

Paris



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28.09.2006 ITALIAN METAL ON SHOW IN PARIS THIS MORNING

The 77th Paris Mondial de l'Automobile opened its doors this morning with a full model line-up from the Fiat brands, all of which are being presented on vibrant, eye-catching stands. Fiat, Alfa Romeo, Lancia, Ferrari and Maserati are all clustered together, their exciting products grasping for attention.

Two of the show's biggest stars, the Alfa Romeo 8c Competizione and Lancia Delta HPE concept though still remain under wraps. The new Alfa sportscar, set to be unveiled in full production specification, will be presented this afternoon when brand CEO Antonio Baravalle introduces the brand. For the moment it lurks behind a wall of glittering silver foil sheeting. The Lancia Delta HPE concept car meanwhile is set to be rolled down a specially constructed catwalk and presented to the assembled media.

Pride of place on the large Fiat stand goes to the new Panda 100hp model with two examples of the little A-segment car on show. A red one is available for close up examination, while a second while a grey one is mounted astride the Ducato "Truckster" concept, the matching colour finishes serving to create a highly arresting image and making the two vehicles easily the centre of attention. Elsewhere the "Model Year 2007" Panda is on show, including which is one raised off the ground and mounted on a pole. The Croma, Grande Punto and Sedici also feature, as does an "environmentally friend" Multipla, and a cheeky original Fiat 500 - in cutaway form - which offers itself as a console looking forward to the new model.

Alfa Romeo's sporty line-up is headed by its "new breed" of models: the Alfa 159, 159 Sportwagon, Brera and Spider, with the revised Alfa GT, now with two new trim level packs, for company. Lancia's line-up as usual exudes its inherent style and panache, the dark glossy colours of its luxurious stand, complementing the brooding models: the new Ypsilon, as well as the Musa and Thesis "Sport" are on show.

Ferrari emphasise their sports car superiority with the new V12-engined 599 GTB Fiorano, which takes absolute centre stage, mounted as it is on a slightly raised dais, while its road range sisters, the F430 and 612 Scaglietti complement its presence. As is usual at motor shows a Michael Schumacher raced Formula 1 car rounds out the line-up. Maserati meanwhile are showing the GranSport "Contemporary Classic" pack for the first time, a striking red version is flanked on either side by the Quattroporte. The Vitaphone Racing-run Maserati MC12 sportscar is another highlight from the Trident brand.

by Edd Ellison in Paris



THE ALFA 8C COMPETIZIONE TAKES CENTRE STAGE IN PARIS

Highlight of the opening day of the 77th Paris Mondial de l'Automobile was the unveiling of the production-ready Alfa 8c Competizione. Before a packed audience the stunning sports car, created in the finest traditions of the brand, was introduced by the Alfa Romeo CEO Antonio Baravalle, and its order book was formally opened.

Baravalle kicked off the highly anticipated Alfa Romeo press conference on Thursday with reference to the extension of availability of the Selespeed and Q-Tronic transmission systems across the range. He also mentioned the new Q2 differential which will initially be available in the Alfa 147, saying that it was devised through their experience with four wheel drive systems and that it will "improve both safety and driving pleasure". He also believes that with its new options packs - being shown in Paris for the first time - the Alfa GT Coupé is a model that can now appeal to a wider customer base.

However the packed audience had only come to see one thing: the official launch of the Alfa 8c Competizione, a new sports car that sees Alfa Romeo return to its roots. "Let's talk about the star of our stand, the Alfa 8c Competizione," said Baravalle. "It is the finest and purest expression of our brand values." He referred to its illustrious predecessors, from which it drew styling inspiration and he emphasised the technical contribution made to the project by the Fiat Group as a whole. Reeling off its impressive statistics Baravalle enthused: "It has a top speed of over 290 km/h and 0 to 100 time of in less than 4.2 seconds. It will be limited to 500 cars - and very importantly it will be introduced to the United States." Later on Baravalle clarified that it will be sold directly to US customers as the sports car will be venturing across the Atlantic prior to the brand's official re-launch there.



"This car represents a new start for Alfa Romeo, its not just an exercise in corporate image," added Baravalle, who sees the Alfa 8c Competizione not only as a global standard bearer for the brand but also a package and direction that can be built on. He also pointed out that the car's order book would open immediately after the unveiling.

Taking of the future he said the brand will need "products with the Alfa Romeo badge on, that combine versatility and impact." And in a clear message that the much-rumoured smaller Grande Punto-based project is on the cards he added, "natural evolution will see Alfa Romeo enter a new segment, with a product especially created for the younger buyer."

With that the Alfa 8c Competizione was introduced. Baravalle firstly invited Wolfgang Egger & the car's Centro Stile design team up to accept the plaudits. Then from where the car was positioned in a glass cage behind the raised dais, an enveloping curtain dropped and was chased backwards before the glass doors slid apart, revealing the stunning new sports car. The 8c Competizione partly rotated as the audience clapped and then quickly rushed forward to view it.

