



# Those magnificent Uomini and their driving machines

No one has captured the world's automotive imagination like the Italians – Claudia Flisi investigates the men and machines that have given rise to this legendary notoriety.

THE PAGE COURTESY OF BUGATTI. FACING PAGE: COURTESY OF FERRARI



Facing page: The beautifully crafted interior of the Bugatti EB 16.4 Veyron Sang Noir special edition. This page: A 2009 Ferrari California in blue.



## THE ULTIMATE

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Italy has been literally shaping the car manufacturing industry since the early 20th century and the car names that aficionados dream about, such as Bugatti, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Maserati and Pagani, invariably end in “i”.

Sports cars aren't the only Italian models to rank among the world's most expensive four-wheeled vehicles. So do certain models of Aston Martin and Rolls-Royce, Mercedes and Volvo, the Lotus Esprit, Lexus GS and the DeLorean DMC 12, all designed in Italy.

What unites all these cars is the fact that they were all given shape by a small group of design firms located either in or near Turin, in Italy's Piedmont region. Design powerhouses Bertone, Giugiaro and Pininfarina have their headquarters here and their histories are inextricably interwoven with Italy's historical industrial development.

There was no auto industry in 1909 when the Milanese artist Ettore Bugatti produced his first racing car, but his models came to dominate auto racing between 1925 and 1938.

In 1914, Alfieri Maserati convinced five of his six brothers to join him in an auto engineering business near Bologna in Emilia-Romagna. Twelve years later they built their first sports car, which finished first in the 1926 Targa Florio. Maserati was the first European manufacturer to introduce hydraulic brakes and the only Italian constructor to win the Indianapolis 500 ... two years running.

The industry came into its own after World War II. In 1947, long-time Alfa Romeo driver Enzo Ferrari produced his first sports car under his own name. The company's first World Championship title came four years later and the Ferrari myth was born.

In the 1950s, Italy experienced an economic boom. Fiat and Lancia expanded and turned to the car specialists around Turin for inspiration. Nuccio Bertone, heading the eponymous firm begun by his father in 1912, and Battista “Pinin” Farina, founder of the firm he created in 1930, now flourished (Giorgetto Giugiaro founded Italdesign in 1968).

Pininfarina's fame has been bolstered by its long-time association with Ferrari and Alfa Romeo,

*This page, from above: A Ferrari 612 Scaglietti on the road; the Pagani Zonda Roadstar, unmissable in bright yellow. Facing page, from top: The Ferrari 430 Spider Bio Fuel provides an eco-friendly alternative; the Aston Martin DBS in Racing Green combines breakthrough performance with classic elegance.*



THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF FERRARI AND PAGANI; FACING PAGE: COURTESY OF ASTON MARTIN AND FERRARI



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with a style that industrial design champion and Giugiano stalwart Giuliano Molineri describes as “cultured, traditional, rational [and] elegant, with an instinct for what customers want.”

Bertone has a less distinct style because Nuccio Bertone tended to hire young designers with daring personalised approaches. “He was exceptionally courageous, provocative, ahead of the trends,” notes Molineri. “This may have reduced his acceptability by the mass market.”

Giugiaro, who worked for Fiat, Bertone and Ghia before striking out on his own, was named “Car Designer of the Century” in 1999. His personal style is so eclectic it is near-impossible to characterise.

