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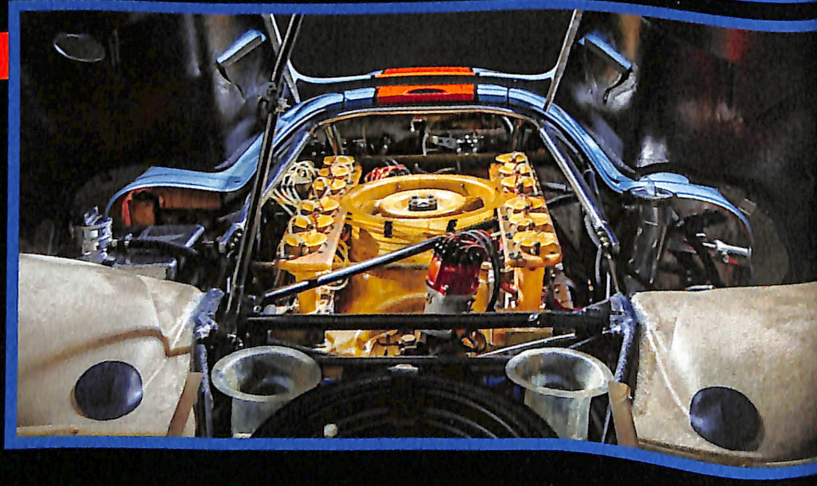




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# JAY LENO

THE COLLECTOR

**W**E'RE ALWAYS LOOKING for angles on the car show I'm filming and I called my friend John Hennessey in Texas. He's the tuner who built the Hennessey Venom, which went 270mph – and it's a street car. I've been amazed in the last decade at how easy it is to go 200mph in a street car. Especially when you think back to Donald Campbell and Craig Breedlove and how long it took for the Land Speed Record to increase.

When I was a teenager, the big thing at Bonneville was to be in the very exclusive 200mph club. Not many cars could go 200mph. So John and I got to talking and said no-one has taken a Mustang to 200mph, at least that we could find a record of, so that might be something fun to do.

I asked how much it would cost to take a stock Mustang and make it go 200mph. He reckoned between 20,000 and 25,000 dollars, keeping the stock exhaust system. John adds a supercharger and plays with the ECU but doesn't touch pistons, crank or camshaft.

That's pretty amazing to me, and I got to thinking about how many stock vehicles you could buy that could go 200mph. Off the top of my head, the new BMW S1000RR motorcycle, with 199

horsepower, gets close to 200mph. The Kawasaki H2R, the first production supercharged motorcycle, will just about top 200mph. Imagine beating a Bugatti Veyron for about \$25,000!

The first person to break 200mph was Sir Henry Segrave, in 1927, using a purpose-built race car with 1000 horsepower. Anyone watching that day couldn't have imagined that, 88 years on, you could take a car from the parking lot and do the same.

We went to the Uvalde test track in Texas. It's where Continental Tire is based and they were kind enough to let us use it. It's not like the salt flats, where there's a six-mile straight; it's an 8.5-mile track. But the straightaway is really only two miles long, so you've got to get up to speed quickly to break the record. The car did it in fifth gear; we didn't go to sixth because the track wasn't long enough. That's pretty amazing too.

I know it doesn't make sense in these days of restricted speed and congested highways; there aren't a lot of places you can go 200mph. But if I watch those fashion shows I think, well, there's nowhere you could wear that outfit, so why do they make it? Because people need a goal. It shows how far we've come.

The fastest I ever went was 278mph, in a jet car, on the dry lakes in California. It was fascinating because, being a jet car, and not having anything to judge your speed with, you just felt that you were taxiing on a runway. I remember when we went to the Idiada test-track in Spain, and I drove the Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren, about 207mph. That felt fast.

A buddy of mine has a business taking people out who want to drive at 200mph. He has McLarens, Ferraris, Lamborghinis. Back in 2006, the only car that would consistently do over 200mph was the SLR. Most cars only managed 195 or 196. Guys would pay crazy amounts of money and he would take them for a drive at Bonneville so they could say they'd gone 200mph. The only car that did it time after time was the SLR.

Nowadays McLaren has limited the P1 to 217mph. It will go faster but we live in a world with legal regulations. You cannot sell a car with a top speed that exceeds its tyres'. The reason the Bugatti Veyron's tyres are so expensive is that they have to go 250mph.

I remember years ago at the Silver State Race in Nevada, a guy had a Ferrari and he had tyres rated to 130, and he was running at about 140 or 150 and the tyres shredded, and, if I remember correctly, his wife was killed.

Tesla has a car now with the twin engine and it's probably one of the fastest-accelerating vehicles on earth, but I think it tops out at about 130 or 140mph because of electric power. It would just drain too quickly.

That seems to be the way we're going now: putting everything towards acceleration and steering. In the real world all the fun happens between 40 and 120mph. Once you're over that on a public road, it gets crazy dangerous.

Yet there's always somebody who wants to have bragging rights, and I think the next number, probably, is 300. John Hennessey's Venom went 270mph, and he told me that the Bugatti people came over and congratulated him but he could see in their eyes that they wanted to beat that. Because they want to have the fastest car.

## JAY LENO

Comedian and talk show legend Jay Leno is one of the most famous entertainers in the USA. He is also a true petrolhead, with a massive collection of cars and bikes (see [www.jaylenosgarage.com](http://www.jaylenosgarage.com)).

Jay was speaking with Jeremy Hart.

**'THERE AREN'T  
A LOT OF PLACES  
YOU CAN GO 200MPH.  
BUT PEOPLE NEED A  
GOAL. IT SHOWS HOW  
FAR WE'VE COME'**





Cars shown:  
*left: 1966 JAGUAR E-TYPE  
SERIES 1, 4.2 COUPE  
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Eagle A/C, PAS, full hide trim and  
much, much more...*

*below: 1973 JAGUAR E-TYPE  
SERIES 3, V12 ROADSTER  
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# DEREK BELL

## THE LEGEND

**I** T WAS AN ITCH I needed to scratch. In recent years, I have received quite a few approaches about contesting the Mille Miglia retrospective, but the stars didn't fully align until this year, when I was finally able to participate. I did so thanks to the generosity of my good friend Adam Linderman and the hugely capable folks at Jaguar Heritage. What's more, I'm still buzzing about it. I'm a bit of a romantic when it comes to motor sport, and 2015 marks the 60th anniversary of Sir Stirling Moss and Denis Jenkinson's remarkable win on the original event, as celebrated in great depth in last month's issue of *Octane*. Sir Stirling was my boyhood hero – he was most lads' hero back then – and he has since become a dear friend. To follow in his wheeltracks, if not entirely on the exact same route, was a dream come true.

What's more, I got to do it in a Jaguar C-type, which is another motor sport icon. That's quite a big deal, let me tell you, not least because I am a former Jaguar works driver. Adam's C-type is a beauty, an ex-Ecurie Ecosse team car that I had previously driven around the Monaco Grand Prix circuit but hadn't actually raced. It's fabulous to drive so I fully appreciate why so many past masters raved about them.

That said, the prospect of Adam and I sharing driving duties over 1000 miles of unfamiliar roads left me feeling slightly apprehensive. I am a racer, not a navigator. I don't mean that to sound disrespectful to those who study maps and shout out directions, but it really isn't my thing. Adam owns the car, and he was similarly less than enthused. The upshot was that we shared seat time and it worked out rather well.

That said, the first day was an eye-opener. Hand on heart, I considered walking away and catching the first flight home. I was taken aback by just how frenzied it all was. From where I was sitting, it was pure lunacy. Imagine the first lap of a typical Formula 3 race: picture all the drama, overtaking and adrenaline-charged bravado, and you would be close. Now just visualise that going on all day, for hour after hour.

I just didn't expect that. Neither of us did. But then, on the second day, things began to change. I settled into a rhythm and began to enjoy myself. I limited the danger, but was still driving bloody quickly on open roads against a backdrop of scenic vistas and typically Italian villages. By the third day, Adam and I were already plotting our return.

Unfortunately, as is so often the nature of these things, we encountered one or two problems, the biggest of which was a split radiator. It was fixed, but it took a while. There was no way we were going to make up the time so we drove cross-country and missed out a section. Driving the C-type at night was something else. I swear I can still hear it! We experienced a few other issues, which were more niggling than anything else, but what an adventure.

For me, the Mille Miglia improved mile by mile, and driving fast on those roads was one of the greatest experiences of my career. It was made all the more special thanks to the ladies and gentlemen of Jaguar Heritage, who were always keen and helpful; smiling faces greeting us at the end of each 17-hour day. What struck me more than anything, though, was the sheer

unbridled enthusiasm of those taking part. I mean, there are some readers who might dismiss this as being nothing more than a jolly for the rich and famous, but most participants were neither.

There were several first-timers driving nice cars, but not particularly exotic ones. And even those wealthy owners such as Adam were there because they're passionate about the cars and the event. It matters to them. Anyone who thinks it is just one big party

is way off base, not least because I don't think I got more than a few hours' shut-eye each night, and I was knackered before I even arrived in Italy.

What I took away most from the Mille Miglia was the support from the spectators. I have no idea how many people lined the route, but I suspect it was well into six figures. They couldn't have been more enthusiastic and I like to think that those of us lucky enough to participate responded in kind. But what made the event super-special for me was seeing Sir Stirling as we drove to the finishing line. Having done the event, albeit an interpretation of the original, it makes me admire his achievement all those years ago so much more. I'm not usually an emotional man, but I don't mind admitting that there was a lump in my throat.