Of note was that the curving bonnet now conventionally hinges at the rear and it opens along the lines of the traditional Alfa bonnet creases; previously the model's prototypes had an entire front bodywork section that swung forward. The interior has also been reworked, including handsome new sports seats, building a very stylish production finish into the cleverly thought out driver-orientated cockpit. The single showcar in Paris is finished with a stunning red leather interior, one of four optional interior trims that will be made available, the others being beige, black and titanium. The darkened backdrop behind the Alfa 8c Competizione included glass cases with mementos of its predecessor and large guides to the sports car which featured carbon-fibre covers.

by Edd Ellison in Paris



Alfa Romeo returns to the Paris International Motor Show with a stunningly staged exhibition of standard models and special versions designed to emphasise – as if we needed reminding – the unique position of the brand in the world motoring scenario.

The design of the exhibition area is defined by simple geometrical shapes. Spaces closed on one side are offset by an aluminium and glass sunscreen at the front. These structural elements define the image of an Alfa Romeo villa built in accordance with the canons of Italian rationalist architecture. The rigour and sparseness of the design as it translates into the shapes, colours and materials help to create an ideal setting for the sinuous, aggressive cars, turning them into the stars of the show: everything is dominated by the red and black that have always been used to express Alfa Romeo's twin soul, a combination of passion and technology.

The true heart of the stand, featuring horizontal surfaces juxtaposed with swathes of glass, is undoubtedly the area devoted to the gorgeous Alfa 8C Competizione: this showcase protects the latest addition to the Alfa Romeo stable as though it were a jewel, a precious object to be admired and desired. Behind this fabulous showcase, visitors can discern the Alfa Romeo building that houses the offices, the Alfa Café and lounge areas, all bearing the same stamp of sophisticated style and state-of-the-art technology.

Cars making their world premieres and current production models sit easily alongside one another at the Paris Motor Show. They also neatly represent the marriage between sportiness and style so typical of Alfa Romeo. The outcome of cutting-edge technology and a unique heritage made up of the cars, designers, races and engines that have marked technological progress and the sporting events of the twentieth century.

Alfa 8C Competizione

The absolute star of the stand is the Alfa 8C Competizione, an exclusive Gran Turismo model that will be produced in limited numbers. The new car, designed by Alfa Romeo, is the best blend of the values that have always distinguished the brand: technology and emotion. The Alfa 8C Competizione sets out to play a starring role and forcefully assert Alfa Romeo's unique position in the world: i.e. the brand's ability to wed a thrilling shape to driving satisfaction.

Alfa 159 and 159 Sportwagon

First up on the French catwalk are two Alfa 159s (one equipped with a 2.2 Selespeed, the other with a 1.9 JTD 16v power unit) – that were recently awarded the coveted 5-star ranking by Euro NCAP – and two Alfa 159 Sportwagons (the former with a 260 bhp 3.2 V6 Q4 engine, the latter with a 200 bhp 2.4 JTDm engine). All the cars are distinguished by an Ocean Black body colour that effectively expresses Alfa Romeo's interpretation of classic sportiness. The four versions offer a wealth of equipment that differs according to the specification: including top-quality Frau® 'grosgrain' leather, tri-zone climate control system, electric seats, Cruise control, 7 airbags, VDC with hill holder, parking sensors, map radio navigation system, telephone with voice commands and the sophisticated 'Blue&Me®' system. Three of these cars are also fitted with the new 6-speed 'Q-Tronic' gearbox that operates in automatic or sequential mode to exploit the power produced by the 200 bhp 2.4 JTDm engine to the full (the gearbox will shortly also be available on the 150 bhp 1.9 JTDm).

Alfa Brera and Alfa Spider

All the attention at the French motor show will also be on another two new-generation Alfa cars: the Alfa Brera, an appealing car that lifts the traditional coupé spirit into the more rarefied atmosphere of out-and-out sportiness. And the ultra-new Alfa Spider that reminds us, through a complex and sophisticated set of allusions, of Alfa Romeo's glorious tradition in this sector (from the Giulietta Spider of the Fifties by way of the Duetto to the Nineties version of the same Spider model). Visitors to the Paris show can admire two versions of the Alfa Spider (185 bhp 2.2 JTS and 260 bhp 3.2 V6 Q4), both in top of the range versions and equipped with 7 airbags, VDC, ASR, automatic bi-zone climate control, wind-stop, natural leather interiors and 18" alloys.

