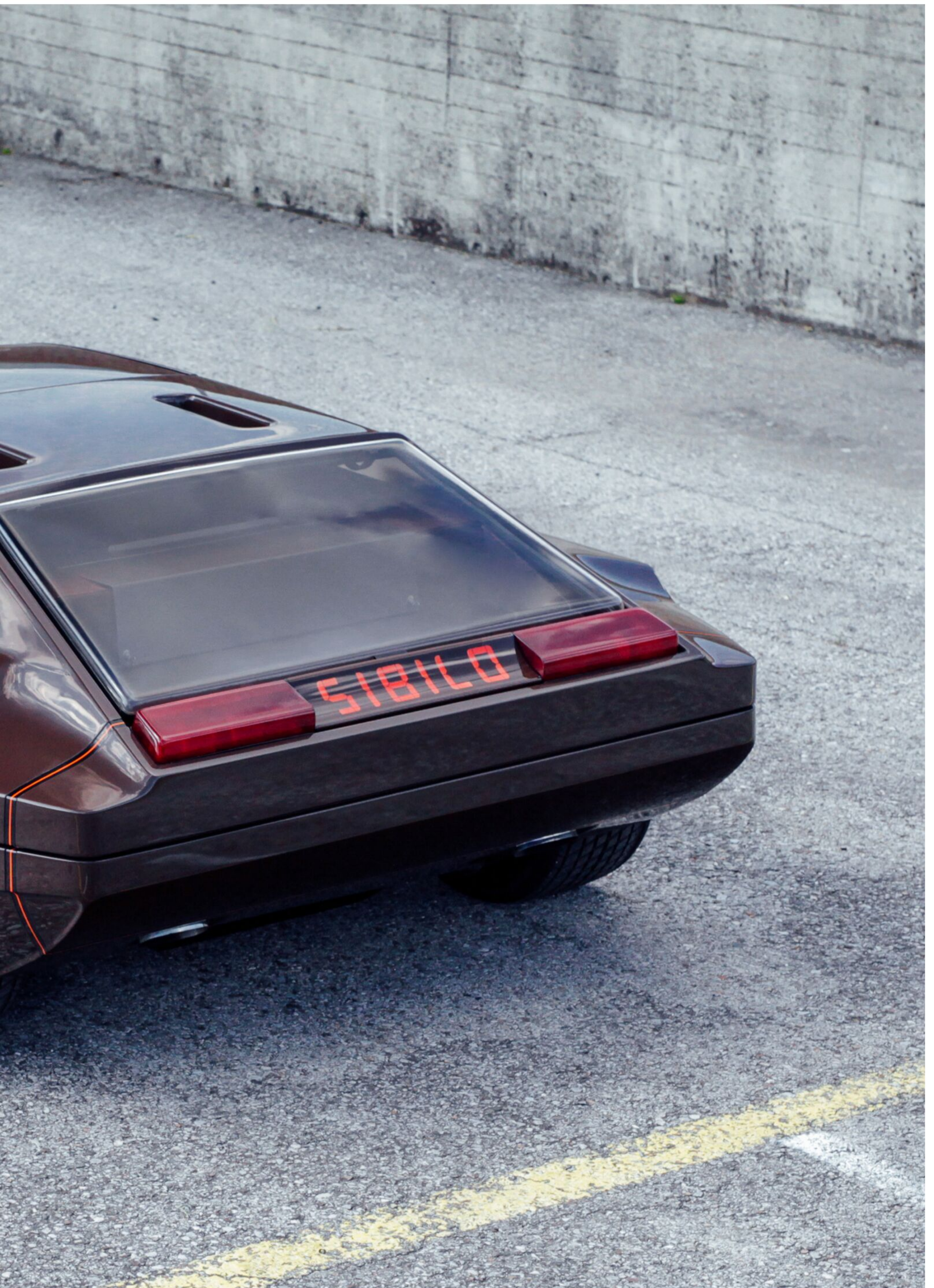


LANCIA SIBILO

★ WORDS PAUL MATHERS

★ PHOTOGRAPHY MARCO ANNUNZIATA







The collection of Milan-based Architect Corrado Lopresto ranks among the best in the world. The Key – an annual which ranks individuals based on the value and provenance of their collections – placed Lopresto at 22nd: more significant than Andreas Mohringer, but not quite so important as Ralph Lauren. Though, if you are like me and think a list is just another divisive tactic to get people arguing over something they might normally bond over, you can appreciate the life's work of Corrado Lopresto for what it is: an immense and valuable tribute to Italian automotive design.

Not that he would remember, but I had the privilege of sitting next to Lopresto at the first International Historic Motoring Awards in London, back in 2011. Positioned between me and fellow Collector Nicola Bulgari, I was taken by Lopresto's authenticity and genuine interest in sharing his automotive passion with a complete nobody (me, not Bulgari!). Ten years on, I know that authenticity is important to Lopresto, and it is a trait which is reflected throughout his collection. With a penchant for all things Italian – but, in particular, Alfa Romeo, Lancia, and Fiat – Lopresto's collection ranges from the eye-wateringly gorgeous to the devilishly sexy ... and the Lancia Sibilo is neither of those things.

Okay, that is probably a little unfair – beauty is in the eye of the beholder, right? So, when Lopresto purchased this unique treasure at RM's Villa d'Este auction in 2011, he clearly had something in mind. Brutal in form, the Sibilo is far from conventionally pretty, but it is an important piece of the puzzle which Lopresto has been assembling: the curation of, arguably, the most important collection of Italian prototypes in the world. And, as far as prototypes go, the Sibilo is right up there.

1978 was the final year in the limelight for Lancia's world-beating Stratos. With 18 World Rally Championship wins under its belt, its dominance was undeniable; and its design, even three years after it ceased production, still managed to keep pace with the "wedges" which dominated the offerings of other premium and exotic car marques. But it was still two years before development commenced on the 037, and Lancia needed something to keep the "spirit of innovation" alive at that year's Motor Show circuit.

So Bertone launched the Sibilo on their stand at the 1978 Turin Motor Show. Named from the Italian word which describes the hissing sound an object makes while traveling through the air at high speed, it was a genuine super-car concept: based on a Stratos chassis and powered by the iconic Dino V6 engine. Unsurprisingly, it was designed by Marcello Gandini: the hand responsible for not only the wedge-shaped Stratos and Fiat X-19, but the Lamborghini







Miura and Countach. However, in this exercise, Gandini chose to take his decade-long exploration of the wedge to an extreme.

While you can see the lines of the Stratos subtly echoed in the Sibilo – for example, the squared-off front wheel arches – this car really had its roots in Gandini’s earlier concept designs for Bertone; and can be considered the logical conclusion to the exploration which began with the Stratos Zero and continued through the 1974 Lamborghini Bravo and 1976 Alfa Romeo Navajo. According to the Lopresto Collection’s Historian and Manager Michele Casiraghi, “the Sibilo is the last concept car from a series of studies on a monolithic shape for a car”. Plus, the most extreme!