### DEREK BELL

Derek took up racing in 1964 in a Lotus 7, won two World Sportscar Championship titles in 1985 and 1986, the 24 Hours of Daytona three times in 1986, 1987 and 1989, and Le Mans five times in 1975, 1981, 1982, 1986 and 1987. He was speaking with Richard Heseltine.

**'THE MILLE MIGLIA  
IMPROVED MILE BY MILE.  
DRIVING FAST ON THOSE  
ROADS WAS ONE OF THE  
GREATEST EXPERIENCES  
OF MY CAREER'**





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# STEPHEN BAYLEY

## THE AESTHETE

**I**F, AS I SOMETIMES do, you spy on the conversations of motor industry professionals, you don't have to wait longer than the second glass of champagne before someone starts emoting about the notions of 'luxury brand'. To discover it is a sacred quest, as potent as the continuing searches for El Dorado and the missing Irish Crown Jewels. If only we could find it, we'd be rich.

But both 'luxury' and 'brand' are notoriously fugitive in definition. Luxury once suggested vice and depravity, so that's certainly stuff we can work with, but I prefer Coco Chanel's belief that it is not the opposite of poverty, rather the opposite of vulgarity. I also rather like another definition from my old friend and mentor Terence Conran, who says that any wine, even Algerian, served in a magnum becomes luxurious. As for 'brand', well we have brand managers with flipcharts to tell us about that, but I'll settle for my own definition that it means the mixture of expectations and associations that successful products possess.

Certainly, cars have played a big part in popular understanding of luxury. In my own case, I can still remember the ultra-violet glow of the instrument panel of my father's Jaguar MkVIII. Even better, the walnut-veneered folding picnic tables in the back of the front seats. These, never used, as my mother inconveniently disapproved of picnics, seemed to anticipate pleasures yet to come, and that, surely, is a luxurious experience. That they were redundant was of no importance: Stakhanovite functionalist directives play no part in luxurious allsorts.

But the ultimate luxury car is, surely, the Citroën DS, 60 this year. Its prototype was the 'VGD', the *Voiture de Grand Diffusion*, which means, approximately, mass-market car. But the Citroën was nothing of the sort: it was refined, sophisticated and entirely removed from the tedium of the everyday. Now Citroën wants to make 'DS' into a luxury brand. An element of the preparation for this is the opening of the new DS World on Paris's Rue François Premier, one of the most *de luxe* addresses on Earth.

While Citroën might sit more comfortably opposite Gap, DS World is opposite the couturier Balmain, evidence of ambition. But 'affectations can be dangerous!', as Gertrude Stein said of Isadora Duncan when her luxurious scarf wrapped itself around her Amilcar's wheels and she was theatrically slung to her death on the pavement of the Promenade des Anglais in Nice.

The 1955 DS presented a version of luxury with deep roots in French culture and business. It started with Michelin: no-one wants to buy tyres except when necessary, so Michelin sold the idea of gastronomic road travel. Its guidebooks presented France as a network of fine restaurants and hotels, best connected by a comfortable car. It was just as the poet Stéphane Mallarmé said of Impressionism: '*Peindre non la chose, mais l'effet qu'elle produit.*' That's 'Don't paint the thing, but paint the effect it produces.' Michelin's Monsieur Bibendum, a cigar-smoking homunculus made of tyres, became the very symbol of felicity.

When it took over Citroën in a debt-for-equity swap, Michelin had the influence to realise this vision in a car designed to waft along autoroutes between a Michelin lunch and a Michelin dinner. The DS's extraordinary ride, sumptuous upholstery and brightly lit cabin (which Roland Barthes described as the 'exaltation of glass') combined to provide the optimum in automobile felicity.

On display in the Rue François Premier are General de Gaulle's last DS and a superb Henri Chapron *décapotable*. The de Gaulle car is black with a light grey interior – tribute to the late president's austere tastes. The Chapron car is in a blink-making gold metallic with cherry red leather and glorious flashes of

chrome excess around the wheels and lights, paying tribute to a louche Montmartre hostess. They express the opposite poles of French culture, vernacular chic and grande luxe, just as perfectly as a Bic pen and a Charlotte Perriand chaise longue in pony skin.

Paris's DS World takes its place in a short history of showrooms that do not sell (although the DS3, DS4 and DS5 are on display). Olivetti made its reputation in 1950s New York by putting typewriters and office machines on display in a museum-like setting. Sony once did the same on Regent Street in London. Each helped its parent accumulate valuable image capital... which was still being spent as Olivetti and Sony went into terminal decline.

They had forgotten what made them great. It wasn't 'luxury' and it wasn't 'brand'. It was 'product'.

### STEPHEN BAYLEY

Author, critic, consultant, broadcaster, debater and curator. Stephen co-created the Boilerhouse Project at London's V&A, was chief executive of The Design Museum, and fell out with Peter Mandelson when he told him the Millennium Dome 'could turn out to be crap'.

**'I PREFER COCO  
CHANEL'S BELIEF THAT  
LUXURY IS NOT THE  
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RATHER THE OPPOSITE  
OF VULGARITY'**





# ROBERT COUCHER

THE DRIVER

**M**OST YOUNG motoring journalists love Alfa Romeos. Cynics suggest this is because they get to roar around in the cars from Milan, then return them without the reality check of having to repair them. On a regular basis.

Motoring journalists of a certain age also love Lancias. Elegant, cerebral, refined, discreet, Lancias have always had a subtle appeal. If Ferrari is the motorised equivalent of Dolce & Gabbana clobber and Alfa Romeo of Giorgio Armani, then Lancia is Loro Piana – all double-ply cashmere and hand-stitched quality.

Unfortunately, today Lancia is a sad shadow of its former self. Under the direction of Sergio Marchionne, head of the Fiat group (which now owns Chrysler), Lancia has been reeled back to the point it now sells only the Ypsilon and only within Italy. The great marque was recently sullied by being applied to the lumpen Chrysler 300 (calling it a Thema!) and Voyager MPV. Genius. As Marchionne said: 'We have to be honest. Lancia will never be what it was. The only model that is of any value in Europe is the Ypsilon, which will be saved. The rest of the range has no appeal.' Ouch.

Lancia has been losing money for decades. Since it was founded by Vincenzo Lancia in 1906, its engineering ambition has always overruled rigorous bean-counting. Lancia built a wide range of models with different mechanical underpinnings and little sharing of components. But the engineering was always first-class. The Lambda of the '20s was an early example of monocoque construction and it pioneered independent suspension. The Aprilia of the late '30s continued with its innovative V4 engine and a world-leading drag coefficient of 0.47, making it the GTI of the age. The Aurelia of the '50s is probably the best regarded of the marque. Designed by Vittorio Jano, it featured the first production V6 engine, with a rear transaxle for good balance and handling. It was the first car to be fitted with radial tyres.

The Aurelia's giant-killing abilities were established when, in 1951, a 2.0-litre finished second only to a fearsome 4.1-litre V12 Ferrari 340 America on the Mille Miglia. To be fair, the weather was atrocious, which better suited the Lancia. But in the same year an Aurelia won its class at Le Mans and finished 12th overall. In 1952 Aurelias took the first three places on the Targa Florio, as well as winning the tough Liège-Rome-Liège in 1953.

The Lancia Stratos HF was launched in 1973. You have to love the excitable High Fidelity tag but, weighing in at under 1000kg with a mid-mounted Ferrari 2.4-litre V6 (190bhp in *Stradale* tune), the Stratos is a real road rocket, even if it has the reputation of swapping ends more violently than any Porsche 911. The Stratos dominated rallying in the '70s, winning three consecutive World Rally Championships in 1974, 1975 and '76.

Prices of vintage and classic Lancias have finally gained traction as drivers and collectors realise how good they are. I've experienced several and wish I'd kept them all. My first car was an Aurelia, a really desirable, light, third-series B20 GT. Unfortunately the car was a total wreck my father gave me, as a 17-year-old, to restore. I managed to get it to run occasionally but it really needed a full nut-and-bolt rebuild. Not something for a teenager.

At the same time my father had an immaculate sixth-series GT that was beautiful but heavy and with a 2.5-litre V6 that lacked sufficient grunt. He also had an ultra-rare B24 Spider, one of only 59 right-hand-drive examples. The Spider was scruffy but solid and I used to drive it to the beach, casually leaving it in the sandy and salty car park. It was fast enough and handled beautifully but the loose engine had a bad smoking habit. Now owned by Ian

**'THE LANCIA FULVIA  
IS UNDERRATED AND  
UNDERVALUED – BUY  
ONE BEFORE IT'S TOO  
LATE! THE THINKING  
MAN'S MINI-COOPER S'**

Fraser of *Car* and *Supercar Classics* magazine fame, the Spider is a properly valuable piece of kit. Coming full circle, Ian's son Brett wrote the Stratos feature that begins on page 72.

But the Lancia I really like is the Fulvia. What a fabulous little sports car, and also a proven rally weapon, winning the Championship in '72, besting a more powerful 911 on the Monte Carlo Rally. It's underrated and undervalued – buy one before it's too late! The thinking man's Mini-Cooper S. Of course, the competition HF and *Fanalone* models are expensive but it's the early 1.3 or 1.3S you want, with their sweet four-speed gearboxes, delicate nature and excellent build quality. It now looks as if Lancia is heading for oblivion. But classic Lancias live on and are always a delight to drive. Especially the early Fulvia.

## ROBERT COUCHER

Robert grew up with classic cars, and has owned a Lancia Aurelia B20GT, Alfa Romeo Giulietta and Porsche 356C. He currently uses his properly sorted 1955 Jaguar XK140 as his daily driver, and is a founding editor of this magazine.



