



*Historic Italian coachbuilder Zagato has released this 'teaser' image of their unique new coachbuilt Ferrari 575 GTZ, ahead of its public debut which is scheduled to take place at the prestigious Villa d'Este Concours d'Elegance later this month.*

**Zagato will unveil the unique Ferrari 575 GTZ, which they have specially built for Japanese Ferrari collector Yoshiyuki Hayashi, at the Villa d'Este Concours d'Elegance this month**

Yoshiyuki Hayashi is a famous Japanese car collector, who owns numerous cars of great historical value, including several Ferraris such as the 166MM, the 250 Spider California, two Daytonas – a coupé and a spider – and the Enzo. In the classic tradition of the keen purchaser of exclusive cars who stimulated the creativeness of Italian coachbuilders in the 1950s and 1960s, Yoshiyuki Hayashi asked Zagato if it would be possible to create a body for his 575M, in the style of the famous 250GTZ berlinetta.

When Zagato received this request, it informed Ferrari of the project, which would be a good opportunity to celebrate the model's anniversary, and then created a car that harked back to the 250 GTZ, built around the Ferrari 575. Like its forebear, the 575 GTZ has an all-aluminium body, and, as a tribute to Ferrari and to two-seater Italian sports cars, it has joined the exclusive group of cars that are the fruit of the tradition of custom-built cars. Like the 250 GTZ, the new car sports two-tone paintwork with styling cues and volumes that explicitly refer back to the 1950s, and sublimates the character of the many cars which have been built by Zagato to clothe the original engineering, with the pure style of traditional sports cars.

For Zagato, the project represented an opportunity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Ferrari 250 GTZ of 1956, one of the most outstanding GT cars, which has already gone down in history. The model, which was also commissioned by a gentleman driver and collector, in the best Zagato tradition, is a sublime synthesis of prestige and performance, elegance and sportiness, to the point that it can boast the highest value of any car in the luxury period sports car market. The 250 GTZ has won numerous competitions and concours d'élégance, and it represents a dream come true, because experts and fans consider it one of the most beautiful cars in the world.

The new 575 GTZ has the Ferrari prancing horse on its bonnet and the Z of Zagato on its side, an expression of eternal Italian excellence in its form and content. It is a winning combination, linking the most powerful, famous engineering in the world with the most refined, fascinating sporting style, both made strictly in Italy. The concept of sporty elegance, functional design that does not merely follow the trend of the moment but strives for pure performance, and the ultra-light aluminium body are Zagato's strengths which become a universally recognised value.

Just as in the 1956, the 250GTZ was showed at the most important concours d'elegance, 50 years later, the 575GTZ will be presented in a world premier at Villa D'Este Concours D'Elegance, Cernobbio (Italy) April 22th -24th.



*Above : At the Geneva International Motor Show last month Zagato celebrated the 50th anniversary of their famous coachbuilt Ferrari 250 GTZ.*

*Below : This second official image from Zagato gives a glimpse of the front end of their new Ferrari 575 GTZ which draws clear inspiration from the 50-year-old 250 GTZ.*



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A Maserati won the Best of Show at the recent Salvarola Terme Concours d'Elegance. The now traditional "Modena Terra di Motori" celebrations kicked off in great style on the third weekend of March with the 7th Concours d'Elegance of Salvarola Terme. Sponsored by Maserati, this gathering of high profile classics is drawing more impressive entries and greater crowds every year.

The participants spent most of Saturday visiting local attractions such as the baroque Palazzo Ducale in Sassuolo, the Stanguellini Museum in Modena or the famous Malpighi balsamic vinegar production premises. The judging took place on Sunday morning at the prestigious thermal baths of Salvarola Terme, 25 km south of Modena, where a sumptuous lunch was served.

After a colourful parade, all the cars rallied Modena's Piazza Grande for the prize-giving ceremony in front of an ever enthusiastic local crowd.

