

CLASSIC DRIVER

Meet Ritmocorsa: the team behind Europe's most stylish hillclimb racers

Lead

Addicted to cars from day one, lawyer Marco Vitale and commercial pilot Luca Piccione decided to found Ritmocorsa after the pandemic to get stuck into hillclimb racing with their Alfa Romeo Alfetta GTV and Peugeot 205. We spoke to the duo to learn more about their hillclimb antics...



Hillclimb racing is almost as old as the automobile itself, but in the last few years, a fresh team has been taking social media by storm with their dazzling Davide Virdis-designed liveries and nostalgic film photographs capturing their hillclimb heroics. Introducing: Marco Vitale and Luca Piccione, the two friends behind Ritmocorsa.

"The racing virus irreversibly infected us since day one!" The pair tells me. For Marco, there's a clear cause and effect: his father Massimo began competing in local rallies back in the late 1970s, so he grew up following him between the garage, parc fermé, and the paddock. "I was dazzled by the smells, sounds, and colours of road racing," Marco recalls. Meanwhile, Luca's passion was sparked by less direct means: "I grew up around aeroplanes, but since they're not really affordable and definitely not suitable for garage-made modifications, it sparked a secondary ambition: going fast on land!"



However, it wasn't until after the pandemic that Ritmocorsa began to take shape, according to Luca. "The pandemic was a hard time for everyone; the 2020 racing season was cancelled, and the friend group Marco and I belonged to was separated." Luca explains, "So during the second lockdown in 2021, we decided to start a new project focused on hillclimb races — Marco's specialty."

The racing wheels had been set in motion, and Marco already had just the car for the job: a 1989 Peugeot 205 1300 Rallye that was originally built to Group N hillclimb spec, and later converted to meet Group A rally regulations. "It was the first race car I ever owned," Marco fondly recalls. "I bought it on Valentine's day in 2015, but it was not love at first sight! More than once, I was on the verge of a complete nervous breakdown. But one day, without realising, I found myself deeply in love." Today, Marco's 205 has been built into a lean racer, featuring a close-ratio Carbone Cambi gearbox and a lightweight clutch, four wheel disc brakes, Orap suspension, and a heavily modified engine that now puts out 125 horsepower at 8,200 rpm. Meanwhile, he has a lovely Fiat X1/9 for road duties.



With the car in place, they just needed an eye-catching livery, and luckily they knew just the man: Davide Viridis. Luca recounts how they met the talented artist. "We worked together on an Instagram project before the pandemic, and when we had the idea for Ritmocorsa, he was the first to give us fundamental advice, sharing his expertise in graphic design. Our logo, and all the liveries we dressed our cars with are Davide's artwork!"



A few years later, a second race car was introduced to the Ritmocorsa stable, which brings us to their amazing tennis ball-liveried Alfa Romeo Alfetta GTV, nicknamed the "Yellow Duck." Marco tells me, "The Alfetta was our last acquisition in early 2024. The car was born as a street legal "America" version with the infamous SPICA mechanical injection system, but was sold in Italy for unknown reasons back in 1977. It was converted into a historical race car in early 2000s, and then neglected for decades... until we found it in a shelter and finally bought it!" Today, it looks absolutely spectacular with its bright yellow livery, inspired by the HTD Tennis, a watch made by an Italian microbrand specialising in vintage-inspired timekeepers. "Who other than Davide would have imagined a racing tennis ball?" Marco says with a laugh.



“Why an Alfetta?” We hear you ask. According to Luca, the answer is simple: “We wanted to take a step up and race under the sign of the Biscione.” However, the Alfetta soon lived up to the ownership experience many Alfisti have endured. “During the first race outings, the car turned out to be a real nightmare. It wasn’t just the years of neglect — a race car needs to race. So we had to work day and night to restore and fix literally every mechanical and electrical component of the vehicle,” Luca recalls, the pain of those endless hours in the shop clearly not forgotten. Thankfully, the team’s hard work paid off. “After countless sleepless nights and wrenches thrown against the wall — and with a huge dose of luck — we managed to win the championship,” Marco happily reports. “Today, after the “Ritmocorsa treatment,” the car is competitive once again!”



Having tasted success in Europe’s hillclimb arena, we had to know what makes this form of motorsport so captivating to the Ritmocorsa team. Marco is quick to answer: “We consider hillclimbs the purest form of racing. It’s probably the most antique form of racing too. It’s pure speed, without filter and with limited safety compared to a racetrack. Competing on a road that has not been designed for racing, and being alone without a navigator adds a touch of cavalry to this specialty.”



It's not just about the romance of the sport, though, because for Marco, hillclimb racing is ingrained in his heritage. Luca explains, "Marco's father Massimo was an influential racing driver in Sicily. In southern and central Italy, hillclimbs are still very popular, even amongst people who are not directly involved in motorsport. On racing Sundays, entire villages get involved in the event!"



It's clear the team is only picking up pace, so before our time was up, we had to learn what they have in the works for 2025. "We have plans for a new race car to join the team for 2025, but the only thing we can say for now is that will be the perfect in-house-enemy for the Alfetta," Marco reveals, unwilling to give too much away. While we can't wait to see the next competitor from the Ritmocorsa stable, and especially the livery it will wear, we'll all have to eagerly follow along on Instagram until the next dose of Ritmocorsa goodness is ready.

Photos by Luca Piccione

Gallery

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