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Photography David Caruana-Dingli

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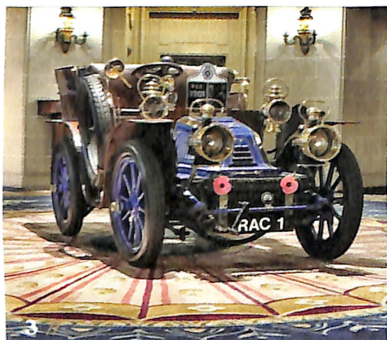
## Ben Cussons

*Ocean-going sailor who found a home on dry land as chairman of the RAC's motoring committee*

**MANCUNIAN BEN CUSSONS** sailed the world crewing ocean-going yachts on leaving school, rather than pursue a career in the Army, eventually studying maritime law at Plymouth and becoming a commercial shipbroker. His enthusiasm for all things motoring led him to join the motoring committee of the Royal Automobile Club on its inception in 1998 and he has chaired it since 2007. He was a director of the MSA from 2001 to 2013 and is a trustee of the RAC Foundation. Ben comes from a motoring family: his aunt ran her own F3 team in the '60s and raced at Monaco, and his father bought a Ford GT40 new and campaigned it in the 1960s. Whether two- or four-wheeled, if it has an engine, then he's interested. Despite a full programme of motoring administration and participation in motoring events as far afield as Macau, Ben runs a graphics company producing various bespoke doormats and giftware. **Steve Havelock**



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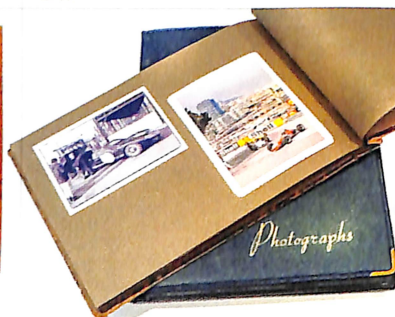
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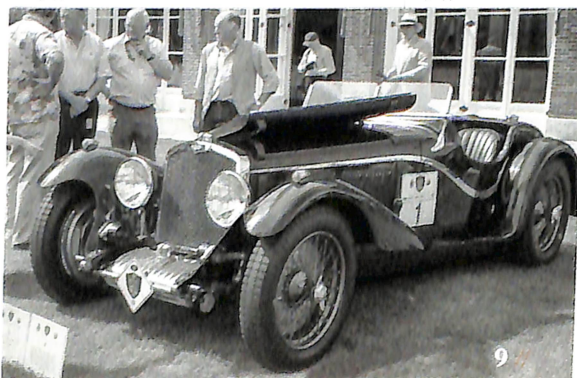
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10

1 // I love working on my own cars and I never leave home without my trusty tool roll. Whilst one hopes not to have a problem, fixing a car is a most satisfying experience; I never give up on a repair.

2 // PUG 676, a 1952 Jaguar C-type, has been in our family for a quarter of a century. In constant use, it's raced, rallied and occasionally bruised, but is utterly glorious to drive. To my mind, it's the greatest 1950s sports car by far.

3 // This is the 1901 Royal Automobile Club Mors car I drove on my first London to Brighton Run back in 1998. I love driving veteran cars, as generally you need more arms and legs than you have, so co-ordination is essential. Chairing the steering group that guides the run is not without its challenges, but the drive to Brighton makes it worthwhile. It's a truly unique event, definite bucket list material.

4 // I made this candelabra from the remains of my C-type's crankshaft and valves after the engine blew up in the 2013 Freddie March race at the Goodwood Revival. Patrick Blakeney-Edwards brought the car into the pits complaining of a vibration, which was not surprising as the crankshaft was in two pieces. We made amends the following year and came third.

5 // This Henry Poole & Co driving suit was conceived with Simon Cudey of the Savile Row tailor to create stylish and practical attire for open top motoring. It has proved its worth, particularly on some damp trips to Brighton. Great cars deserve a bit of respect and I think that means looking the part. I use my suit on all my motoring adventures and would use it while racing if the rules permitted. Now there's an idea.

6 // I still use this walnut cufflinks box, given to my step-grandfather in 1959 as a Christmas gift from his Jaguar dealer for being a loyal customer of the marque; the leaping jaguar is as close as I can get to a car in the bedroom without divorce!

7 // In 1998 the Earl of March organised a new event, the Revival Meeting. I was fortunate to drive a Ferrari 250 Testa Rossa - I was at the back of the field but didn't care a jot. This is a photo of the car.

8 // A family album of historic racing cars includes treasured memories of my aunt Natalie racing a Brabham F3 at Monaco, dad testing his new Ford GT40 at Oulton Park in 1966 (that's Richard Bond in the foreground), and my stepfather racing a Chevron B8. I wish they were still in the family, but then they were just for racing!

9 // 'If you can't buy it, blag a ride' is sort of what I did on the 2014 1000 Mile Trial when Jonathan Turner invited me to co-drive his exquisite ex-Donald Healey 1934 Triumph Dolomite. Its restoration was completed the day before we left, but this amazing car didn't let us down. There was a grin etched on my face long after the event.

10 // Conceived with Carol Spagg, this race at the Silverstone Classic weekend had the aim of bringing out to race the great GT cars of the 1950s and '60s. Ferrari 250 SWBs, Aston Martin DB4GT Zagatos, AC Cobras; all sensational cars. I think we succeeded.



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# TONY DRON

ON CLOCKING UP HALF-A-CENTURY OF DRIVING ON THE NORDSCHLEIFE



**T**WO DAYS BEFORE setting off for the Nürburgring, disaster struck. My friend Bruce's car, a late MkII Sprite giving all of 56bhp, suddenly sagged at the offside rear with a broken spring. Ruling out my Austin Seven, our first trip to the German GP seemed doomed, but there was one slim hope. If we could get some new springs quickly and fit them ourselves, we might still make it. Thanks to Mr Price, proprietor of my local garage in Sunningdale, we did.

He even let us use his Chobham Road Garage workshop, after hours and unsupervised. 'Just lock up when you've done,' he said. England was a very different place in 1965. Driving away on new springs, the improvement astonished me. Aged 18, it was a revelation – chassis set-up really is even more important to performance than engine power.

We made it to the 'Ring days before the F1 teams arrived and headed straight for the café under the huge wooden grandstand by the start/finish straight. Looking across at the pit-road, Bruce said: 'Just a minute. They're queuing up to drive their road cars round the circuit.' Excited and amazed, we drained our coffees and shot round to join in.

For days we pounded that Sprite round and round. The circuit went left after the pits straight and then

## 'A BROKEN HUB EJECTED A FRONT WHEEL AT 120MPH DURING QUALIFYING'

you could choose between forking left under a bridge onto the Sudschleife or staying right and heading directly towards the Nordschleife. We tried both before sticking to the classic Nordschleife – the GP circuit in 1965. Watching F1 qualifying near Hatzenbach, we were inspired by Jim Clark's spine-tingling, pole-setting lap and witnessed his dominant race victory, securing the 1965 World Championship.

I was hooked; the fabulous Nordschleife has been Mecca to me ever since – and now I've been driving there regularly for exactly 50 years in public sessions, Historic car track tests, exclusive trackdays and, starting with the 1982 WEC 1000Km, innumerable races in all sorts of cars.

I've lost count of the number of times I've competed in the famous 24 Hours. In the 1996 Eifel Klassik, driving a 1963 Ferrari 330LMB solo in a field of some 200 cars, I chalked up my only Nordschleife outright pole, victory and fastest lap.

More recently, Mark Taylor and I enjoyed several great races in his DB4, pictured left. I had a lucky escape in it, when a broken hub ejected a front wheel at 120mph during qualifying. Going uphill at Kesselchen, it still took half a mile to stop.

The 'Ring hasn't changed much. The alterations for safety after 1970 made no noticeable difference to the corners – they just got smoother and mostly faster, with annoying bumps removed, Armco barriers added and a few strategically placed run-off areas installed. Those improvements greatly increased the pleasure of driving there. The biggest change came in 1984 when the Sudschleife was sacrificed to create the modern GP track but the famous Nordschleife remained intact all along, still with a maximum of 73 corners – never around 180 as is often claimed.

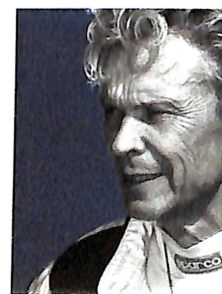
Oldtimers used to say you couldn't learn it like other circuits but that just isn't true. By the time I got to race there, I did know it intimately, which was then a big advantage, but today hundreds of drivers know it as well as any local hero knows Brands Hatch.

Unlike other circuits, you have to keep working at the 'Ring. Learning which way the corners go is obviously the start but you need to keep track of repairs to the many changes in surface – and know how each section performs in dry, damp and wet conditions. Walking it helps enormously and decades back I spent two days doing that, studying every twist and camber change in close detail. That made a considerable difference.

I'd like to see one change made to the track now. The crest at Quiddelbacher-Höhe should be eased to stop cars taking off and flying into a crash 200m down the road at Flugplatz where, believe me, there never has been a jump. The latest victim was the Nissan GT of Jann Mardenborough, who crashed in a carbon copy of the accidents of Chris Irwin (1968, Ford F3) and Manfred Winkelhock (1980, March F2). Driver error was not a factor in those incidents.

As an industry test track for road cars, the Nordschleife remains unrivalled, if used properly to perfect handling, brakes and reliability. The ultimate lap time achieved is relatively unimportant. For a great passenger ride, the legendary Sabine Schmitz still runs the Ring-Taxi service, though I think Claudia Hürtgen is now the only ace lady driver.

But how will we feel if, perhaps soon, the driverless 'Ring taxi arrives?



