

CLASSIC DRIVER

Geneva International Motor Show 2008



There was a slightly strange atmosphere at Geneva this year. A carbon-free, 100% clean atmosphere for sure, but nonetheless slightly other-worldly. The reason - as ever at Geneva - was the presence of what can only be described as the worst excesses of garish 'improvement' side-by-side with sober-suited executives from the 'proper' car makers, all intent on showing wholesome environmental concern together with true, cutting-edge, high-performance technology.

And none more so than **Bentley**, on whose stand **Franz-Josef Paefgen**, the company's Chief Executive, made an important speech announcing a far-reaching environmental strategy: making the entire **Bentley** fleet capable of delivering less than 120g/km by 2012. I think 'capable' is the important word here, as this extraordinary achievement would be on a 'well-to-wheel' basis, requiring the use of second-generation bio-fuels as well as the high-technology we know the company - the **Volkswagen Group**, that is - has at its disposal.



Well done anyway **Bentley**, and on its stand were all the company's current range including the ultra-desirable **Brooklands** we tested last month. Sandwiched between **Bentley** and **Audi** was sister company **Lamborghini**, on a raised plinth arrangement that had cars and girls in equal proportions. New for Geneva was the **Gallardo LP560-4**, a revised car with more power, grip (via the Viscous Traction system first seen on the Diablo) and 'attitude', as it has grown larger Reventon-esque air intakes. The extra 40bhp will catapult the new car from 0-62mph in 3.7 seconds. Top speed is now 325km/h. It's fast.



If the wares on the **Lamborghini** stand were a little garish for you, just a couple of aisles away was **Ferrari**: the personification of Italian style. No new cars this year at Geneva – although **di Montezemolo** did reveal that the anticipated 'DB9-beater' would debut in Paris this autumn – just the entire range displayed alongside a **365 GTB/4 'Daytona'**, celebrating its 40th birthday. The **612 Scaglietti** featured large. Upstairs, Ferrari was showing a mock-up of its new *atelier* showroom, where customers can commission special interiors, wheels and paintwork. On show in the *atelier* was a **612 Scaglietti** with an electrochromic panoramic roof, *manettino* on the steering wheel, and a super-luxurious interior in brown leather. It was truly stunning, as was the *Grigio Ferro*, with *Cioccolato*, **F430 Spider** on the lower part of the stand.



Arch-rival **Aston Martin**, despite its sell-off from the **Ford** empire last year, was in its traditional position near soon-to-be-sold **Jaguar** and **Land Rover**. For those absent at last December's **Design Studio** opening, it was the first chance to see the **V12 Vantage RS Concept** and **Aston** took the opportunity to announce updates to the **DB9's** interior (new centre stack, with the **Emotional Control Unit** from the **DBS**) and V12 engine. The latter now produces 470bhp at 6000rpm. There are also some chassis tweaks to bring the big car into line with the sharp-handling **V8 Vantage**.

The British company also announced that Austrian automotive specialists **Magna Steyr** will build the company's four-door **Rapide** at a dedicated facility in Graz. Eyebrows were raised at the annual production projections – 2000+ cars – as Aston had originally described the car as a high-priced, exclusive run built strictly to order. We shall see.



Elsewhere at Geneva, **Audi** had its monster V12 diesel crammed into a production **Q7** and a concept **R8**, in addition to a diesel **TT**, the tarmac-shredding **RS6 Avant**, and the world debut for the **A4 Avant**. All stylish, as ever. **Mercedes** was showing its facelifted **SL** amongst a plethora of **AMG** saloons, while **BMW** premiered the **M3 Convertible** and many CO₂-friendly upmarket family saloons.

On **Jaguar's** stand was an **XF**, as well as the **XKR-S** - the fastest XK ever built and a limited - to just 200 units - edition. **Rolls-Royce**, of course, was showing the **Phantom Coupé**, and **Maserati** the **GranTurismo S**; both previewed on Classic Driver in recent weeks.



Finally, it would be easy to state that **Alfa Romeo** was the star of Geneva with the gorgeous **8C Spider** and it was, truly, a fabulous creation. However, tucked away on a strictly guarded discreet stand lay the **Bugatti Veyron Fbg by Hermès**. All 1.55m euros (plus taxes, as if you cared) of hand-stitched leather, carbonfibre and composite material, it was, without question, Best in Show.

Alfa Romeo





Aston Martin







Audi















Bentley

















BMW + Mini









Bugatti







Ferrari









Fioravanti







Giugiaro





Gumpert + Yes









IED





Jaguar







Koenigsegg





Lamborghini















Land Rover



Mansory





Maserati





Mercedes-Benz









Morgan





Pininfarina







Porsche







Rinspeed





Rolls-Royce



Saab



Sbarro





Spyker







Volkswagen





Webasto



Zagato







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