Top honours went to Umberto Panini's fantastic Maserati A6GCS Berlinetta Pinin Farina of 1954. The well-known collector, who bought the cars from the company's museum over a decade ago, won a deserved Best of Show for this stunning automobile, one of only four ever built. It was faced with serious competition including bespoke Lancia, Alfa Romeo and Rolls-Royce one-offs of pre-war vintage.

Set just outside of Modena, the Panini Museum – which stages one of the most impressive collections of Maserati cars in the world, amongst other attractions – can be easily visited by appointment any day of the week. Various "Modena Terra di Motori" exhibitions will continue through April to celebrate the phenomenal sports car culture associated with Maserati's hometown.

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*"This is one of those cars that's demonstrably and appreciably better than any other mid-range four-door family saloon" Jeremy Clarkson drives the Alfa 159*



"This is one of those cars that's demonstrably and appreciably better than any other mid-range four-door family saloon" Jeremy Clarkson drives the Alfa 159 in *The Sunday Times* today.

The *Sunday Times*: Alfa 159 Road Test by Jeremy Clarkson

How many actors are there in the world? I'm counting everyone, from the "boy" in an amateur dramatic society's performance of *The Winslow Boy*, to the Latvian teenager who appears only on webcams, covered in baby oil. I'm counting people in Bollywood, people in French art house films, people at provincial Brazilian drama colleges. And if you do that, the number must be into the millions. Some of them must be very good. It stands to reason. But they'll never make it. The hand of fate will continue to deal them low diamonds and mid-range clubs until eventually they wind up teaching Stanislavski to self-harming inmates at Pentonville. Even those who make it to the top struggle to become Tom Cruise. The big-name star. The guarantee of bums on seats.

Take Christopher Walken as a prime example. He's big, all right. He could get a table at the Ivy any time

he wanted. And he's also fabulously watchable. That gold watch scene in *Pulp Fiction* was, I think, the finest performance from any big screen actor since . . . well, ever. But he still couldn't fill a theatre. I mean, since *Pulp Fiction* he's appeared in *Kangaroo Jack*, *Engine Trouble*, *The Country Bears*, *Poolhall Junkies*, *The Affair of the Necklace*, *Joe Dirt*, *Jungle Juice*, *The Opportunists*, *Kiss Toledo Goodbye*, *Mousehunt* and countless other movies that I can pretty much guarantee you haven't seen. Since *Top Gun*, however, there isn't a single Tom Cruise film I've missed. In fact there isn't a single Tom Cruise film I don't own on DVD. Of course Tom's a fine actor. His performance alongside Dustin Hoffman's twitchery in *Rain Man* was especially memorable. But is he better than Walken?

So it goes with all things, especially cars. Last week, after a hard day's filming, I drove home in a new 3-series BMW. The Tom Cruise of motoring. The machine you would automatically choose if you wanted a well-made, reasonably sporty four-door saloon. And it was fine. But the next day an Alfa Romeo 159 arrived at my house. Now this is a car you would automatically not choose if you wanted a well-made, reasonably sporty four-door saloon. This is Christopher Walken.

Actually, that's one of my less risible metaphors. Because in its long history of making cars, Alfa only rarely produces a Deer Hunter or a gold watch scene in *Pulp Fiction*. The vast majority of its offerings are complicated, silly and badly made. And as a result most go straight to the discount DVD bin at Blockbuster. The thing is, though, with the exception of the simply appalling Arna, I've loved all Alfas. In fact I've argued time and again that nobody can be a petrolhead until they've owned one. It's a rite of passage. Think of it as the great sex that leaves you with an embarrassing itch.