### TONY DRON

Having started his racing career in Formula Ford, Tony made a name for himself in 1970s Touring Cars and since then has raced an astonishing variety of sports and historic machinery. He is also a hugely respected journalist.





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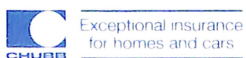
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# Letters

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## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### ‘Thanks for the fag, mate’

EVERY MONTH I have been enjoying Tony Dron's column looking at motor sport from a slightly different perspective, but Tony: if you are going to point out André Lotterer to the reader, he's on the right of the picture in issue 145! [See Tony's response, below – Ed].

The first time I saw Tony race was in 1976 when, as a spotty bespectacled youth who was desperate to get close to racing cars, I became a marshal at Oulton Park. I was assigned paddock duties for the F3 race so was able to see the likes of Bruno Giacomelli and Rupert Keegan preparing for their race (the BP Championship, I think). However, at the start of the race, we were called trackside to recover one Tony Dron in his March 763, who had failed to start.

'What's up, mate?' I asked, putting my head towards the cockpit. 'F.....g stripped first gear,' came the reply. After a quick removal of the car – and, boy, it was quick, as the race was using Fosters circuit – I helped Tony back to his trailer. He just sat in his car, head in hands. Not knowing what to do or say, I asked, 'Do you want a cigarette?' He nodded and we sat in silence for about five minutes enjoying a Marlboro – well, it was the '70s.

Towards the end of the meeting, he came up to me and said, 'Thanks for the fag, mate', shook my hand and said he hoped to see me again soon.

It's not always the grand gestures that matter, but the little things that cost little that mean so much. My wife and I marshal regularly now and thoroughly enjoy all the events we go to, and it's nice to get an acknowledgement from drivers for our efforts. Keep up the excellent writing, Tony.

MIKE BROADBENT CHESHIRE

*Thanks for those very kind words, Mike, and thanks again for that fag! To survive a bit longer, I packed in smoking later. However, as you might guess, I do know what André Lotterer looks like, but the information was added (incorrectly) by a staffer in the editorial office. These things happen, even in the best magazines, but shall we have him shot anyway – just to encourage the others?*

Tony Dron

THE LETTER OF THE MONTH wins the writer's choice of print from the set of Special Editions offered by poster specialist Drivepast. Known particularly for original movie posters that feature cars and motor racing, Drivepast also has its own collection of around 20 Special Edition reprints: these are high-quality versions of magazine covers from Europe and South America, dating from the 1920s to the 1950s and mostly featuring motor racing. They've been blown up to A2 size (420 x 590mm) and laid on heavy textured art paper, with the title embossed, and even retain some of the original patina. You can view the whole set at [www.drivepast.com](http://www.drivepast.com)



## LAND ROVER BODGES

MARK DIXON thinks that Landies can be fixed with a lump of wood [cover story, Octane 145]. I beg to differ, and think I ought to know about their reliability and 'fixability' for, as a student, I drove in a ten-year-old Series IIA LWB Truck Cab (Archie) with ex-WD ammunition trailer (Mahitabel) some 12,000 miles to Afghanistan and back in 1971.

My co-owner – luckily studying engineering and with mechanical experience from an ongoing restoration of a Roesch Talbot 105 – plus four other students were persuaded by me to emulate a classic 1930s journey, Robert Byron's *Road to Oxiana*. What fun and games we had with Archie and Mahitabel.

In retrospect, most of our woes were sorted fairly quickly by native ingenuity or local make-do-and-mend mentality. They were:

- 1) Gearbox and rear axle needed replacing – luckily fixed under guarantee – straight after purchase from a West London dealer.
- 2) Radiator header tank return required rebrazing (Vienna).
- 3) Brakepipes replaced (Iran).
- 4) Wheel studs came out of their backplate, wrecking the threads. Luckily this was just outside a Land Rover repair shop and they simply welded (to my co-owner's horror) the studs back in (Caspian Sea, Iran).
- 5) Propshaft was bent after a reversing/ditch incident; not a big problem for an Afghan mechanic to straighten, amazingly.
- 6) Front leaf spring broke (Great Salt Desert, South Iran).
- 7) Leaking core plug fixed with a cork and Araldite (Firouzabad, Iran).
- 8) Weeping radiator sealed with some patent gloop that some Germans donated (Iran, somewhere).
- 9) Coolant hoses broke-up twice (Tehran, and again in Turkey on the drive back to Istanbul), resulting in some cherry-red exhaust headers, seemingly without lasting problems.
- 10) Foot dip switch broke (Vienna).
- 11) Worn points (Brussels) – not fixed because a vital screw seemed to have been welded into the distributor, and we limped home at 30mph.
- 12) Brake master cylinder failed during the rush hour (London Embankment). An emergency handbrake stop trashed the rear diff' – it's a transmission brake – and we converted to front-wheel drive.

Back at uni, we had run out of money and could not afford a new battery, so I used to have to handcrank Archie, usually in the early hours of the morning having climbed out of my girlfriend's college.

In retrospect, we would have done better to take a VW Microbus, as we never needed the off-road capability. VWs were just as fixable and there were many around. Six-up might have been tight, though.

It was an eventful journey in many ways: I was imprisoned overnight near Persepolis, Iran, for knocking over a pedestrian. It's always the driver's fault in Iranian law, and technically I should have remained there until the family provided a pardon (which eventually cost £20), but luckily the judge did not want to imprison an Oxford student. Who says privilege does not count!

Then, in Istanbul, while asleep in the back of Archie on the night before we were to set off into Europe, I had my wallet and passport stolen from around my neck. The British Consulate 'unofficially' advised us to smuggle me into Greece rolled up in a carpet, as I had no chance of going back to the Iranian border to get the Turkish entry stamps. They gave me an emergency passport and told us, when asked by the Greek border guards why there were no Turkish exit stamps in it, to shrug and say 'Turks...' It worked, but it was a sweaty crossing, to say the least.

It was not all bad. I had my 21st by the Caspian and one of the girl students – just visible behind me, the cool dude on the left in the yellow shirt – had become my girlfriend by the end of the trip, and we are still happily together 44 years later.

MICHAEL POWELL LONDON

*Despite all the breakdowns, the Land Rover got you home in the end, didn't it, Michael? I rest my case!*

Mark Dixon







#### A GOOD-LOOKING FERRARI

I VERY MUCH enjoyed the article on the Ferrari 250GT PF Coupé in *Octane* 145. Born in 1946, I developed a passion for cars and motor racing at a very early age, and the 1950s were a golden era for me.

Nowadays Ferraris are two-a-penny on the road but back then they were as rare as hen's teeth. I would cycle from my home in Ewell to Roy Salvadori's garage at Tolworth, on the A3. One day in the autumn of 1958 I was looking to see if there was anything interesting about, and to my joy a 250GT PF came towards me from the Guildford direction, slowing down to negotiate the roundabout that existed in those days. Who should be driving it but newly crowned F1 World Champion, Mike Hawthorn. I was a great fan of his and he still had his own modified 3.4 saloon – in which he would be killed within a couple of months. I was mortified when I heard the news. He was taking the 250GT to be displayed on the Ferrari stand at the London motor show.

Coincidentally, another encounter with a 250GT PF also included a hot 3.4 Jaguar. I was with my parents, holidaying in Switzerland in 1960, and we had parked up at the roadside for a picnic. We could hear a wonderful sound of engines working hard and it took a few seconds for the source of the noise to appear along the winding road. Into sight came a 250GT PF, hotly pursued by a 3.4 Jaguar saloon. Both were making a glorious noise and were pressing on hard. That vision has always stayed in my brain.

The 250GT PF came from a time when almost all Ferraris were really good looking and it had a wonderful balance of elegance and aggression. The most beautiful cars of that era looked as if they could be danced along the road. Today's designers, and not just Ferrari, seem to have lost that sense of elegance and produce machines that bludgeon roads into submission.

RICHARD BRADBURY SURREY

#### THE ITALIAN JOB E-TYPE

I READ WITH INTEREST the letter from Frank Perrott regarding my father's first race E-type, registered 2 BBC, later to become 848 CRY

[Letter of the Month, *Octane* 144]. The car was actually our dealership's first demonstrator, registered in July 1961, and had minimal race preparation aside from slightly wider rear tyres and occasional removal of the bumpers. The car was raced at the weekends and then cleaned and put back into action for its weekday duties as a demonstrator.

The car did not return to Browns Lane but was sold to a local used car dealer in January 1962 and from there went into relative obscurity, until it was bought, I believe, by a member of *The Italian Job* film crew, from whom the film company bought the car and therefore sealed its place in history.

Thankfully it was later rescued by Philip Porter and continues to delight all who see it.

CHRIS STURGESS

STURGESS JAGUAR, LEICESTER

#### ANY MACKLIN MEMORIES?

I AM WORKING on a book about British racing driver Lance Macklin, who died in 2002. He is perhaps best known for his role in the famous 1955 Le Mans disaster.

I'm trying to track down as many people who knew him as I can, which can be rather trying given the advanced age of those involved, and I'm asking them to contact me at jackshbarlow@gmail.com.

This, I should add, is a project authorised by the Macklin family.

JACK BARLOW LONDON

#### IT'S ALL RELATIVE

WHAT A GREAT series of articles by Doug Nye in *Octane* 146 about the '55 Mille Miglia, meticulously researched and presented in a highly readable style, as usual.

I thought Hans Herrmann's choice of words was interesting when he said that, driving car 704, he had passed Kling and then Fangio, '...who was driving Argentine-style, swinging out wide in the bends and kicking up dust in my face...' Then 704's throttle began to stick '...but I was able to nudge it back with my toe.'