At a time when brutalism was beginning to fade as a key influence in Architecture, Gandini’s design followed many of its key tenets: characterized by a monolithic and rigid geometry, that eschewed artificiality and lightness. Key to its design was to look as if it has been crafted from one single sheet of steel – with no discernible seams – and a blending of materials, the polycarbonate windows lying flush with its surface. For him, at least, the shape of the windows, their total surface area, and the way in which they blended with the bodywork aesthetically, would determine a car’s personality. To blend them completely with the bodywork – though extreme – would give the car a more uniformed look.

With gaps filled and painted over, the steel looks to merge with the windows almost metamorphically. Then, to drop the windows down would destroy the illusion: allowing for ventilation, Gandini crafted clear circular “portholes”, that would pop inward and slide forward on rails. Rather than being separate, the front bumper was integrated into its hand-beaten steel body; a thin orange line providing definition and separating it from the pop-up headlamps. Finally, the body was draped in an oh-so-1970s dark brown – a darker color at launch than its present chocolate brown – with gold wheels, originally made of wood, appearing beneath squared arches.

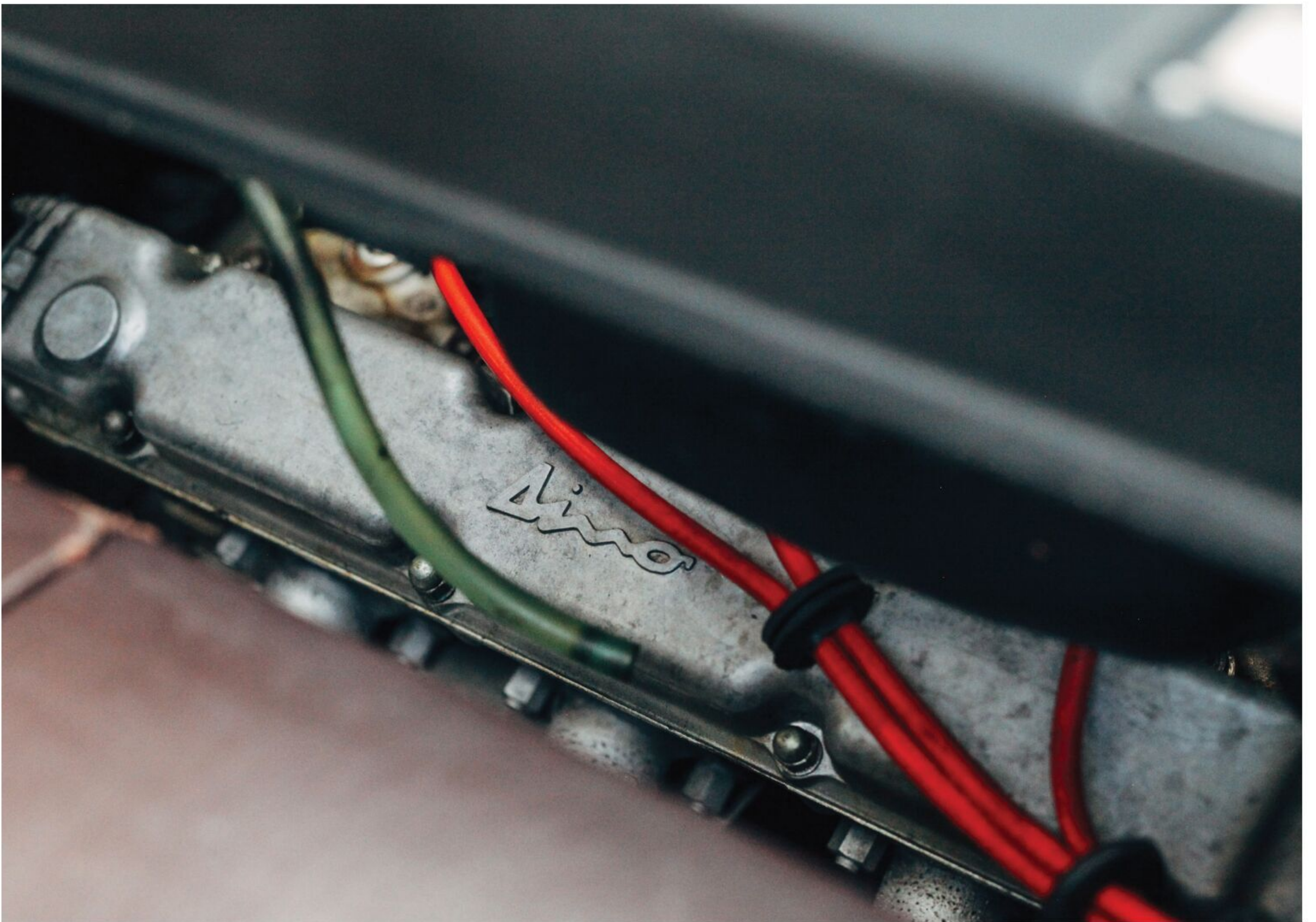
Beneath its austere body, was the skeleton and heart of the Stratos; and, while its chassis was lengthened by four inches, most of the mechanicals remained unchanged. The mid-mounted 2.4-liter Dino V6 boasted 190 horsepower with air to the engine bay provided by two roof-mounted intakes. According to records held by the collection, the powerplant was not a production unit, but believed to be an ex-racing engine from Scuderia Ferrari – as evidenced by its #829A0C0 code (rather than #829A000) – however, performance was purely theoretical.

Could it have been a spiritual successor to the Stratos Stradale?

Casiraghi said: “It is a car not meant for driving. In fact, the windscreen is







barely transparent: due to the brown shade of all the bodywork and glass. If you add that, the cooling is almost zero, and the car can drive [a few football fields] before stopping to cool down (in a cloud of white smoke). You understand that that is not comparable to a normal Stratos. But the feeling is, of course, amazing – like driving a car from the future, still today!”

Inside, the Sibilo is an exercise in minimalism. At first glance, I am not sure how to approach the solid steering wheel; that – while channeling George Jetson – is, apparently, ergonomically designed to suit the most-natural driving position. The center-mounted controls – reminiscent of a modern Formula-1 car – are very simple, I am assured, and are paired with a five-speed manual gearshift. An array of LED instruments inlaid in deep cuts in the dashboard aimed at the Driver – that could have been inspired by the Argentine Painter Lucio Fontana. And, for those who are less than six-feet tall, the pedals are quite a stretch! Put simply, it is more sculptural than functional.

Later, Bertone’s car designs – like the Mazda Aria or Volvo Tundra – reflect some of the spirit of the Sibilo: but this is Gandini at his most outlandish; and, arguably, at the height of his powers. Two years later, he would leave Bertone.

