

CLASSIC DRIVER

The Geneva Show 2007



If green issues dominated the mainstream manufacturers at Geneva this year there were no such worries on the stands of Lamborghini, Pagani, Ferrari and most of all Bentley, whose hand-built Brooklands coupé dominated the super-luxury sector with its imposing dimensions and superbly crafted interior.

The **Bentley**, and the **Maserati GranTurismo**, were undoubtedly the highlights of an interesting Geneva Salon, but not one that dazzled. **Aston Martin** left the **Lagonda** at home and was busy fending off enquiries regarding the company's impending sale. (And it's NO news at the time of writing, if you're asking). However they were debuting the delicious **V8 Vantage Roadster** in Europe, as well as the superb racing **N24 GT** car, the first customer car to be delivered present on the stand.





Ferrari had their customary end-of-hall space with five road cars and a Formula 1, the two **612 Scagliettis** demonstrating the personalisation programme that truly makes 'no two Ferraris the same', and new for 2007 was a new exceptionally soft, 'buttery' **Poltrona Frau** leather option, as well the Bose® 2 DIN radio-navigator: an innovative system combining radio, audio and video DVD, Bluetooth® and satellite radio (on US and Canadian markets) systems. There was also the launch of 10 historic colours that will also be available as options on the 612, all having featured on standard-setting Ferraris of the '50s and '60s.

And if **612 Scaglietti** buyers could become a little overwhelmed by the number of variations open to them, Geneva 2007 also saw the official launch of the online Carrozzeria Scaglietti Personalisation Programme configurator at www.ferrariowners.com.



A few steps across the carpet brought you to the **Maserati** stand where the highly anticipated **GranTurismo** was taking its bow to the world. The company had two examples, one silver with red leather interior, one blue/crema. It is a dramatic car, and a worthy successor to the outgoing GT, with better internal packaging giving genuine seating in the rear (DB9 watch out!), as well as styling that says 'Italian supercar' a little louder than the old car. We can't wait to drive it. Also on Maserati's stand was the **Quattroporte Automatic** (a car we will be driving next month), and the size of the presence (big) underlines the fact that this is a company that really is going places.





Bentley of course, thanks to the super-successful **Continental GT**, is has truly arrived. Taking pride of place was the company's latest car, the **Brooklands**, a coupé of the old school, limited to just 550 units at a price yet to be confirmed. It was mightily impressive, not only for its size, quality and presence but also because of its 6.75-litre turbo V8 engine delivering around 800 lb-ft of torque - more than any other production V8. Surely enough to allow the car to set some serious performance figures and enough to fully tax the carbon-composite, multi-piston brakes, the size of which moved a famous Formula 1 - and high-performance road car - designer to remark "Why don't they just fit the tyres to the discs and do away with the wheels altogether?"





Over at **Rolls-Royce** it was the **Phantom Drophead Coupé** that was taking centre stage, the Goodwood company having the familiar blue/stainless steel car on the stand, this time joined by an all-white colleague as well as a discreet two-tone **Phantom Saloon**.





Lamborghini were sited in the VAG complex, next to **Audi**, and was showing the **Gallardo Superleggera** while its Ingolstadt neighbour had the **A5** as its centrepiece. The new **A5**? Nice if you like the generic Audi 'look', but perhaps no more in my eyes.

Arch-rivals **BMW** and **Mercedes-Benz** had enough power to satisfy most people's needs. There's no **C-Class AMG** yet (a 6.3 is coming), but the standard car (making its world premiere at the show) really does set the benchmark for the class, and the **6.3 AMG** liveried **E-Class Estate** just dripped tarmac-melting performance. The company also launched the **DTM** version of the new 'C', a racing car with more carbon fibre than you can shake a (carbon fibre?) stick at.

And just for good measure the livery of the car was...carbon fibre applied graphic, what else?











BMW meanwhile, had the **M5 Touring** and what's likely to be the next **M3 CSL** in body and styling form - if the drivetrain details are still under wraps.





To end; a city car for the people you can buy, and a limited edition supercar you can't. The new **smart fortwo limited edition** in two-tone grey/brown with a bespoke leather interior was a stylish and a cute way of driving in town, while **Alfa Romeo** was showing the superb **8C** and boy did it look good in black with red trim! Sadly, they were all sold in a matter of days from launch.

There's probably still time to buy a **smart** though.

Our photographer Nanette Schärf was present to record all the action.
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