Herrmann's start time was 7.04, Moss's 7.22, so Moss left 18 minutes after him, but Herrmann prefers to mention how he has passed two of his Mercedes team-mates before Rome, rather than acknowledge that Moss had passed him earlier and was now over 20 minutes ahead in race terms. He just says: 'At the Rome control we were two-and-a-half minutes behind Moss...' as if he were catching Moss. A case of only promoting one's achievements?

NICK HOWELL CORNWALL

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# THE VICTORY MACHINE

*With three World Rally Championships and three Monte Carlo Rally wins in its genre-defining career, the Lancia Stratos was built purely to come first. This is its story*

WORDS Brett Fraser / PHOTOGRAPHY Matthew Howell







**AHEAD THE VIEW** is panoramic; behind, the refined snarling of a Ferrari V6 booms forth from the engine bay, filling your head with its intensity. You're more or less sitting on the floor, and from beneath you comes the rattle and clatter of suspension working hard to provide a surprisingly good ride quality.

And you're nervous. The car is twitchy. Very twitchy, courtesy of extremely light, hair-trigger steering that translates every wriggle of your wrist into a darting movement of the nose. This excitability of the chassis is exacerbated by its cruise-missile eagerness to follow the terrain beneath the tyres, keenly seeking the lowest point of the road, which is inevitably the gutter. Your guard is up constantly, because it has to be, your hands gripping the steering wheel tightly, your concentration levels in the red zone.

There's lots more performance to come and the engine's ready desire to rev and the car's palpable light weight are goading you to delve deeper into their package of dynamic delight. Your heart wants to respond to their entreaty, but your head sensibly overrules →





## 'THE SOLE PURPOSE OF THE STRATOS WAS TO GO RALLYING. TO GO RALLYING TO WIN. EVERYTHING'

them: going quicker in this captivating yet nerve-wracking car would require the otherworldly skills of a championship-winning rally driver. No doubt about it, you can only be in a Lancia Stratos.

The Stratos seems too pretty for the rough and tumble of rallying. It's small and neat and pert, not butch and aggressive or any of the other macho qualities you might expect of a car that needs to bully its way along rock-strewn goat tracks in Greece and snow-slathered Swedish backroads. It's a mid-engined sports car for nice, smooth tarmac surfaces, surely?

But that's the deceit of one of the world's most attractive two-seater designs, because the sole purpose of the Stratos was to go rallying. To go rallying to win. Everything. Lancia's competition department, headed by Cesare Fiorio in the 1970s, was very focused on that last point – total domination of the world rallying scene was the only way to justify the huge cost of the exercise.

So the Stratos was a car created from scratch specifically to roar around rally stages, rather than being a road car adapted to the task. As such it was the first of its kind, an extreme interpretation of the expression 'homologation special', and the success of the

Stratos concept would later spawn the special-stage monsters of the Group B era. And as either rally or road car, plain or liveried, wherever a Stratos stops, an enthusiastic crowd soon gathers.

It's remarkable that the Stratos, especially looking the way it does, was sanctioned by Lancia's management. Or by Fiat's for that matter – by 1970 Lancia was part of the Fiat group, along with Ferrari. Rallying's value to most of its participants is that the cars out on the stages look very much like the cars you can buy in the showroom. The Stratos was not like anything in Lancia's showroom, or anyone else's. Yes, a minimum of 400 road cars would have to be produced to homologate the Stratos for competition, but such tiny numbers would do little to appease Lancia dealers anxious for a tangible lure with which to entice customers.

By 1970 the Beta coupé was in the pipeline and by Lancia standards could be considered a volume model but, while a rally version was developed to run alongside the Stratos, most of the company's motor sport budget was directed at the wedge-shaped projectile with pop-up headlights and a Ferrari engine.

The Stratos owes its existence to a perfect storm of happy coincidences. Chief among

them was the permanent appointment of Cesare Fiorio as Lancia's sporting director in 1969. Fiorio had previously run the company's motor sport operations on a freelance basis, and his connection to Lancia stretched back years – his father, Sandro, was Lancia's PR man and an ex-rally driver, and clearly Fiorio picked up on his old man's passions. Fiorio junior's drive, determination and intimate understanding of the rules of rallying helped ensure that, despite several setbacks, the Stratos made it to the starting line.

And yet he couldn't have done it on his own. Another key champion of the cause was Piero Gobbato, installed by Fiat as Lancia's managing director towards the end of 1969. Although tasked with turning around Lancia's miserable sales and cutting costs, he was a sympathetic ear for Fiorio's plan to boost the company's image with a purpose-built rally car. And later in the Stratos's protracted gestation, it was Gobbato's wily political manoeuvring that finally made a reluctant Ferrari come good on its promise to supply 500 Dino 2.4-litre V6 engines.

Lancia's inexorable decline during the 1960s also played into the Stratos's hands. Research and development had more or less come to a halt and, at the end of that decade →





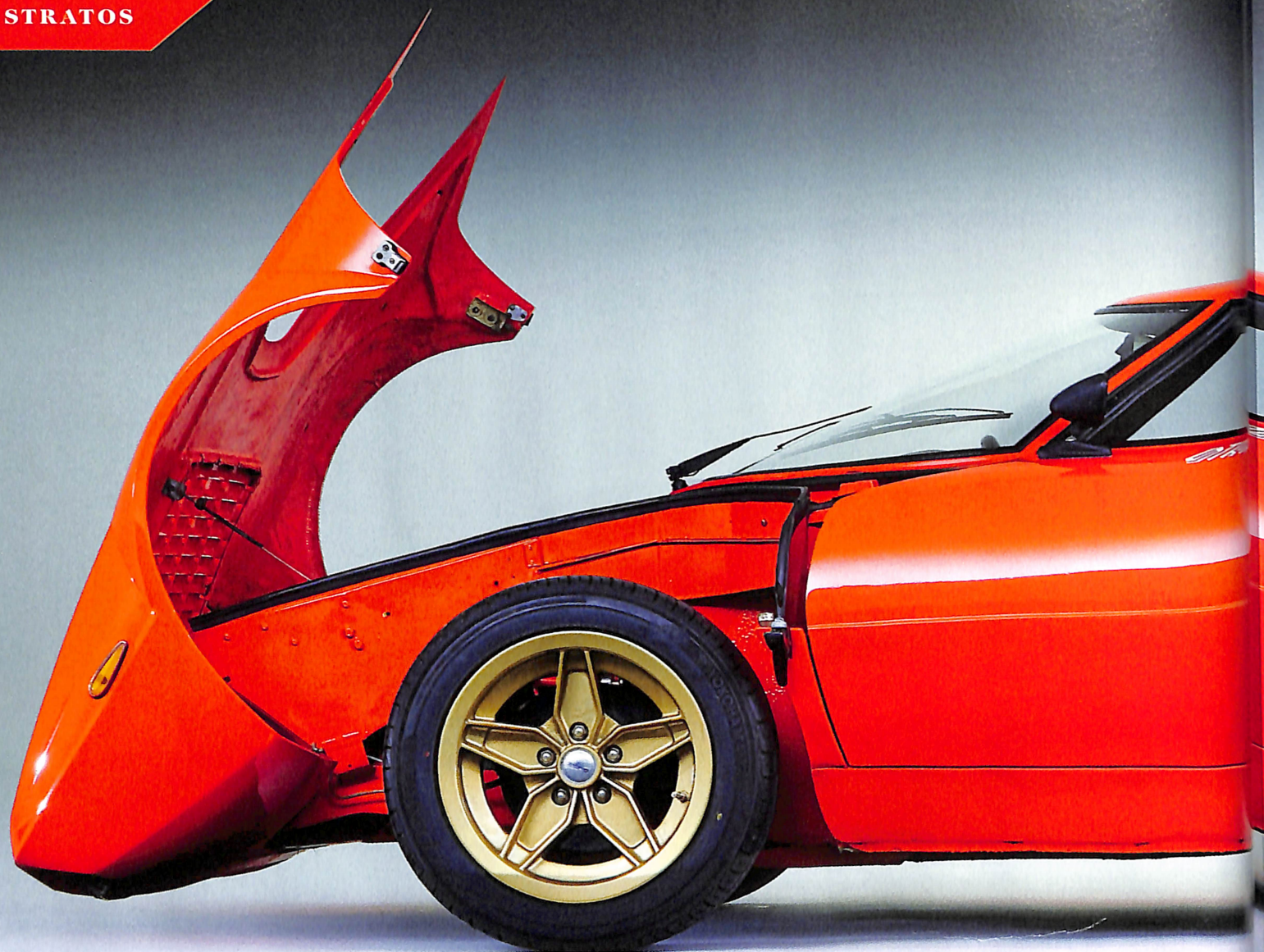
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when Fiorio began thinking of a rallying replacement for the ageing – though still moderately successful – Fulvia coupé, there was nothing to replace it. Fiorio believed that a purpose-built rally weapon would reinvigorate Lancia internally and externally, and reflect the company's tradition of technical innovation.

Fiorio's musings about a replacement for the Fulvia were inspired by the Renault-powered Alpine A110. This fast and lithe little rear-engined coupé was making a nuisance of itself in the International Rally Championship for Makes during the mid-to-late-1960s, and only its fragility on some of the rougher events prevented it strolling off with more of the silverware. When in 1968 Renault bought out Alpine and threw some much-needed cash into the Dieppe-based sports car maker's R&D pot, Fiorio realised that the French car's full potential might soon be realised, to the detriment of the Fulvia.

As it transpired, however, there was actually plenty of life left in Lancia's dainty coupé, despite its competition heritage stretching back to 1965. In 1972 – and to everyone's surprise, especially Alpine-Renault's – the Fulvia bagged the very last International Rally Championship for Makes. And in 1974, while the Stratos sat idle awaiting homologation, the Fulvia (together with the Beta coupé) chalked up enough points during the early season to help its mid-engined sibling win the championship for Lancia by the year's end.