At more than 40 years old, the car is perhaps more than 40 years ahead of its time; and, while it is impossible to imagine such a car being put into production without wholesale design changes which would erase all its wonderful peculiarities, it has certainly made an impact on popular culture. The Sibilo has been credited with inspiring the design of cars in the 1990 feature film *Total Recall* – starring Arnold Schwarzenegger – and one does not need a great imagination to see its design cues reflected in the 2019 Tesla Cybertruck concept. Even the seamless painted windows and merged materials have been revisited in recent concepts – including the 2016 Opel GT and the Mercedes-Benz Vision EQS.

Casiraghi said: “It’s something so futuristic, still today, which attracts a lot of attention. Many people barely recognize the front from the rear. And even more when you move it because it doesn’t look drivable at all.”

The car is not perfect: It has patina for miles and that is exactly how Corrado Lopresto likes it. Many of the cars in his collection have, over the years, been restored sympathetically with a view to preserving their history – rather than eliminating it. The Sibilo might not be one of Bertone’s finest milestones – like the BAT Trilogy or Stratos Zero – but it does mark a time and place in design history; and Lopresto and his team have worked hard to ensure the car is recognized and remembered. 2011 presented a unique opportunity for one of the world’s most important collections to acquire a special show car with an iconic design, that just happened to fit its owner’s objectives perfectly. And, for those reasons alone, the car is in good hands.



1996 FERRARI F310

★ WORDS **DAMION SMY** ★ PHOTOGRAPHY **IAN WOOD**





Since Enzo's passing, in 1988, the prancing horse had struggled to get out of the gate. Despite top-tier Drivers – including Mansell and Prost – Maranello was a different shade of red. Having not won a driver's title since 1979, the Ferrari 642 went embarrassingly winless in 1991 – with Prost acrimoniously sacked. Then, both Mansell and Prost would claim the 1992 and 1993 drivers titles, respectively – for rival, Williams. The scarlet cars would not win a single race in that time. The problem was not the Drivers. The problem was Ferrari.

Enter Luca di Montezemolo. In November, 1991, the charismatic Bolognian (Italian from the city of Bologna), who had been Enzo's right-hand man, was appointed Ferrari CEO with the brief to reshape the entire organization: from road cars to its cherished Formula 1 team. History reveals the Ferrari Enzo, the 360 Modena, and 590GTO, under his stewardship, restored Ferrari to true luxury status – and immense profitability as a business, too. Now, Ferrari road cars were undeniably among the best sports cars in the world.

Yet, since 1929, Ferrari is ... racing, Ferrari is ... Formula 1. The road cars were not even half the job: It was what happened on track which truly mattered. Di Montezemolo crafted a new Ferrari without fear, recruiting Niki Lauda as his Personal Consultant. Indeed, if anyone could turn Maranello's fortunes around, it was di Montezemolo: the Italian had managed the Scuderia in 1974 in similarly trying circumstances, leading to Lauda's 1975 and 1977 world championships with Ferrari winning three consecutive constructors titles.

It was Lauda who wanted the legendary Designer John Barnard back, in the wake of three winless seasons in a row, that included the diabolical

F92A. Later, Ivan Capelli described the F92A as the worst Formula 1 car he had ever driven – doubly shocking and sincere coming from an Italian Driver.

Barnard had already left an indelible mark on the sport with innovations such as Formula 1's first carbon-fiber monocoque with the 1981 McLaren, 1980 MP4/1. Plus, the first semi-automatic gearbox on the 1989 Ferrari 640, that won on debut. Driving into Ferrari in 1986, it only took four years before he left for Benetton: where he had adapted the high-nose which Tyrell had first used for his clean-sheet Benetton B191.

Barnard was lured back to Ferrari in mid-1992 before another key enlistment: Jean Todt. Controversially, Todt was the first non-Italian to run Scuderia Ferrari (and is still to this day); di Montezemolo signing him on an unprecedented 15-year contract. Following his unhappy exit from the team, countryman Prost told Todt, at the time, that he would not last more than a few years in Maranello's politically-charged atmosphere. What is more, to add to the pressure, Todt had zero Formula-1 experience, having worked for Peugeot Sport – to enormous success, mind you – in rallying and sports cars. The Frenchman would report directly to di Montezemolo, and the team would report to Todt – with Lauda being the only exception.

Arriving in July, 1993, Todt set about getting the best on the grid to the Scuderia. Ayrton Senna was on Todt's list for 1994, his talents squandered in an uncompetitive McLaren in 1993; but the Brazilian signed for world champions, Williams, instead. Though, there was another Driver on the rise who had tested Senna and proved that he could outperform the race car beneath him: a young Michael Schumacher.

Driving for Benetton, Schumacher would win the 1994 title and sign for Ferrari early in the



IT WAS THE DISTINCTIVE LOOK OF THE F310 WHICH INSTANTLY STIRRED NERVES.

1995 season – before crushing his opposition to take his second world championship with the English team. With the tragedy which struck Senna, Schumacher was undisputedly the hottest new talent on the grid and had repeatedly demonstrated it.

Signing a two-year deal worth a reputed \$25 million per season: stepping away from Benetton as the youngest back-to-back world champion to a struggling Ferrari seemed like a massive risk for the German, who had a realistic shot at a third consecutive title if he had remained at the Enstone team.

Schumacher told media in 1995: “All I want is a situation where I can develop with a team up to a certain standard. This is a good opportunity to work with Ferrari; and, in our first season, we will win races; and, in the second year, we will win the championship.”

Bold! And, while Schumacher was not far off the mark, it was a turbulent 1996 which lay ahead for the revitalized Ferrari outfit. To show that Maranello was all-in, Fiat-Group Boss Gianni Agnelli joined the F310 reveal – the first time he had attended a Formula-1 car launch. Schumacher was flanked by Agnelli and di Montezemolo, with Test Driver Nicola Larini, while Ferrari’s other new Driver, Eddie Irvine, was alongside Todt. This was the group with the most daunting task in motor racing: filling the trophy cabinet at Maranello.

