

CLASSIC DRIVER

Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione



Design consultant Chris Hrabalek considers the styling of Alfa's 8C Competizione...

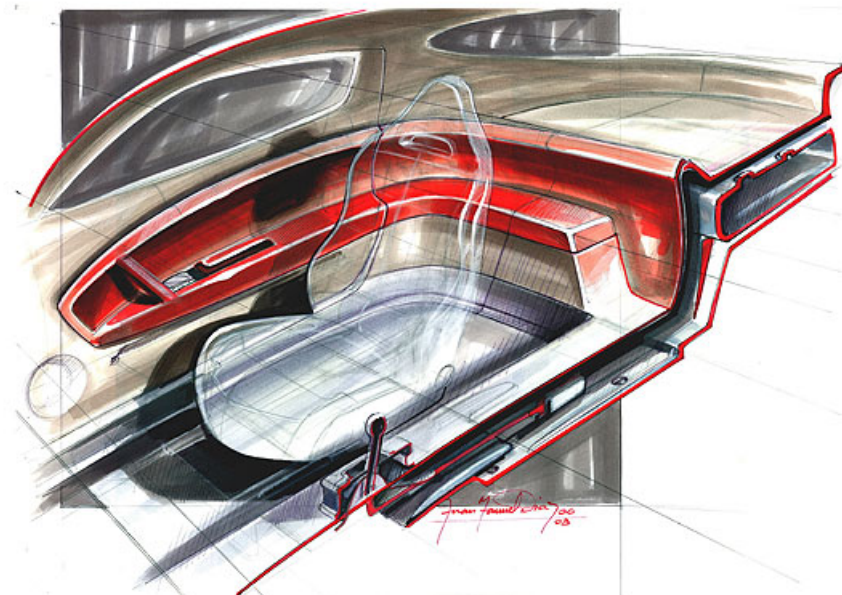
Alfa Romeo has achieved something of which most carmakers only dream... it has created a contemporary classic that's as profitable in the short term, as it is valuable in the long term. Alfa will acquire revenue from the product and image for the brand.

The **8C Competizione** is this modern classic: an automobile on its way to becoming an all-time Alfa icon, a limited-edition model created solely to ignite passion for the Alfa Romeo marque. It is a flagship for existing markets and a brand ambassador in newly developing ones. It is for this very reason that the 8C Competizione's appearance needed to be classic, rather than avant-garde.

Wolfgang Egger, at the time **Head of Alfa Romeo Design** and today **Head of Design** for the **Audi Group**, had the difficult task of creating a design that would instantly become 'everybody's darling'. Wolfgang succeeded. Unlike the **Alfa Romeo SZ** of 1989, a car that is conceptually very similar to the 8C but was quickly branded '*Il Monstro*' (the monster), the 8C Competizione was given no such cruel nicknames. While the SZ is a very special car for mature and developed automotive taste buds, the 8C is an Italian classic. Frogs' legs versus lasagne.



One of the most incredible design achievements is the near-identical translation of the **8C Competizione 2003 IAA** motor show concept to the 2007 production car. Unlike the **Alfa Romeo Brera**, a model whose production derivative is – visually – significantly different from its stunning **Giorgetto Giugiaro**-styled Geneva show concept, the 8C is very similar to its catwalk ancestor. In fact, the 'productionisation' of the 8C is so well executed that Wolfgang is one of those very lucky few designers whose initial vision has not been lost in translation.



Visually, the 8C Competizione relates to a number of historic Alfa Romeo sports and competition cars, such as the iconic **Franco Scaglione**-designed **1967 Alfa Romeo 33 Stradale**. The form language and surfacing of the car is very classic, however. The voluptuous and simple lines of the body stand out among the crowd of hard-edged supercars of the post-Enzo era. Indeed, the only hard edges that can be found on the 8C are the two surface creases that originate from the Alfa grille at the front, and the main feature line on the side of the body, that begins at the front wheelarch.

The 8C Competizione maximises a classic front-engined, rear-wheel drive proportion, with extremely compact overall dimensions. Maybe even a bit too compact. If one were overly critical, one could relate the chunky volume of the 8C to that of the previous-generation **Maserati 3600**. Both cars would visually benefit from a slight increase in wheelbase. Next to the elegant **Aston Martin DB9** or the new, lean **Maserati GT**, for example, the Alfa resembles a small and chunky Italian pizza chef...



No one can deny that the Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione is a fantastic car. Alfa's management must be congratulated on the political achievement of pushing the 8C Competizione into (limited) production. The 8C perfectly represents the pure and undiluted DNA of the Alfa Romeo brand – and could not have arrived at a better time.

Chris Hrabalek is a director of Fenomenon Ltd, a holistic design consultancy working with OEMs from the US, Europe and Russia, as well as handling sub-contracts for design houses with deliverables in China and Japan.

*Text: Chris Hrabalek
Photos: Alfa Romeo*

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