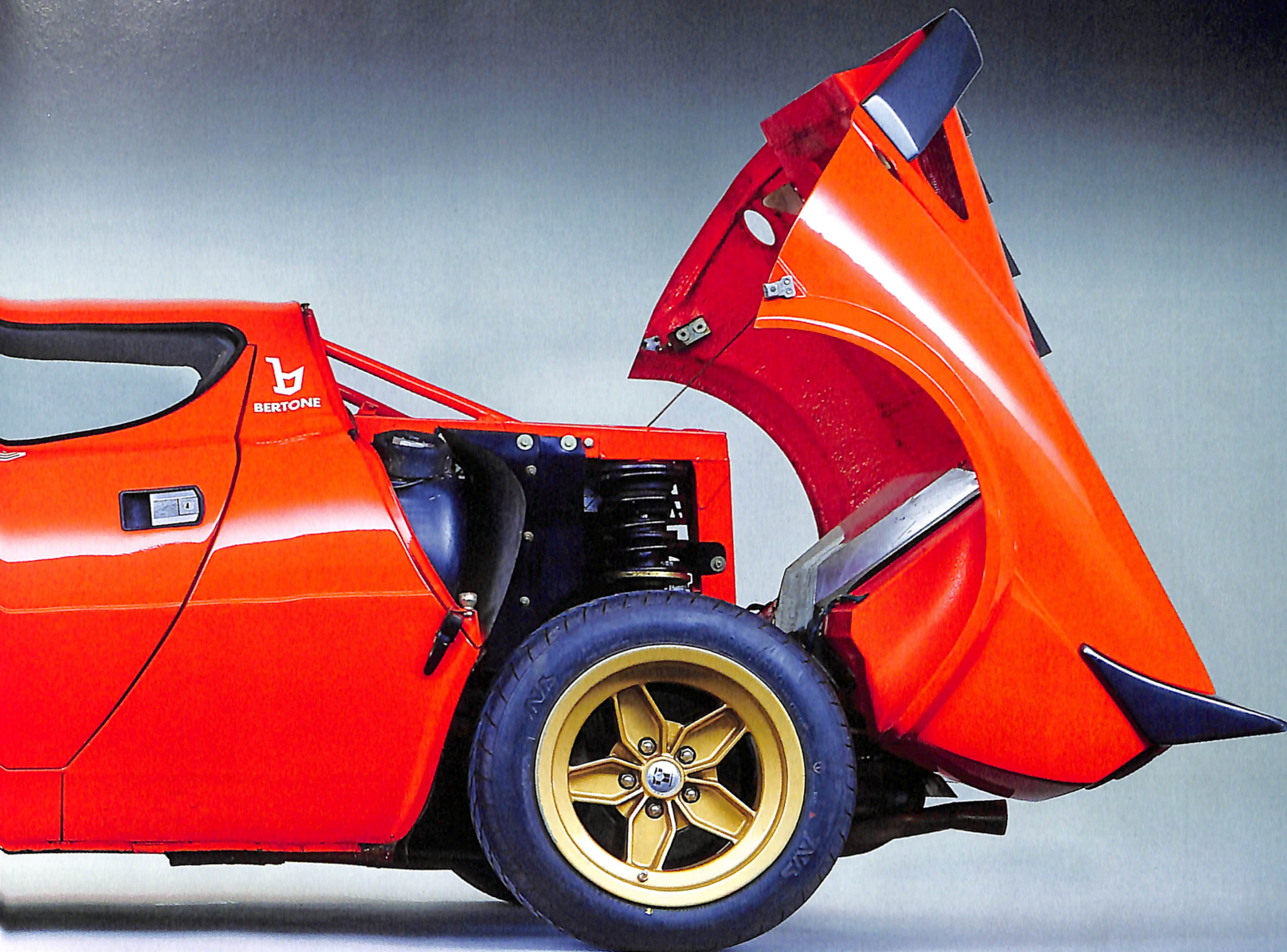
All that, of course, was in the future when Fiorio began mentally compiling the ideal specification for Lancia's new star of the stages: it would need to be mid-engined, rear-wheel-drive, small, light (less than 1000kg), robust and have adjustable suspension to cope with extremes of road surface. It would also require about 250bhp. Aiding his thought process was the fact that Ford was working on its own rally

special, the mid-engined GT70 and, while that project would never make it past a handful of prototypes, it showed the Italian that others shared his vision for the future of rally cars.

Meanwhile, carmakers in general were, by the end of the 1960s, applying pressure on motor sport's governing body, the FIA, to give rallying greater international cachet and visibility. By 1970 the lobbying paid off with the announcement that in 1973 there would be a new, more high-profile global series, the World Championship for Rallies; with it would come new regulations. What particularly caught Fiorio's eye was the Group 4 category, which would accommodate modified and highly tuned cars, provided that at least 400 of them were constructed. The base elements for the Stratos were falling into place.

Yet another stroke of good fortune had come along in 1970. Carrozzeria Bertone decided it would like to shake loose a bit of Lancia





coachbuilding business from the clutches of Pininfarina. Nuccio Bertone tasked his studio's new signing, Marcello Gandini, with creating a shape that would wow Lancia at the Turin motor show in November. Gandini already had the Lamborghini Miura in his portfolio, so Bertone couldn't be accused of gambling with fresh talent. What Gandini created was the thigh-high wedge of weirdness that was the Stratos Zero, the car's name reputedly stolen from the box of a wooden aeroplane kit that was lying around in the studio.

For all its dramatic styling, that first Stratos concept with its Fulvia 1600 HF V4 motor wasn't so well received by the motoring press (see *Octane* 127). But that didn't matter, it cracked open the doors at Lancia: Nuccio Bertone was so overjoyed to have received the phone call from Lancia HQ in January 1971 that he jumped in the concept car and drove it himself into downtown Turin. There was

never any intention to develop the Stratos Zero any further, but what the car did was to awaken an urge within Lancia management to be bold and daring. Fiorio, of course, had already reached that conclusion, but now others were on board with the idea.

Bertone's services were duly enlisted to create Fiorio's vision and Gandini was once again put in charge of the project. And although Lancia's race engineer, Gianni Tonti, was on hand to offer practical advice, Gandini largely worked on his own. Having only been handed the brief in early March 1971, by August Gandini had a full-size mock-up ready. At the Turin motor show that November, the day-glo orange, aluminium-bodied Bertone Stratos concept car made its triumphant debut.

It was to seem like an eternity, though, until Stratos the rally car first turned a wheel in anger. Longer still until the car was finally homologated, in October 1974, and was able to

**'EVEN IN TODAY'S  
WORLD OF EXTREME  
SPORTS CARS THE  
STRATOS REMAINS  
AN EVOCATIVE  
SIGHT'**











**'THE SIMPLE ACT  
OF GETTING INTO IT  
DISTANCES THE STRATOS  
FROM REGULAR CARS.  
SENSE OF OCCASION  
COMPENSATES FOR THE  
LACK OF ELEGANCE'**

#### Inside

The colour scheme might be straight from a '70s sit-com living room, but the ambience is strictly motor show – except for the doorbins, specially designed to accommodate crash helmets.

run in Group 4 (rather than as a prototype) and score points towards the world championship. Much of the delay stemmed from the Ferrari factory procrastinating over the supply of the 2.4-litre V6 engine (despite Enzo's own support for the deal); replacing it with the four-cylinder motor from the Beta coupé was considered, but the threat of swapping over to a 3.0-litre Maserati V6 – a politically astute move by Gobbato – finally spurred the men from Maranello into signing the supply agreement.

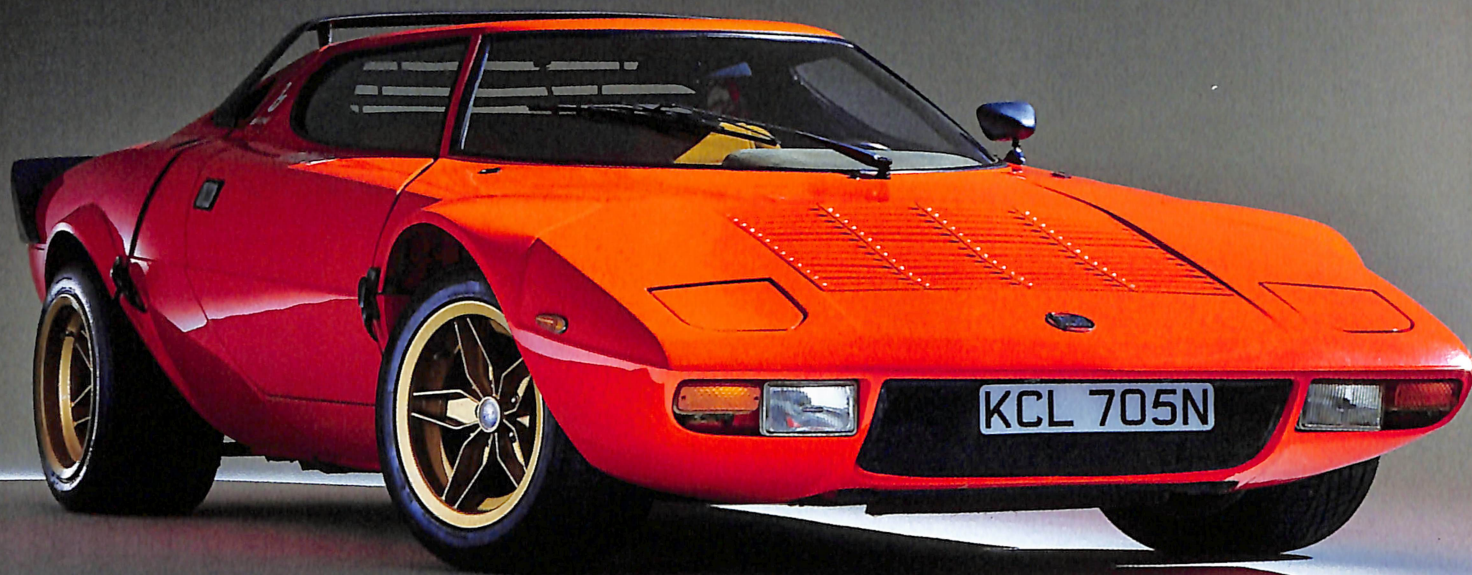
Even then the engines merely dribbled out of the Ferrari factory. Getting enough cars built to homologate the Stratos for motor sport became a nightmare for Fiorio and Lancia's competition department: hopes of competing in the 1973 season proved fruitless, and for a while 1974 seemed in doubt, too. Rumour has it – and this is supported by documents reproduced in Nigel Trow's excellent *Lancia Stratos, World Champion Rally Car* – that a deeply frustrated Fiorio eventually signed paperwork claiming that all the required Stratoses had been built by October 1974, when in fact cars were still trickling off the line in the middle of the following year. Yet nobody seemed to mind, because the world's rally stages were to become much more interesting with the arrival of the glamorous Stratos.