Take the old GTV6 as a prime example. I owned one once and it was a nightmare. The worst car I've owned. Deeply uncomfortable, spectacularly impractical and blessed with steering so heavy that navigating into a London parking space was like navigating a donkey into a budgie cage. Then there was the complete lack of quality. Nothing worked. And when you got one thing fixed something else would break on the way home. Once it tried to murder me. The linkage from the gearlever to the rear-mounted gearbox fell off and jammed the prop shaft, causing a sound not heard on earth since Krakatoa blew up, and the rear wheels to lock. But behind the oyster-like impregnability of its ergonomics and hidden in the sea of snot were two perfect pearls. The styling. And the howl from its V6 engine. In a tunnel, at 4000rpm, it was more sonorous than any music. It was like having your soul licked by angels.

In essence, then, Alfa has always understood what makes driving a thrill. But it has never been able to make a car. Well, not a car that a rational, normal human being might want to buy. Think of them as underground German art films. Great for serious-minded critics but not quite in the same everyman league as BMW's on an asteroid.

At first I thought the 159 would be more of the same. The boot release button is in the roof, just where you wouldn't expect it to be, the electric windows have a mind of their own, and like the Fiat Grande Punto I reviewed last week, it couldn't find or hold Radio 2. It could pick up pigs squeaking on lo, and Radio Leicester. But not Johnnie Walker.

These, however, are trivial faults. No more annoying in the big scheme of things than the iDrive in a BMW or the harsh ride you get on an Audi. Unlike Alfas of old you have to look long and hard in a 159 to find something deeply disturbing. But I found it, all right.

The greatest sensation of speed afforded to ordinary man is not on a go-kart or a rollercoaster. It comes when you've got the cruise control set at 70mph, the traffic in front is stopping and momentarily you can't find the button to turn it off. In that hiccup of time it doesn't feel like you're doing 70mph. It feels like you're doing three times the speed of light. That's why, in most cars, the cruise control "off" button is clearly visible and easy to use in a hurry. Not in the Alfa it isn't. It looks like one of the pieces from a game of Risk and it's mounted on a stalk just below and slightly behind the indicator. So when the traffic ground to a halt on the M40 I bet the chap behind me was keen to know why I didn't slow at all and then, for no obvious reason, suddenly indicated left. This, then, is proper swivel-eyed Alfa lunacy but it is the only thing in the car that's truly wrong and there's a simple way round the problem. Ignore it. Pretend it isn't there.

But do not pretend the 159 isn't there next time you want a mid-range four-door saloon because that would be a mistake. A bad one. First of all, it is exactly one million times better looking than a BMW 3-series. And with those triple headlamps, and perfect proportions, at least half a million times better looking than any rivals from Audi, Mercedes or Jaguar.

Inside, it's even better. The driving position is spot on, the dials look like they've come from a Swiss watch and the quality of the leather, especially if you have it in red, gives the impression that it costs Rolls-Royce money.

But it doesn't. A 159 Lusso, which is the luxury version, is £22,395. That's about what BMW charges for a 320i SE, but Alfa gives you far more equipment as standard and lots more power as well. The 2.2 litre engine is a peach that just begs to be taken outside and given a damn good thrashing. Porsche engineered an exhaust rasp into the Boxster at 5000rpm to reward the sporty driver. Alfa hasn't bothered. It just gives you a simple four-cylinder engine that, all on its own, sounds better and better until you're up at 6500 when it sounds like a metallic werewolf.

You can pootle around slowly but somehow you tend to drive the 159 very hard and very fast. But the engine, torquey, powerful and smooth though it may be, is not the best part of this car. That accolade goes to the steering. It's fast, sharp, more informative than the internet and more tactile than a freshly carved stone otter. The handling is also sweet and yet the ride isn't even slightly uncomfortable. Which means that the 159 drives and feels like no other car in its class. If you have even the faintest trace of petrol in your veins, if you are even on nodding terms with the concept of simple, good engineering, you should drive this car. Because it doesn't matter what you have now, you'll be smitten. I was.

This is one of those cars that's demonstrably and appreciably better than any other mid-range four-door family saloon. And unlike any Alfa of the past, you don't have to machete your way through a million inconveniences to find the point. This car does not hide its gold watch up its behind. It is an absolute gem.

Report: The Times Online