

CLASSIC DRIVER

BMW GINA Concept



Chris Bangle is at it again: giving the car world a shock. This time it's a fabric-bodied concept car, the 'GINA'. At first, the idea of a car made of cloth seems bizarre but hey - let's not be luddites about this. A 'car of cloth' might have a bit of the 'house of straw' about it but, really, why not?

Spaceframe chassis with non-structural claddings aren't exactly new and the more you think about it, the more you can bring yourself to see it as a logical extrapolation of current trends in car design. Or at least some of us can: this is a subject that has drastically divided opinion in the Classic Driver editorial office.

True, there are no actual plans to make a fabric-bodied car for the market. The GINA (Geometry and Functions In 'N' Adaptions - if that helps to clarify it for you) is a concept, pure and simple; one which has already had a profound effect on BMW designs of the last few years. It's just that BMW has only now decided to make the GINA public.



The bonus to the design team was that the GINA Light Visionary Model - as it's fondly known - has a

moveable substructure, over which is stretched fabric skin. Yes, that's right, moveable. This car is not only made of cloth... it can also change shape. Okay, we're not talking about a car which flips from 1-Series to M3 when it reaches a twisty back-road, but it does have such touches as an integrated rear spoiler which grows taller at high speeds. And since the industry trend is, according to BMW, towards increased personalisation, it does raise the question of whether it will one day be possible for buyers to choose not only the colour, trim levels and fitted options on their new car - but also the car's shape.



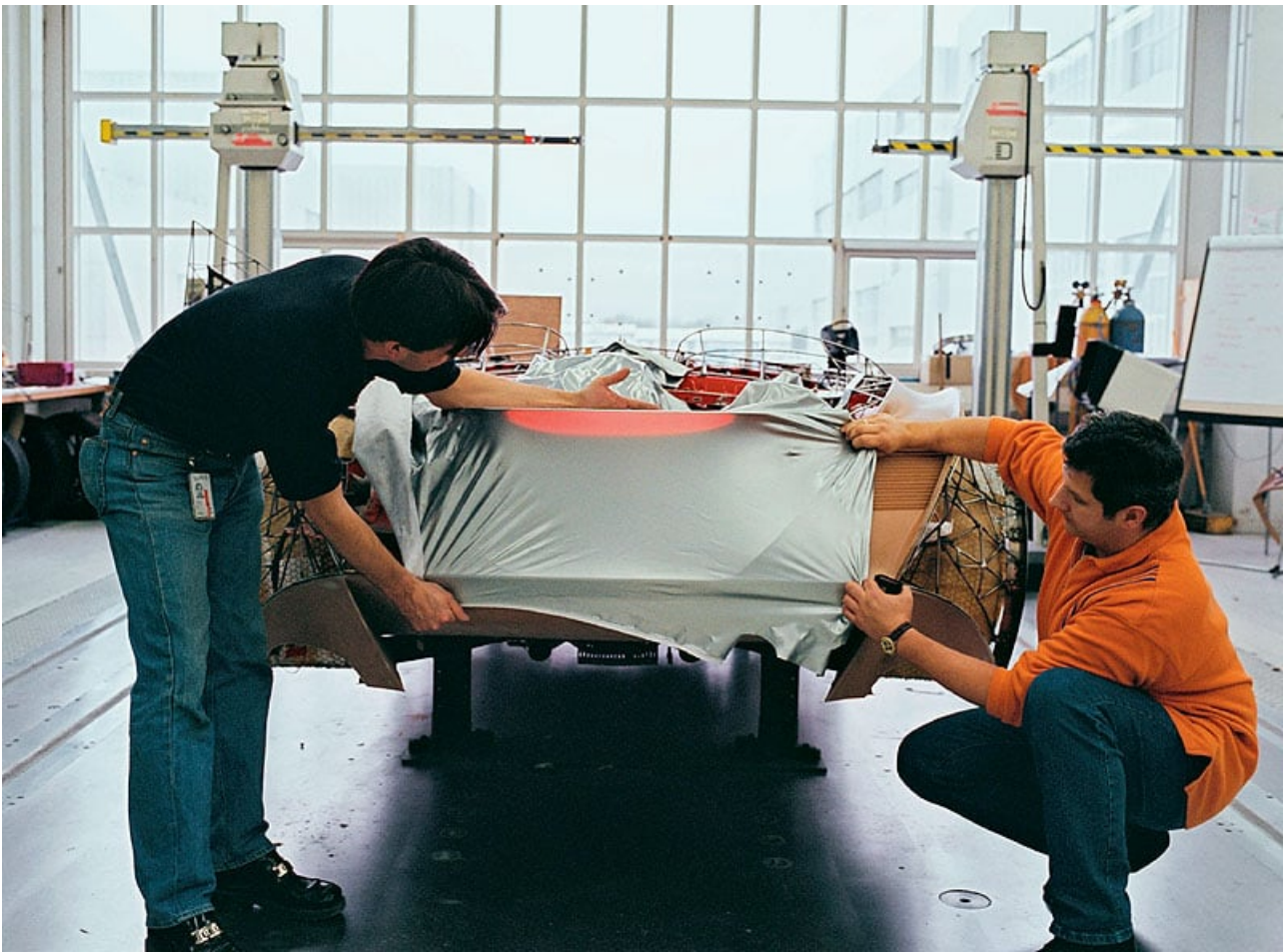
Anything is possible: even a car which can change shape at the owner's whim. After all, BMW claims that with its (not-universally-liked) iDrive system, the 'cockpit adjusts to the driver's needs'. So is it such a huge leap to a shape-changing, fabric-bodied car?





Well, yes, it is. But it's only lateral thinking of this magnitude which has led BMW to ask such questions as: Does a car roof really have to rest on pillars and be bordered by windows? Do all functions have to be visible at all times, even when they're not needed? And are there any possible alternatives to the rigid body-shell made of steel or plastic? It seems that there are.





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