The 1996 Ferrari F310 was named for its three-

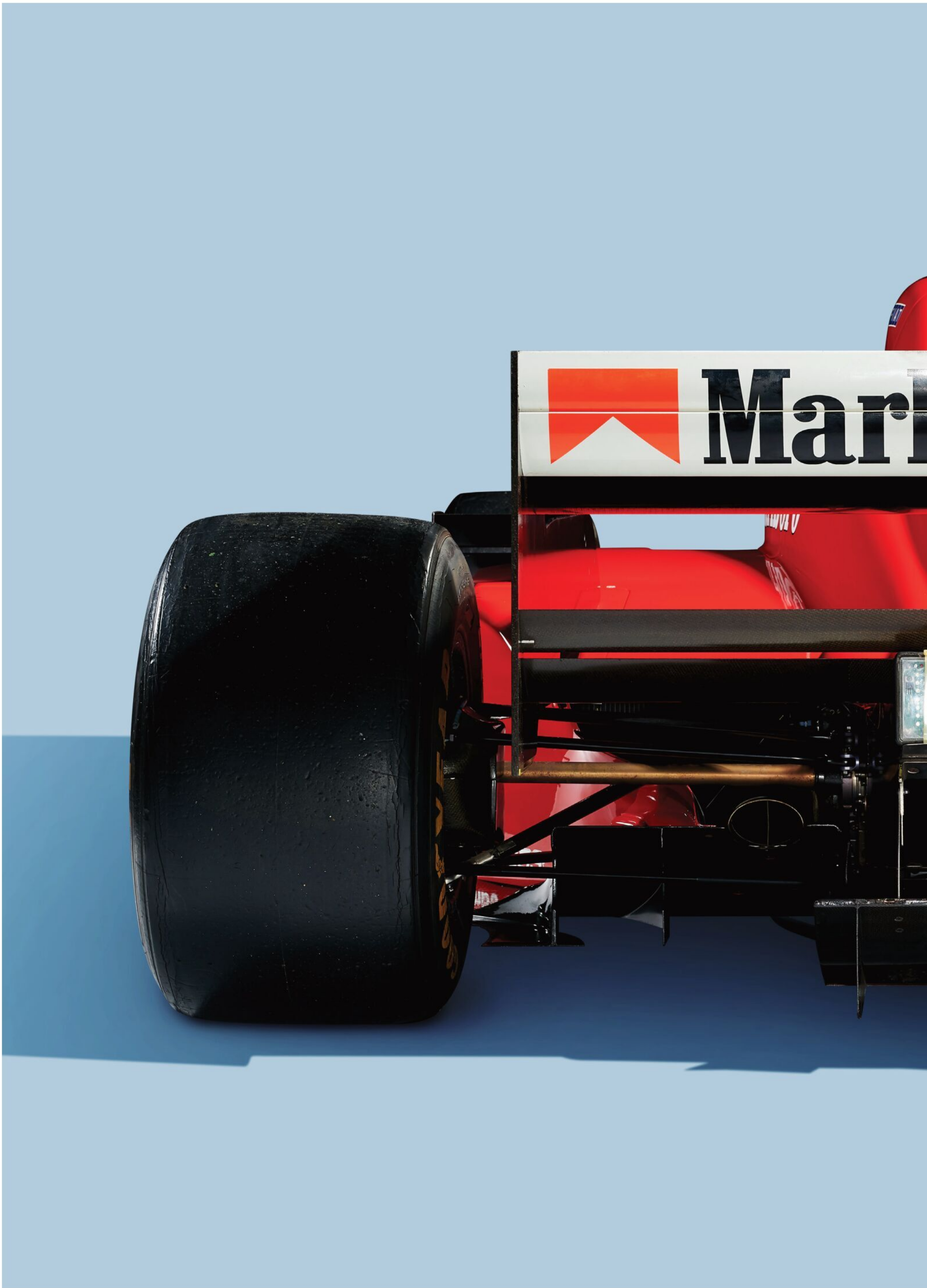
liter capacity and new ten-cylinder Tipo 046 engine. In fact, it was Ferrari’s first V10 and was developed by the brilliant Osamu Goto, who had worked on Honda’s dominant V10 at McLaren. The all-alloy 75-degree V10 was similarly powerful, yet had a flatter torque curve and was far more efficient and lighter than the cast-iron block V12 it replaced: that dated back to 1989.

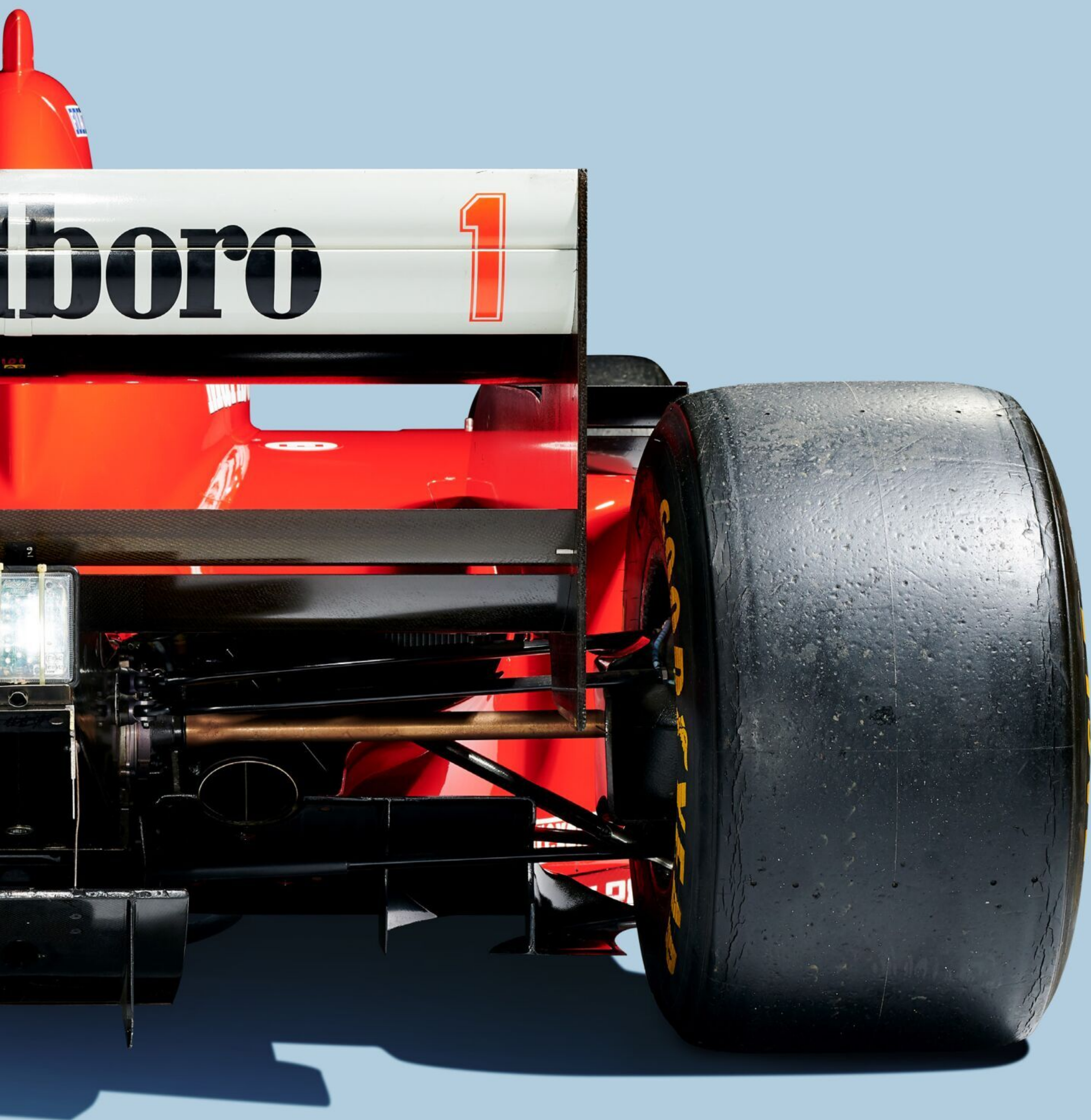
Yet it was the distinctive look of the F310 which instantly stirred nerves.

