

CLASSIC DRIVER

2012 Geneva Motor Show: Best of Show

Lead

Geneva 2012 was memorable for the return of bright colours. Gone were the discreet greys and blacks of years past, and none shone brighter than the rich red lustrous paintwork of the Lamborghini Aventador J — one of the highlights of the show.

While the drip, drip of carefully planned leaks and pre-Geneva announcements inevitably serve to dull the impact of a new car's debut, actually *seeing* something in the metal is still to be savoured.

Not obviously apparent in the studio shots released on 29 February, for example, were the wonderfully executed aerodynamic sail panels that topped the F12berlinetta's wings, channelling air across the bonnet and around the windscreen.

Likewise, the convertible Evoque really made sense in the metal; this is a usable, fun, luxury car, beautifully created the 2012 Range Rover way. And the new Defender is going to be a hit worldwide.

Which brings us to the oft-rumoured, but still springing a surprise at Geneva, mammoth Bentley SUV. The British press in particular has piled opprobrium on what is officially still a concept, the W12-engined 'EXP 9 F'. But Wolfgang Dürheimer, Chairman and Chief Executive, Bentley Motors, knows more about this market than anyone - he was the man who introduced the now super-successful Cayenne to sceptical members of both the Porsche company and worldwide media all those years ago.

Anyway, once again taking a stroll through the aisles of Geneva 2012, what took our eye? Here are some of our favourites:

Touring Superleggera Disco Volante





For the Classic Driver team at Geneva, this was the highlight of the event. Touring Superleggera's head of Design, [Louis de Fabribeckers](#), took an Alfa Romeo 8C and paid homage to the ground-breaking 1952 original *Disco Volante* ('flying saucer' in Italian) in quite the most brilliant way. Yes, it will be produced to order, with a not unreasonable lead time of eight months from delivery of a donor vehicle.

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From the pen of master designer Giorgetto Giugiaro, the Italdesign Brivido showcases the VW Group's hybrid technology in a rakish four-seater with gullwing doors and 170mph capability from its petrol/electric powerplant. Dressing one car in charismatic Martini Racing livery - with one of the most attractive girls at the show - helped raise its profile even further.

Ferrari F12berlinetta





A sensational car that will be the hottest launch of 2012 (likely to be in July, we understand). As mentioned above, the 'sails' on the wings were an innovative surprise and the design sits well at the top of Ferrari's mighty 2012 model line-up. It's certainly smaller than you'd expect, with another sumptuous and cossetting Ferrari interior. The Italian company just gets better and better in this aspect - the idea of several hours behind the wheel of an F12berlinetta with a long, cross-country continental Europe trip ahead would have to be most enthusiasts' idea of heaven.

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Lamborghini Aventador J





Conceived and executed in a relatively short time, the improbably long and low (the lowest Lamborghini ever built) Aventador spider stunned even the most world-weary observer. The 'J' is a reference to both 'Jota' (a name from the company's past) and the governing body of motor sport's old Appendix J regulations – a slightly bizarre link as Lamborghini is famous for NOT entering sports car racing on an international level. Whatever, the one-off was quite brilliant and will make its undisclosed buyer pleased with their 2.1m-euro purchase.

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RUF RT-35





In a show regularly displaying some of the most abominable special tuning models known to man, one firm regularly stands out for its combination of superb engineering and innovative styling: RUF. In 2012, the German company had on its stand several Porsche-derived RUF models (such is their re-engineering), including the RUF RT-35, a version of the new 991-series 911 with a 7-speed PDK gearbox and 600bhp turbo engine from the older, 997 Porsche 911. Alongside, also in metallic green with green tartan cloth seats, was a 930 Turbo by RUF.

Range Rover Evoque Convertible Concept





Despite concerns that this would be a bling-fest (we should have trusted the company that sets standards for well-executed styling, and can't be responsible for some of its customers' tastes), the two-door roadster Evoque looked just 'right' sitting next to a prototype of the next Defender. As a runaround in Florida or St Tropez it will have few equals and will - a press spokesman assures us - have all the off-road capability the British firm's cars are so famous for.

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Bentley EXP 9 F





Joining the only [recently introduced V8 Continental models](#) and a [Mulliner Driving Specification Mulsanne](#) on the Bentley stand was the company's first SUV, carrying the experimental reference 'EXP 9 F'. There was more than a hint of the Range Rover Sport in its stance and mien, and if the mainstream press don't like it, well, that's their problem. This is exactly the sort of range-topping 4x4 suitable for Middle East, Russian and Far East markets where price is no consideration whatsoever, and will most often be chauffeur-driven with armoured privacy glass.

Not for us, but they'll build it, we're certain.

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BWM M6





The Bavarian manufacturer had as its star turn at Geneva an all-new 'M' version of the 6 Series. With a 552bhp twin-turbocharged 4.4-litre V8, the lightened coupé is BMW's fastest-ever two-door. Unusually, both convertible and hard-top versions were launched simultaneously. The coupé features a clear lacquered CFRP (carbonfibre-reinforced plastic) roof.

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Aston Martin V12 Zagato





Over on the Aston Martin stand, the British company was understandably majoring [on its revised V8 Vantage range](#) (that now starts at around £85,000 in the UK, a real alternative to a new 991-series 911) but was also showing the limited-edition (to no more than 150) V12 Zagato [first shown at the Kuwait Concours](#). It also had a Cygnet, and a Virage Volante produced by its bespoke service, 'Q by Aston Martin'.

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Porsche Boxster





The Boxster is one of Porsche's biggest selling models. No, it's 'not a 911', but across country the mid-engined roadster is just about as fast as anything this side of £100k. The all-new car will be just as successful, not only in terms of sales in its own right, but also ramping up the price to entry of 911 ownership (and Porsche profits in the process). Clever, eh?

[Read more on this car >>](#)

Photos: Nanette Schärf / Jan Baedeker

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