Next to these two cars visitors can admire an Alfa Brera, a black Q4 version equipped with a 24 valve 3.2 V6 JTS power unit, a jewel of automotive engineering that delivers a power output of 191 kW (260 bhp) at 6300 rpm with a maximum torque of 322 Nm (32.8 kgm) at 4500 rpm. Both vehicles are extremely well endowed with equipment, including a host of features specifically devoted to safety: 7 airbags (including driver side knee bag), VDC, ABS with EBD, ventilated front and rear brake discs, MSR, Hill Holder, ASR and foglight. The long list of devices used to ensure maximum on-board comfort includes: automatic bi-zone climate control system, radio with CD player and CD changer, parking sensor, Bose® Hi-Fi, a Visibility Pack (rain sensor, dusk sensor and anti-mist sensor) and a map navigation system with telephone and voice commands. This version is complemented by natural leather interiors and 18" alloy wheels.

Alfa 147 in Q2, Black Line II and Collezione II versions

Another example of the Alfa Romeo world of style and technology is the 147 model exhibited in three versions at the Paris show. The first car, enjoying its world premiere, is distinguished by a front self-locking differential (known as the Q2) that confirms all the strengths of a front wheel drive configuration, i.e. increased driving satisfaction and control while guaranteeing some of the typical benefits of a four wheel drive. The system is available solely with the 150 bhp JTDm engine. This choice takes into consideration the current technological turbodiesel scenario. Since 1997, the debut year of the Alfa 156 JTD (the first vehicle in the world with Common Rail technology), the amount of torque to be transmitted to the wheels has increased greatly, even on compacts. Alfa Romeo has therefore developed the sophisticated Q2 system to guarantee maximum control and traction in all driving conditions. The Alfa 147 Q2 therefore offers satinised 'whiskers', grille and mirror farings, rear spoiler chrome exhaust tailpipe, low ride and a special Q2 logo.

Inside, this version offers a sporty look including: gauges with red scale and white lighting, leather upholstery with red top-stitching on the steering wheel and gearlever gaiter and parking brake, dark grey steering wheel panels and central console, special Q2 door sill and aluminium pedal unit. The Alfa 147 Q2 equipment list is complemented by radio controls on the steering wheel, cruise control, a VDC system and 6 airbags. The car on show also adds leather seats in a sports configuration with red top-stitching, Bose® sound system, satellite navigation and xenon headlights.

The second Alfa 147 is available in the Black Line specification. This three door car equipped with a 120 bhp Twin Spark 1.6 engine marries sportiness and style, as is evident from its special 'b-colore' livery: this takes the form of an Alfa Red body with some details painted in a sophisticated glossy Black (roof, central panel and rear spoiler) with satinised grille, 'whiskers' and door mirror fairings. The interior is enhanced by a new two-tone sporty cloth (black and grey) with black steering wheel panels and central console. In a quest for further sportiness, the new Alfa 147 Black Line Special Series also offers low ride, chrome exhaust tailpipe and 17" perforated chrome shadow alloys with 215/45 tyres. The standard equipment list also includes ABS with EBD, 6 airbags, radio with CD player, leather steering wheel and gear knob and manual climate control system. The vehicle on the stand complements these items with some options such as VDC with ASR, Cruise Control and wiring for an iPod.

Lastly, the third car is a 5-door version in the 'Collezione II' specification with a metallic black body and elegant two-tone 'b-colore' leather interior (black/cream) and black 'b-colore' fascia. The compact Alfa, equipped with the 150 bhp 1.9 JTDM, offers the most sophisticated safety devices available: including VDC, ASR, ABS with EBD and six airbags. The equipment array is complemented by a bi-zone automatic climate control system, 17" spoked alloys, radio with CD, Cruise Control and rear electric windows. The car on show is also equipped with a map navigation system with built-in handsfree phone and radio and telephone controls on the steering wheel, rear parking sensors, CD changer, Bose® Hi-Fi system, low suspension and particulate filter.

Alfa GT 'Black Line'

The Paris show will also host the Alfa GT in a special version designed to emphasise the model's unique spirit still further. The Alfa GT was created in conjunction with Bertone for original styling coupled with exhilarating performance. It is a revolutionary new concept of sportiness geared for comfort and elegance. The line-up includes a 'Black line' version with an Alfa Red body and interior trimmed in black leather top-stitching equipped with a powerful 165 bhp 2.0 JTS engine.

This car, designed to appeal to sporty customers, offers certain exclusive features and content in addition to the usual standard equipment: 18" alloys (perforated design with chrome treatment), front headlights with black frames, satinised painted central grille and chrome door mirror fairing. The interior features a black fascia with dark coloured central console treatment and seats in black leather with red top-stitching and logo and perforated seat area. The carpet, mats, gearlever and handbrake gaiters are also black with red top-stitching. This original Alfa GT also offers a highly attractive equipment package including a map radio navigation system with telephone and voice control complete with subscription to infotematic services.