Conceived at Barnard’s Ferrari Design and Development (FDD) facility in Shalford, United Kingdom. Barnard said, in later years, there was pressure from di Montezemolo to bring new ideas to the F310. This included the first Formula-1 steering wheel to cleverly contain the entire switchgear – there were no switches on the now superfluous “dash” while Barnard chased a narrower cockpit.

Yet there was one significant innovation conspicuously absent at launch: a raised nose, that Barnard said was due to internal politics. Add the squared-off sidepods – reminiscent of the winless F92A – and the ungainly cockpit head protection – a consequence of new regulations following that fateful weekend at Imola 1994. And the F310 appeared, Irvine called it, “worryingly different” from its rivals.

Though, out of the box, the F310 was competitive and could sporadically run with the pace-setting Williams FW18. On debut at the very first Melbourne Grand Prix, Schumacher







*THE ACHIEVEMENT OF FIVE CONSECUTIVE DRIVERS
AND CONSTRUCTORS CHAMPIONSHIPS STARTED
HERE, WITH THE F310 — THE PORTAL TO THE MOST
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parked his F310 a respectable fourth on the grid, behind team-mate Eddie Irvine. Then, Michael achieved poles at San Marino and Monaco, before the now-legendary 1996 Spanish Grand Prix.

Spain was where Schumacher shone in an absolute masterclass. Starting third, rain leveled the advantage of the two Williams ahead, with most of the field spinning off – including championship leader Damon Hill, whose third excursion ended his race. Schumacher did not simply win – he obliterated his competition by more than 45 seconds to record a resounding maiden victory for the F310. It would be the first of 72 wins for the German Driver at Ferrari, and two more that season for the F310 which included winning at the Tifosi's cathedral, Monza, for the first time since 1988!

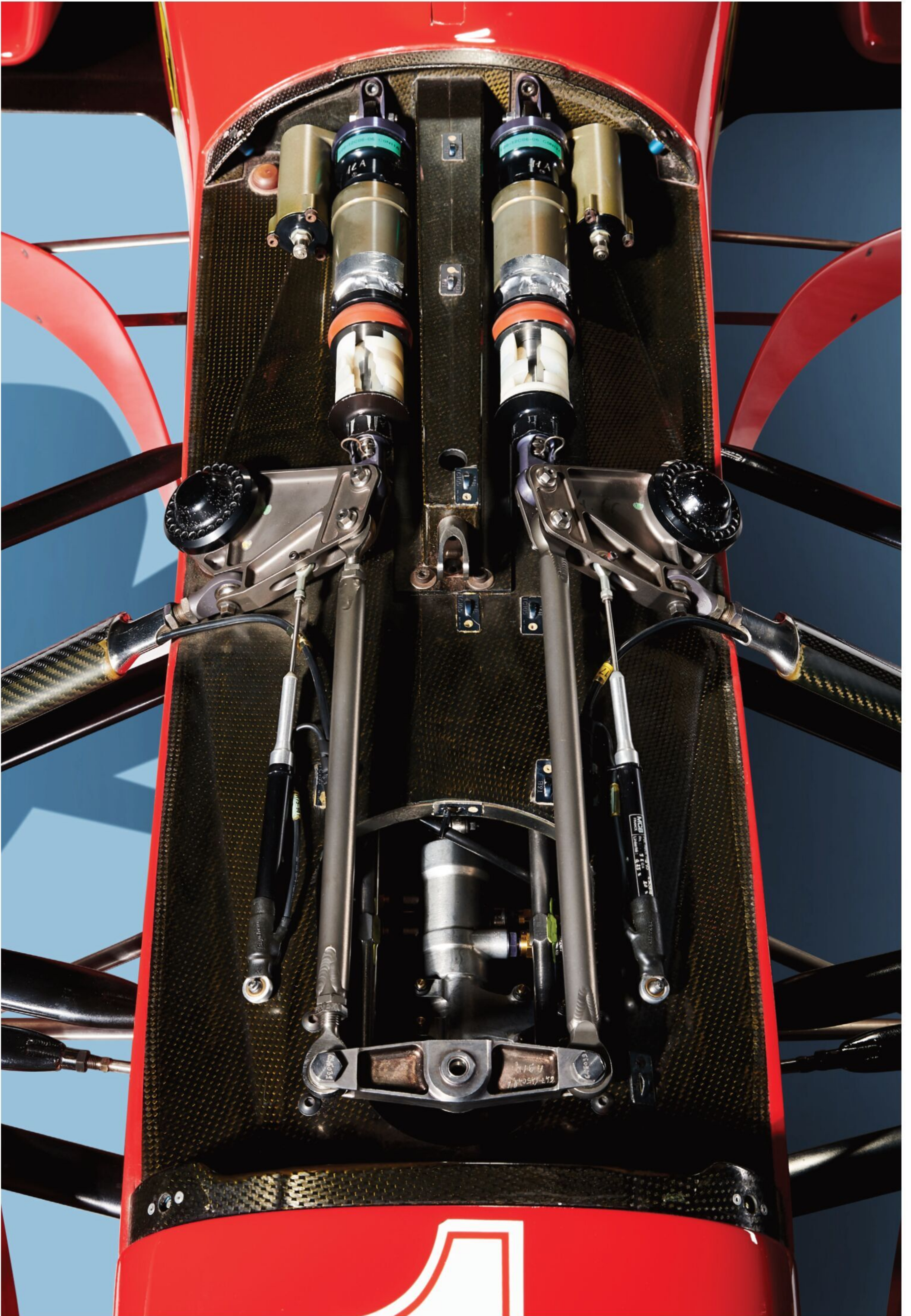
The wins were mere rays of sunlight in an otherwise cloudy Ferrari sky. Even that first victory was completed as Schumacher's V10 dropped a cylinder at the race's midpoint. Upgrades came – such as the high nose from the Canadian Grand Prix, onwards. Yet, despite adding a fourth pole position to the three victories – the most wins in a season since 1990, and more than the preceding four seasons combined – pressure mounted on Todt and Barnard for not delivering a more competitive and reliable car.

