

CLASSIC DRIVER

Five questions to Louis de Fabribeckers, Head of Design Carrozzeria Touring Superleggera

Lead

Six decades after Touring's influential Alfa Romeo C52 Disco Volante, the Italian Carrozzeria has been spinning the flying saucer again. Classic Driver talked with Louis de Fabribeckers (Head of Design, Carrozzeria Touring Superleggera) at this year's Geneva Show...

Louis, can you please tell us a bit about the original Disco Volante and what importance it had for Touring, and automotive design in general?

The original car was made in 1952 and the focus of the briefing was clearly on aerodynamics. It was the first car that had enclosed wheels both at the back and the front. And also, there were no spoilers to break the clean lines of the design.

The main parts of the original briefing that we have kept to for the new car were: an emphasis on the aerodynamics of the body, a feeling of sportiness, and a timeless design. The latter, by the way, is something that we try to achieve on every car by Touring.



In those far-off days before crash regulations, you could make a chassis as short or as long as you liked. Do you envy the designers for the freedom they had?

Yes... and no! If you have to work on a chassis like the Alfa 8C's and you cannot change certain fixed dimensions, it is quite challenging. And it pushes the designer to find new solutions. Here, the idea was to make the bonnet and the whole front as long as possible. Also, the aluminium 'coach line' that stretches from the front grille to the door-handle was intended to support this impression of length, while you can feel all the power concentrated around the rear fender. You can see it best in a top view, which shows off the rounded and aerodynamic front as well as the muscular back.

In 1952, the Disco Volante was a very out-of-this-world car, that no one had ever seen before. It was so influential that people are still talking about it sixty years later. Which aspect of your car is the one that you are especially proud of - and that people will pick up on?

I have not seen a covered front wheel-arch for ages. And we have worked quite a lot on that. I think that we have found a good compromise between covering the wheels and make the car not seem too large.





How did you establish the idea to revive such an iconic car, and how did the buyer influence its development?

The great thing about our clients is that they are very passionate people. The passion and absolute will to bring something to life which they bring into the conversation is always an excellent input for a designer. It gives you enormous motivation. But the main reason for our decision to build a new Disco Volante was of course the 60th birthday of the original. The full-scale model you see here in Geneva was made for a certain client – our team will create the aluminium panels for the first car based on this, but there will also be a limited series of cars to follow.



In the past, Carrozzeria Touring Superleggera has not only influenced the design of Italian brands like Alfa. With the DB4 it also created an iconic car for Aston Martin. I am sure there will be an anniversary soon - how about creating a special body for an Aston V8 or a DB9?

That would be great, I am really ready for that kind of project!

Photos: Jan Baedeker, Carrozzeria Touring

Gallery

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