Even in today's world of extreme sports cars the Stratos remains an evocative sight, and no less so for our photographic car being the road-going *stradale* version. It must have been a breathtaking moment when Fiorio took Sandro Munari and the other Lancia works drivers aside and said 'Look at the new toy we've built for you'. Compared with its rallying predecessor, the Fulvia coupé, the Stratos was properly exotic, a revolution in Lancia design that embraced nothing from the past.

The simple act of getting into it distances the Stratos from regular cars. The glassfibre door is so light that there's a strange lack of momentum behind it as you open up, and you need to keep a tight grip of it if there's a breeze. The driver's seat is a long way down, mounted straight to the floor, so you have to stick your right leg in (it's left-hand drive) beyond a broad sill, fold yourself almost in half from the waist, reach in and grab the steering wheel to steady yourself, perhaps bend your other knee a little, and then drop into the Alcantara-trimmed bucket. Sense of occasion compensates for the lack of elegance.

If you're broad-shouldered, the deep but narrow bolsters of the simply styled seat will push your upper body slightly clear of the backrest and it can be a struggle to get truly





#### 1974 LANCIA STRATOS STRADALE

**ENGINE** 2418cc V6, SOHC per bank, three Weber IDF 40 carburetors **POWER** 190bhp @ 7400rpm **TORQUE** 166bhp @ 4000rpm  
**TRANSMISSION** Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive **STEERING** Rack and pinion **SUSPENSION** Front: upper wishbones, lower radius arms, lower semi-trailing arms, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear: MacPherson struts, reversed lower wishbones, supplementary trailing links, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar **BRAKES** Discs **WEIGHT** 980kg **PERFORMANCE** Top speed 142mph. 0-60mph 6.0sec

comfortable. For all the excellent front and side vision afforded by the visor-like windscreen, the Stratos's cabin is a tad claustrophobic – headroom is extremely tight and, although you sit a long way inboard, the glasshouse is inboard, too, placing the side window close to your left temple, while the rear-view mirror seems perilously near to your right. One of the quirks of the cabin is door pockets big enough to accommodate a crash helmet, but you're left wondering how the drivers and navigators ever found the space to wear them in the first place.

When the transversely mid-mounted 2.4-litre Ferrari V6 cranks into life behind you, the hiss and pop of the carbs underlays a cultured, deep-toned rumble. Warm the fluids and start pinging the sharp-tipped tacho needle around the dial, and it becomes crisp, strident, imposing, with a metallic timbre at the top end. If you've spent any time watching YouTube videos of Group 4 Stratos rally cars with 24-valve heads and 275bhp raging through the forests, then the sound the *stradale* makes might not seem quite rampant enough, yet it does prick the hairs on your forearms and sets your synapses tingling.

By modern standards the Stratos isn't wickedly quick, yet with just 980kg to haul along you'll find that 190bhp is enough to

keep the pace entertainingly high. The Ferrari V6 is quite torquey, too, so throttle response in the mid-range is snappy, a useful attribute given how ponderous and sloppy the five-speed gearchange can be.

On brief acquaintance – and, I suspect, even after prolonged exposure – you'll not really want to be chucking the Stratos down the road with the throttle buried. With such a short wheelbase (2180mm), 42:58 front:rear weight distribution and that super-quick steering, the potential for a big spin is ever-present. The chassis and suspension set-up were, of course, tuned for acrobatic agility but, you'll notice from rally footage from the 1970s, not even Munari held a Stratos sideways for long; it's not a drifter like Ford's Escorts or modern rally cars.

The Stratos might be a handful as a road car, but as a rally car in the mid-70s it was imperious. Three World Rally Championships (1974, '75 and '76), numerous national rally championships and drivers' championships, plus countless individual wins – including, in Group 5 form, the 1973 Giro d'Italia and 1974 Targa Florio – were emphatic vindication of Fiorio's belief in a clean-sheet design to a very particular specification.

And yet the Stratos's domination of world rallying – and the money being spent for it to

do so – raised hackles and jealousies within the Fiat group. In 1977 Lancia lost the political battle and Fiat's rallying muscle was placed firmly behind the 131 Abarth. The Stratos still competed in key events that season – Munari won his third successive Monte Carlo rally, for example – but Lancia announced that it wasn't chasing another world title.

Game over for the Stratos? Not quite. Changes to world rally regs in 1978 meant that the car had to revert to its original specification, yet it was still victorious on the San Remo, Giro d'Italia and Tour de Corse. Without factory team support in 1979 it was assumed that the Stratos had nothing more to offer, but talented privateer and Monte Carlo expert Bernard Darniche had other ideas, placing his distinctive blue Chardonnet-sponsored Stratos on the top tier of the podium. Further points successes by privateers throughout '79 meant that by the end of the season Lancia was fourth in the championship, despite not having officially entered it.

As Markku Alén (who used the car to win the 1978 Monte) once said of the Stratos: 'It is the car made for rallying.'

**THANKS TO** Lancia specialist Omicron Engineering Ltd of Norfolk, UK, [www.omicron.uk.com](http://www.omicron.uk.com).





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# SANDRO MUNARI

## THE RALLY DRIVER

*The 1977 World Rally Champion and three-time Monte winner divulges his Stratos secrets*

INTERVIEW Massimo Delbò // ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPHY McKlein

SANDRO MUNARI is not a man who smiles easily, as is the tradition of Venetians. They are taught, from a young age, to be serious, to work hard and that only by making sacrifices can you be successful. But when he hears my first question about the Lancia Stratos, his eyes soften and a smile appears instantly. Munari, now 75, is revered as one of the greatest rally drivers ever, the best to master the Stratos – which, back in the 1970s, was the ultimate rally weapon.

'I remember very well the first time I saw the Stratos,' he says. 'It was the original Bertone prototype, with the wing shape [the Stratos Zero]. It was beautiful to look at but totally wrong as a rally car. Then Cesare Fiorio had the best idea ever: he asked every member of the racing team to write down one or two ideas on how the car should have been made. Everybody suggested something; I personally requested an engine with 300bhp, without knowing that with this last wish I would become a bargaining chip. Cesare Fiorio wondered what I would do with so much power, and I simply replied: "Give it to me, I will find a way to do something with it!"

'I was simply bored by the lack of horses in the Fulvia. Our competitors were the Porsche 911 and the Alpine and, before every rally, we had to perform a "rain and snow dance" so I could hope to win something. Ferrari was asked for its Dino's new engine, and *Il Commendatore* agreed, asking in return that I would race the Targa Florio with his 312P. How he thought a rally driver, accustomed to the 160bhp front-wheel-drive Fulvia, could race a 460bhp rear-wheel-engined prototype remains a big mystery to me. But he was right!

Early Stratos development was problematic, with terrible roadholding and a total insensitivity to any adjustment. 'I created the Stratos, I did it with my stubbornness, because I'm a hard head,' says Munari.

'For the very first drive, Gianpaolo Dallara, Mike Parkes and I were in Corsica testing. It was an absolute disaster, with the car being impossible to drive. The Stratos was reacting every time in a different way, shifting from under- to oversteer without any apparent reason, irrespective of the set-up. My report says that the car felt like it was hinged in the middle, with the front and the rear travelling in opposite directions.

'The real problem became the fact that, instead of fixing what was wrong, some manager decided that the car was right, and that we weren't able to do our work, and we lost some months with a car that was impossible to drive. We were very close to dumping the whole project when we had the idea of a last test in Spain, at the Costa del Sol rally. Due to budget limitations, a car was shipped with Mike Parkes as technician plus two mechanics. I went away testing the last modifications on tarmac and the car was as bad as always. I still remember coming back to the van with Mike anxiously waiting for my response. It took me few seconds to answer: "Mike, we are still in deep shit!"

'I knew that, with this answer, the Stratos project could have been over. But then came →

### Right

Munari celebrates at the end of the 1977 Monte Carlo Rally, which he won (for the third time) on his way to winning that year's Drivers' Championship.