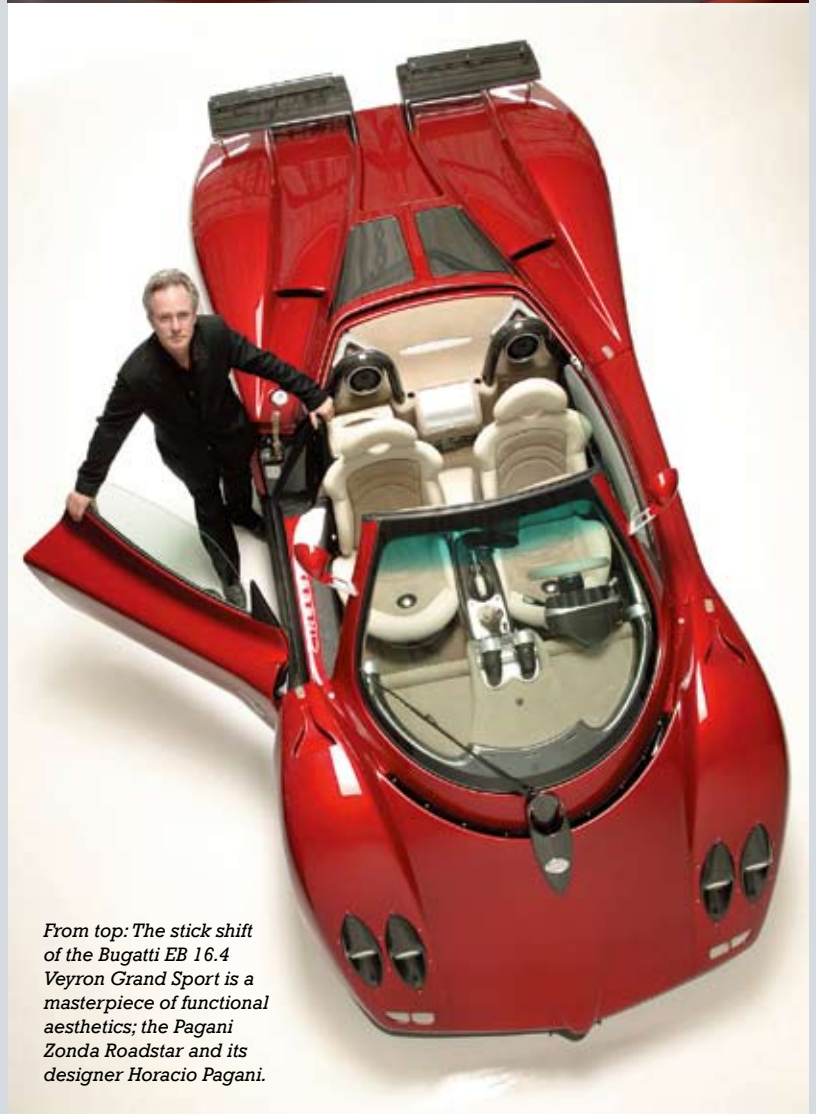
The 1960s and early 1970s marked the apogee of dream cars and fantasy evasion for designers. Lines ruled and no one seemed to draw them better than the Italians. The Lamborghini Miura of 1966, designed by Bertone, reinvented the design concept of an aggressively styled high performance coupé. The same year Giugiaro designed the De Tomaso Mangusta, a masterpiece and a turning point in car design from the softer shapes of the 1960s to the “folded paper” or wedge designs of the 1970s.

By the 1980s, Italian design was less about form and more about the use of new materials and interior layout. There were still excesses, of which the Ferrari Testarossa is perhaps the most famous, but cars in general were less extreme.

The rise of the SUV (sports utility vehicle) in the 1990s confirmed a trend for function. Interiors were more important than exteriors, as cars were used for vacations, offices and as shuttles for children and pets. On the outside, retro styles (nostalgia for the past) battled with new edge forms (made possible by developments in CAD) for the customer’s approval.

By the turn of the millennium, energy efficiency and safety were becoming paramount. Today, Italian designers are as involved as any in the development of micro cars, urban people movers and alternative energy vehicles. Bertone introduced the Filo, a rounded Drive by Wire vehicle in 2001, with simple relaxing lines. Giugiaro presented its concept car Quaranta at the 2008 Geneva Auto Show – a hybrid with solar panels and a Robocop-style nose. Pininfarina’s Bo, an electric car, debuted in October 2008 at the Paris Auto Show also with solar panels and a snub nose, and is expected to go into production next year.

Luxury cars will always exist, predicts Molineri, because there will always be an elite market for them. But the emphasis today is on ecology and practicality. One niche developing in the US today is that of small companies making electric cars and putting classic car bodies (like the old Mustang) on top of them. “This is a new kind of dream,” sighs Molineri. Electric Ferraris, anyone? **P**



*From top: The stick shift of the Bugatti EB 16.4 Veyron Grand Sport is a masterpiece of functional aesthetics; the Pagani Zonda Roadstar and its designer Horacio Pagani.*