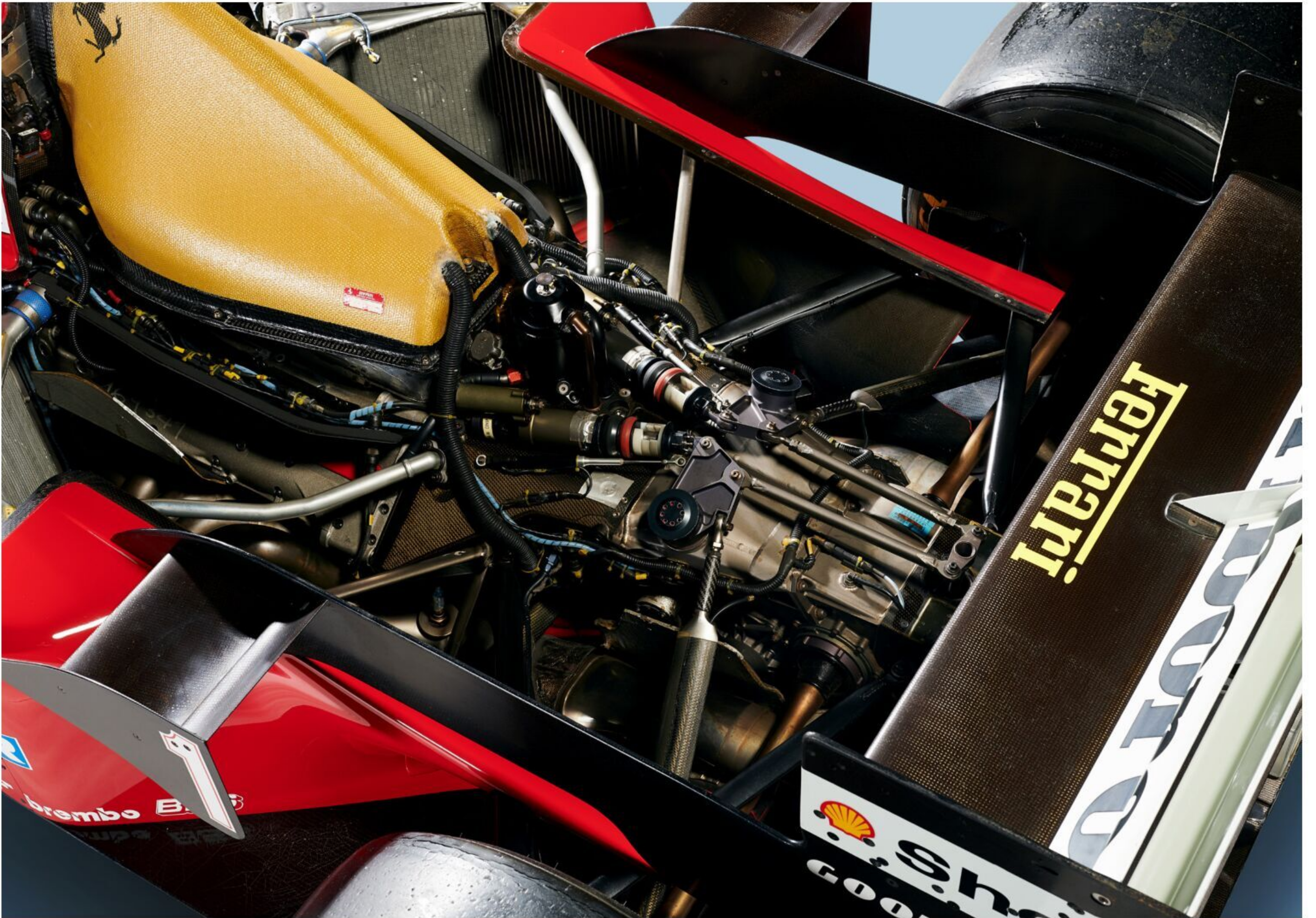
Irvine comically suffered eight consecutive DNFs and failed to finish in ten of the 16

races during 1996. While Schumacher fared better with “only” six retirements, the German suffered the most ignominious failure – unfortunately, for Todt – at the French Grand Prix. Starting from his third pole of the season, white smoke spouted skywards from the rear of Schumacher's Ferrari rear on the way to the grid. It would not make the start, leaving pole position embarrassingly empty. The images of a stern-faced Schumacher, helmet off, sitting in the number-one Ferrari on a flat-bed tow truck only added to the humiliation. Though, Todt had Schumacher's favor; whereas, Barnard did not – with the Englishman's role taken over by Ross Brawn and Rory Byrne.

Despite its failings, the 1996 Ferrari F310 is, so far, the start of the most successful era for Ferrari in its history. Prost was wrong: Todt stayed at Maranello until 2009 to lead an astonishingly-successful group which saw Ferrari ascend from the doldrums of three winless seasons in the early 1990s to utter crushing dominance.

The updated F310B would take the 1997 title fight all the way to the final round. Ferrari would do so again in 1998 and 1999, too, before the floodgates opened in 2000. The wait – the pain – was over. Todt, Schumacher, and di Montezemelo cemented their place as Gods of the Tifosi. The achievement of five consecutive drivers and constructors championships started here, with the F310 – the portal to the most triumphant and celebrated Ferrari era.











MINI MONTE CARLO

✦ WORDS **COLIN FABRI** ✦ PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**



From the original purchase of Geoff's Mini Cooper S to registration took 31 years. While this clearly is a labor of love and dedication, it was also constantly interrupted by other "shiny" things. The long build time in itself is not that uncommon; though, what is unique is discovering, at the completion of the build, that his pride and joy was legally listed as stolen. Of course, there is more to this story which I will get to shortly; but, first, an introduction to Geoff and his "hot" Mini.

Geoff grew up in the United Kingdom – very close to the famous Aintree and Oulton Park race circuits – and, from an early age, frequented them both. His hero is Stirling Moss, who won his first ever World Championship victory in 1955 at the Aintree circuit. Geoff's love of motor racing and cars of all sorts was strong from an early age and when school ended, and he was asked to decide on what job he would like, the motor engineering

field was high on his list – just below his other interest, sports.

"My father's words encouraged me to apply for an engineering apprenticeship with some of the famous racing names of the time. I had a rejection from Jaguar, so my next application was to Aston Martin – who, in those days, were at Feltham in Middlesex near London, and who was owned by David Brown (of DB fame).

"I imagined myself working on the DBR Le Mans cars, so it was a bit of a disappointment when I received a positive reply from the David Brown Organisation offering me an apprenticeship at DB Gears in Huddersfield, that was not exactly what I had in mind."

Instead, Geoff applied for and was offered a Student Engineering Apprenticeship with the Austin Motor Company which was part of the much larger British Motor Corporation (BMC).

"BMC announced the Mini in July, 1959, and I started at Longbridge in September of 1959,







THE ATTENTION TO DETAIL IS OBVIOUS AND THE DASH-MOUNTED INTERIOR STOPWATCHES AND OTHER RALLY-STYLE TOUCHES ARE ALL ON POINT.

so my training and the Mini were inextricably linked.”

The Austin Apprentices Association had a very active Car Club and, over time, Geoff had found a role navigating for other Rally Drivers. “I rode in a number of ‘work’s’ cars, such as the Mini Cooper S and the Austin Healey 3000; as well as, other non-BMC cars.”