## 'IT WAS LIKE DRIVING A SPACESHIP. PERFECT FROM THE VERY FIRST METRE'

the idea. We never had the car on dirt roads. We thought, let's try, just once, for personal curiosity. We put on four gravel tyres and I went on a dirt road close by. It was like driving a spaceship. I never felt something so amazing. It was absolutely perfect from the very first metre. I come back with a smile as big as the windshield telling Mike: "Give me a car like this on gravel and we are set."

'Finally they provided the more rigid hub-carriers we had asked for since day one. Then the Stratos became irresistible. It was, and still is, the perfect rally car: it is fast, but absolutely reliable, and exciting to drive. Its strongest quality is its handling. I don't remember a single time – and I'm probably the human being who spent the most time behind the wheel – when the Stratos reacted unpredictably.

**Above**  
Munari kicking up dust in North Africa on the 1976 Moroccan Rally. He finished third on this occasion, behind a pair of tough, if low-tech, Peugeot 504s.

'The trick was easy: point the front where you want using the steering and forget about the tail, because it will somehow follow. As soon as you are on the right line, do not move the steering anymore, and keep everything balanced and lined up using only the gas pedal, under- or oversteer at your own convenience, knowing that everything will always happen in a very smooth way. It worked on snow, tarmac, dirt and even on the circuit.'

Sounds easy, but other great rally drivers always admitted that Munari was the best Stratos driver. How does he explain it? 'At a certain level, there is not a better driver than another, at least technically speaking. What still makes the difference is sensitivity. In the Stratos the limit is so high that it is impossible to reach it every time. The fastest driver is the one who feels it best, and can get closest to it. Maybe with the Stratos this is simply what happened to me.'

The only important rally victory missing in the Stratos portfolio is the Safari Rally. Was the

Stratos too extreme to win such a hard competition? 'Nothing is more wrong than this. The Stratos was an almost perfect machine and could have won the Safari too. If it didn't it's because of an incredible run of bad luck. In 1975, at the beginning of the last day, I was first by more than 90 minutes over second-placed Ove Andersson with his Peugeot 504.

'Then, 400km from Nairobi, I got another flat, the third of the day, at the rear. I had already used the two spare tyres, and tried to contact the assistance crew. The only way was to use a radio bridge through the aeroplane, where Fiorio was. After many futile attempts, we put a front tyre on the rear to preserve the differential, the co-driver [Lofty Drews] on the back to help lift the front, drove the 10km to the end of the dirt road, and left Lofty hitchhiking a passage to Nairobi to come back with the assistance. We waited forever for a car to pass... and in the end I was second. I'm still wondering where the aeroplane was.

'Just to say how good the Stratos was, at the start there were 84 cars, including three Stratoses, and by the finish only 11 had survived. We were the only team that did not lose a car in the whole rally. In preparing them we only had to add an oil-bath air filter to prevent the dust getting into the engine, and we led for 4500km out of 5000.'



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# CESARE FIORIO

## THE TEAM MANAGER

*He's the man it wouldn't have been possible without. Now he talks to Octane*

INTERVIEW Massimo Delbò // ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPHY McKlein

CESARE FIORIO managed the Reparto Corse Lancia from the very beginning. Under his reign, it won everything. Now 76, he is retired and lives in Puglia, southern Italy, where he manages a *masseria* (a beautiful farm and hotel) at which people relax, eat and drink – and sometimes talk about cars.

'The Stratos was a need. My job was to win, and we were doing miracles with the Fulvia, a car born for ladies to drive on their shopping trips. One day I called enough, and went asking every member of the team their wish list for a new rally car. It was then quite easy to make the correct technical specification, and Bertone and Gandini did their job in creating a beautiful shape to envelope everything. We asked Ferrari for an engine and, thanks to our

good relationship, we got it. Then, looking at the team, I saw the best rally driver of the period. I felt very safe – and I was very wrong.

'What I did not consider was the political war that a certain group of Fiat middle managers would wage against me and the Stratos project. These people were still upset with me because we destroyed them in races before the Pesenti family sold the Lancia company to Fiat, and tried to stop the project [instead pushing the idea of the X1/9] with technical obstacles. I had to ask for help from senior management, involving Mr Agnelli in person, to solve the situation, and this was the hardest part of the whole Stratos project.

'It is important to underline that the decision to kill the Stratos after few years of success and

Right and below  
Fiorio leading the team on the 1975 Safari  
Rally – ahead of a run of bad luck; in 1976  
(Lancia's last Group 4 manufacturers'  
title) with the works Stratoses.

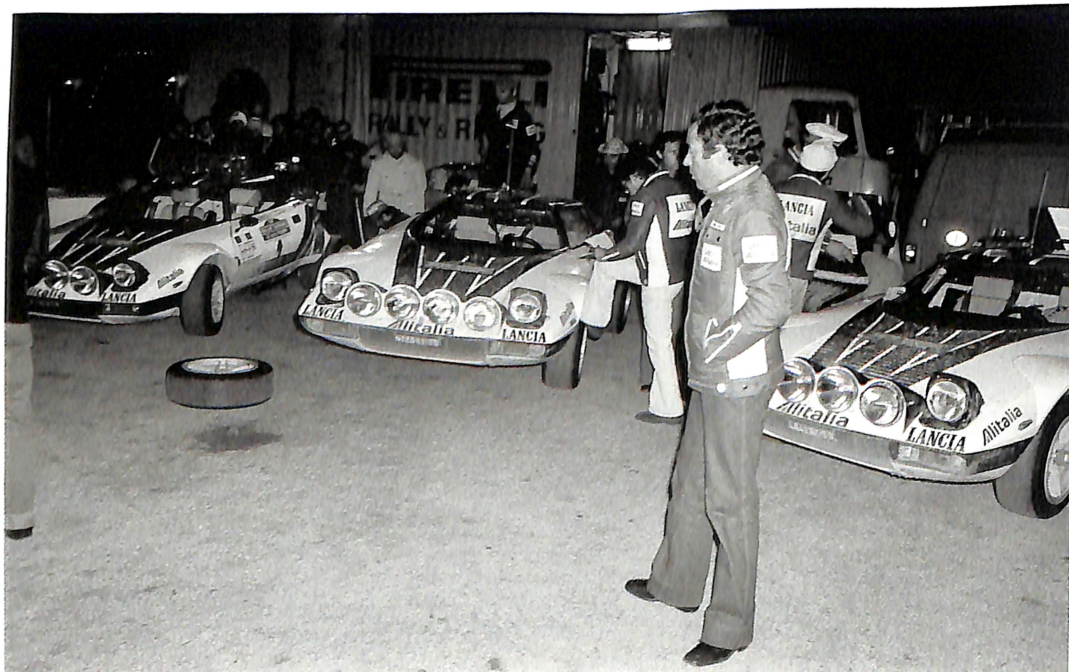
to promote the Fiat 131 instead came from a totally different idea. Racing departments are not created to allow people to enjoy racing, but are the weapon to sell more cars. With the Stratos we were so good that everybody else decided to withdraw from competition, and we needed competitors to beat to fulfil the sales managers' needs. The 131 was a perfect way to suggest to our competitors that we were, finally, beatable, having them coming racing against us, and still beating them with a car that was not created to be a rally killer.

'When we stopped the Stratos we knew that we were losing a fantastic car, capable of winning everything, everywhere, on gravel, racetracks and, in races such as the Tour de France, half on road and half on racetrack.'

So what are Fiorio's greatest memories of the Stratos? 'Take a seat and a good bottle, because I could go on forever,' he says. 'The Stratos was a racing dream come true, developed from a white sheet to win, and I have hundreds of memories connected to the car and to the racers who drove it. Lancia was the best team and, in time, we had all the best drivers. If I could live forever, I'd never forget the emotion and the feeling connected with the first victory at Monte Carlo, with Munari. We entered three cars, each of them a potential winner. The first evening, with still five days of racing in front of us, we'd already lost two of them because of human error. I spent five terrible days, with incredible stress, looking at Munari driving to victory, always fearing the worst. I still remember the relief, of both of us, after the finish line.

'I share with Munari the regrets for the lost Safari too. He is still upset with me, because when he called for assistance with the flat tyre, I wasn't there doing my job of forwarding the call to the assistance crew: we could have solved the problem in 20 minutes, and we had 90 minutes on the second car. He is right, but the race was two hours late, because organisers decided to regroup cars before the morning start. The helicopters I was flying in had to land before sunset, because that was the rule, and the pilot would have lost his licence if he'd carried on, and that is the reason why, when he had three flats in a row – I think he set a record! – I wasn't there.

'Like every general, I had my defeats. In one rally there was a special stage with a 12km dry road uphill, followed by a same-length iced downhill. I had the idea to arrange a pit stop at the top of the hill, to change tyres with a new







pneumatic gun capable of unscrewing the five bolts in one single operation. When we practised, our mechanic could do the job in about 40 seconds, and I was sure we could have wiped out our competitors, granting the Stratos another victory. I remember the excitement going up the road, to supervise the operation, and I was so happy that I didn't even feel the freezing cold while waiting. The first car arrived – and the guns blocked immediately.

'The temperature was below 20, and the air hoses got clogged with ice. I still remember the sound of the guns going from the typical

*frrr-frrr* to a quiet *gnee*, and the mechanics looking at me. We had to unscrew every bolt by hand and, while doing that, the second car arrived, then the third. We looked like a country service station during the holidays.

'I still remember the "nice and polite" words drivers were using about me. But the Stratos was so good that it survived this mistake too. I even owned one for a period of time. It was the very car Sandro Munari won the 1975 Monte Carlo in. But cars need to be taken care of, and after a while I sold it. I regret that, because it would be the perfect piece to put in the "motor room" in my *masseria*.'

**'LANCIA WAS THE  
BEST TEAM AND, IN  
TIME, WE HAD ALL  
THE BEST DRIVERS'**

