

CLASSIC DRIVER

Inspecting Touring's top-secret Aero 3 before its maiden flight

Lead

Poised to make its public debut at Salon Privé next week, the new Touring Superleggera Aero 3 is a modern love letter to the Milanese coachbuilder's spectacular streamlined cars from the 1930s. We're thrilled to be the first publication to show you this fabulous coach-built Italian Gran Turismo...

"Weight is the enemy, air resistance the obstacle," exclaimed Carlo Felice Bianchi 'Cici' Anderloni, the son of the co-founder of Carrozzeria Touring Superleggera. It's a simple statement, but one which encompasses a philosophy that can be traced back to the very beginnings of the Milanese coachbuilder in the 1920s.



See, while Touring Superleggera is a brand that was built on knee-weakening, eye-watering, unabashed beauty, the aerodynamic efficiency of its bespoke bodies played an equally significant role in forging the company's reputation.

As the first major coachbuilder to boast its own wind tunnel, the avant-garde cars to have emerged from Carrozzeria Touring in the 1930s were styled not only with love, passion and reverence for what had come before, but also with principles backed up by scientific research and a yearning to break new technological ground.



Extravagant, wind-cheating (though still utterly stylish) designs such as the Alfa Romeo 8C 2900B Berlinetta Aerodinamica and BMW 328 Mille Miglia Touring Coupé realised this expertise and translated it into racing success. In turn, the Italian coachbuilder was able to grow the reputations of many of the world's most prominent manufacturers.

This era of exciting innovation, before the 1950s heralded a new obsession with traditional automotive elegance, is therefore one of great importance to Touring Superleggera today. So much so that it serves as the primary inspiration for the new Aero 3, a dramatic, strictly limited V12-powered Gran Turismo succinctly described by head of design Louis de Fabribeckers as a 'showstopper'. We'll happily be the first to agree with him.



"The Aero 3 is our vision of how the streamlined, aerodynamic style of the 1930s would look today," Louis explains. "Touring is very famous for its lightweight bodies that blend style with aerodynamic efficiency – it was important for us to visualise the future embodiment of this key strand of our DNA. In that respect, the Aero 3 very much shares its soul with our modern interpretations of the Alfa Romeo Disco Volante."

There's a key difference between Touring's desperately pretty new-era Disco Volantes and the Aero 3 in that this car doesn't pay homage to a specific car but rather an entire epoch of dynamic automotive design.



That said, on the request of its owner, this first example is chiefly inspired by the Alfa Romeo 8C 2900B Berlinetta Aerodinamica that was raced at Le Mans in 1938 by Raymond Sommer and Clemente Biondetti. Hence the motorsport-oriented trinkets such as the number 19 roundels, vented three-quarter windows, four-point seatbelts and bespoke crash helmets. We're told chassis two and three will be configured completely different and we're itching to see them.

Whereas the aluminium body of Touring's Maserati GranTurismo-based Sciàdipersia bore a complex simplicity, we reckon there's a simple complexity to the carbon-fibre cloak of the Aero 3. It treads the fine between feminine form and brutish function, boasting Touring's characteristic balance and exquisitely judged proportions.





The deftly designed Stratosphere Red body, the result of over 5,000 hours of work, clothes the underpinnings of ‘a premier Italian supercar’ (a front-engined V12-powered GT producing 740HP – make of that what you will!).

As with all of Touring’s creations, the details are both abundant and hypnotising – there are subtle flares on this car that mass-producing manufacturers could only dream of. The wonderfully intricate grille, for example, which we’re told will be a hallmark of Touring’s future Aero models. It exudes aggressive elegance. The same meticulous attention to detail has been paid to the interior in order to bolster its Grand Touring credentials. The cabin is a triumph – from the sumptuous and rich-smelling Foglizzo hides that lend a feeling of the old world to the Alcantara and carbon-fibre trim that’s firmly in the new.



Shall we address the (incredibly slender) elephant in the room? That prominent rear shark fin, which extends from the tapering rear of the beautiful teardrop canopy, is a feature that Louis claims serves no aerodynamic purpose but evokes the streamlined legacy of Touring and did actually act as the initial launchpad for the entire design of the car.

“Our goal today is not to make the most efficient car,” he explains, “but rather the most beautiful. We’re very proud because even though there is such a large and particular element in the fin, the overall design is very well balanced.”

What do you make of the Aero 3? Is it a worthy homage to a bygone period of Touring’s history teeming with dramatic and innovative aerodynamic cars? We certainly think so. Just like the extravagantly styled Alfa Romeo-based Disco Volante, this car gut punches you with its beauty and leaves you wiping drool off your chin. That Touring was able to develop and build this stunning Gran Turismo in what has proven to be an incredibly difficult year for everyone is especially impressive.



The Touring Superleggera Aero 3 will make its public debut at Blenheim Palace in the UK next week as part of the popular Salon Privé concours. A further 14 cars will be produced, each to the exacting specification of its discerning owner.

We appreciate that most of our readers will be unable to make to Blenheim Palace next week owing to the widespread Covid-induced travel restrictions, which is why we’re especially pleased that Touring invited our man Rémi Dargegen to capture the Aero 3 in all its Italian splendour. Enjoy the images, ladies and gents.

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Touring Superleggera © 2020

Gallery