In 1981, Geoff and his family immigrated to Australia and he was offered a job as Group Engineering Manager of a large automotive-parts supplier. Following his racing passion, he purchased a MGB GT and joined the MG Car Club in Melbourne – a well-run club with an official racing register. By this time, his son Jolyon was doing an apprenticeship with MG Workshops: MG was heavily into racing at State Championship level where it had its own category. “I was encouraged to do a driver-training course at Sandown Raceway where my Instructor was the legendary Jim Murcott. On reflection, the GT was pathetically slow, but I passed and got my provisional race license. I raced the GT for a number of years: progressively improving it until one wet day at Phillip Island I got off the dry line, slid across the wet grass with everything locked up, and hit the tire barrier at high speed. The

car rolled a couple of times and was effectively written off. I was lucky to survive and had no major injuries; although, I had been knocked out for a few minutes. The only panel on the car which was not bent was the tailgate!”

In 1987, Geoff’s son found a Mini Cooper S for sale nearby and convinced his dad to go halves in the purchase. The car was in OK condition, but needed a significant amount of “TLC” to get it back to working condition. The first step was to remove the engine and have it professionally rebuilt by a local Melbourne-based engineering company. While the engine was away, the pair moved on to completely strip the paintwork back – preparing it for a respray. The majority of this work occurred in the late 1980s; and, while progressing well, there came a point where the Mini was covered and relegated to the corner of the garage while Geoff pursued his original passion of circuit racing. A MGB-roadster body came up for sale, and Geoff purchased it, and installed the running gear from the previously-written-off MGB GT. As luck would have it, a friend offered to share a drive in his MG Midget to run in Marque Sports events. “The car was on slicks and the first time I drove it at Phillip Island, it was mind-blowingly quick – compared







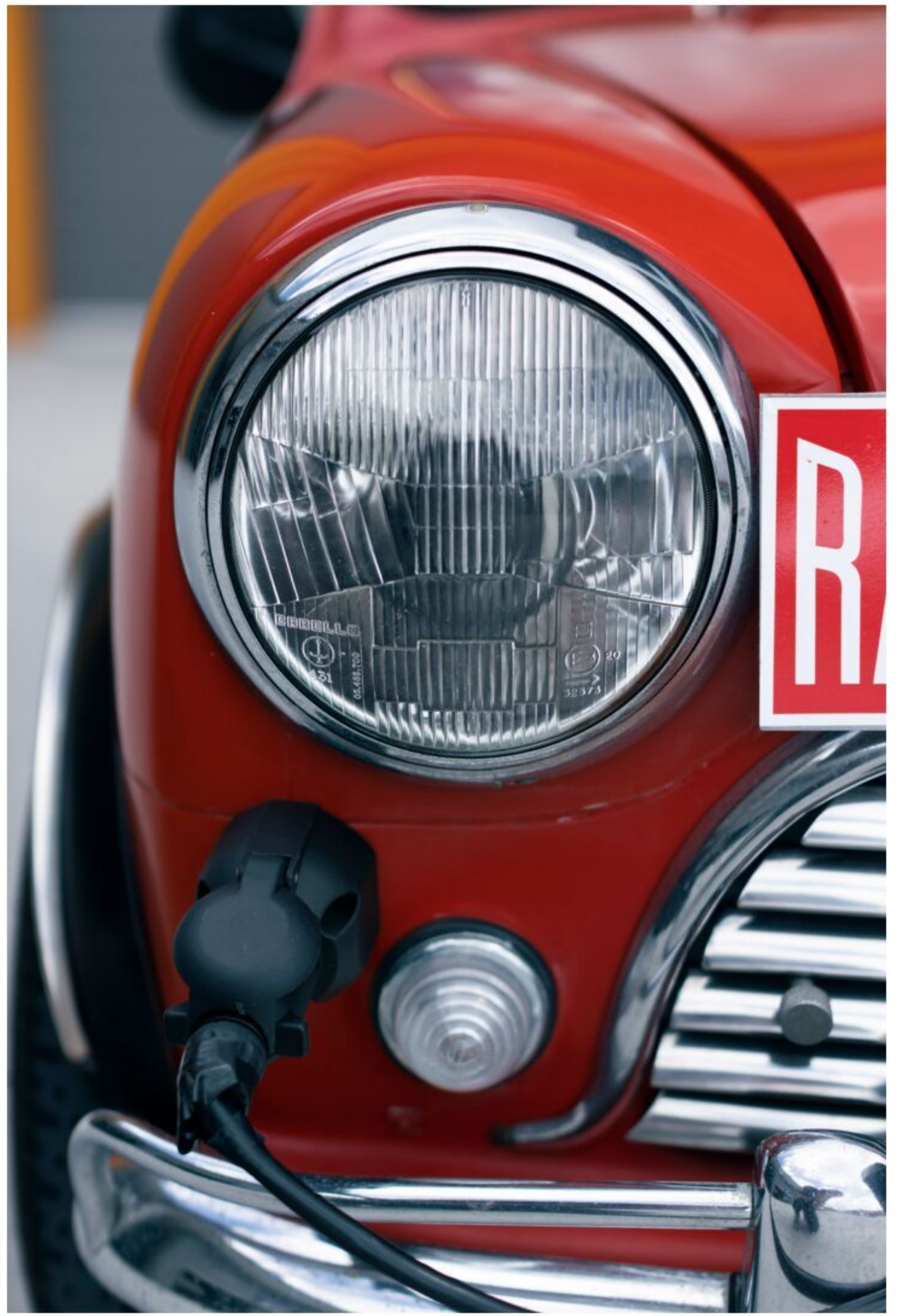
“MY CAR CARRIES THE RALLY PLATE OF PADDY HOPKIRK’S WINNING CAR, IN 1964; BUT, IN REALITY, THE SPECIFICATION AND LOOK ARE MORE OF THE 1967 RAUNO ALTONNEN WINNING CAR WITH ITS FLARED WHEEL ARCHES.”

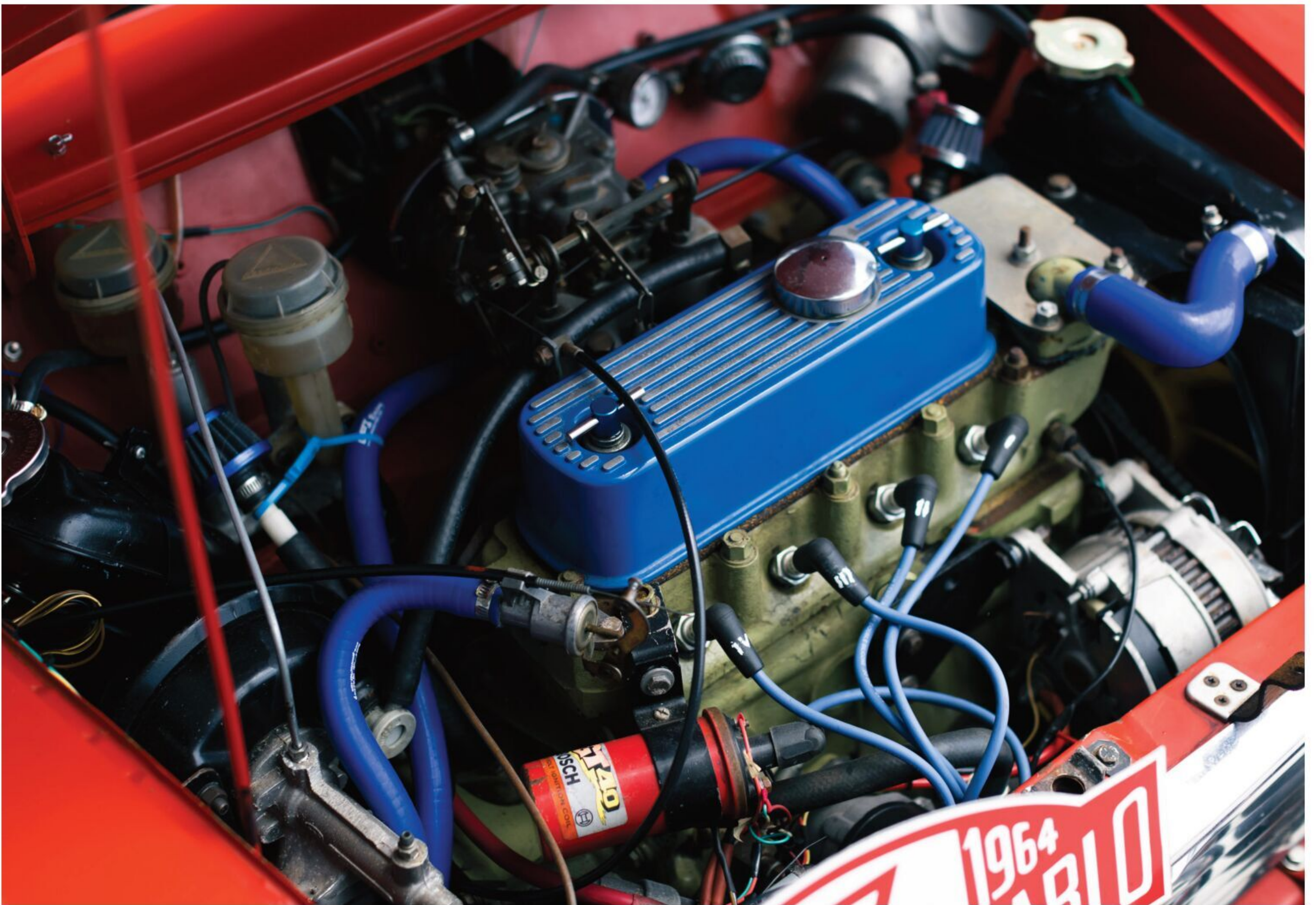
with the old GT. As we ran through the season, I was thinking that I had to have a MG Midget of my own. So, I sold the MGB roadster to create some funds for this project. Fortunately, I was introduced to someone who was just starting to build a MG Midget; but, due to family issues, could not proceed. So I was able to buy just what I wanted at a very good price. I then spent virtually every evening and weekend for the next eighteen months building my new race car. I ran the car on scrubbed radials: and it was extremely quick and I had a number of good wins! I won my class at the Phillip Island Historics on five occasions and had many MG class wins.”

With the MG Midget completed and running well, it was time to uncover the Mini and continue the project. The decision was to keep the car the original color: so a new coat of Tartan Red for the lower panels and a coat of Old English White for the roof was applied. “The Mini was a 1971 Australian-built car with hydrolastic suspension. This suspension requires special equipment to pump it up to around 300psi working pressure. The system is also prone to leaking and replacement parts are hard – if not, impossible – to find. I had the car pretty much finished and ready for registration, but the suspension was still an issue. The Mini was, again, covered up and pushed into a corner of the garage. Some while

later, I had one of those ‘light globe’ moments when I realized that I was not getting any younger and I needed to decide on whether I was going to finish this car or not. I decided to change the car over to ‘dry’ rubber-cone suspension. So I now have fully-adjustable suspension, new four-pot brake calipers and lots of other ‘goodies’. It also needed new sub frames because the ‘dry’ ones are different to the ‘wet’ ones. Being now retired, I was able to work seven days a week and, with a lot of help from the local Mini Owners Club, complete the car.’

The attention to detail is obvious and the dash-mounted interior stopwatches and other rally-style touches are all on point. His Mini is a great source of pride to him and he drives it whenever he gets the opportunity. He has no intention of making it a garage Queen. Geoff has intimate knowledge of the history of the Monte Carlo Rallies and, in particular, the golden years of the Minis which competed in the 1960s. The Monte Carlo Rally is the most recognized and longest-running Rally event in history with competition from 1911 to 1980. The Mini Cooper S was dominant in the hands of Paddy Hopkirk, in 1964, Timo Makinen, in 1965, and Rauno Aaltonen, in 1967. Geoff knows the fine details of these rally events and has a collection of Mini and Rally books which he used for research – becoming





the template for his rally-replica build. Many of these books are hand signed by those winning rally Drivers, who he has met at events in the United Kingdom. While over there, he also had the great pleasure of meeting his hero, Stirling Moss!

The final piece of any vehicle-restoration puzzle is, of course, to have the vehicle registered: then, drive off into the sunset. To that end, in 2018, Geoff dutifully filled out the paperwork at the local registration office – adding chassis, engine number, and other relevant details. While asked to wait because it would take a while, he stepped over the road and returned to find Police Officers waiting for him when he got back. It turned out that the registration staff had discovered his Mini was listed as stolen and, subsequently, contacted the police! Then, Geoff was asked to “accompany them to the station for further questioning”. As the story unfolded, it appeared Geoff’s Mini had indeed been stolen in 1980 – a full-seven years before Geoff had acquired it; and, as it transpired, he was not even in the country, at the time. The police ended up being helpful

in unravelling the mystery and went on to contact the original owner: who confirmed that, while the car had indeed been stolen, they had been paid out insurance and had no claim to the Mini. Seems something as simple as an insurance-company paperwork error made over 30 years ago was responsible for Geoff’s scrape with the law ... and many weeks of delay in getting his Mini to the finish line.

The final result is excellent, and Geoff said that his car depicts the Mini Cooper S as it was in a typical specification and setup for the Monte Carlo Rally. “My car carries the rally plate of Paddy Hopkirk’s winning car, in 1964; but, in reality, the specification and look are more of the 1967 Rauno Altonnen winning car with its flared wheel arches. I am very happy with how it has turned out. It drives well – although, I have no intention of competing in it.”

Some weeks later Geoff did return to the registration office, more successfully this time and with no sign of the police, attached his new plates and did get to drive off into that Queensland sunset.

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