

Zagato

Ugo Zagato set up his coachbuilding works in Milan in 1919, and by the late 1920s had become one of Italy's most famous specialist stylists and producers of sporting bodywork. From that day to this, Zagato has been one of Italy's most prominent coachbuilding concerns, and there has always been a member of the Zagato family at the helm of the company.

Northern Italy, of course, has had a distinguished coachbuilding tradition for centuries, so when Ugo Zagato took up a trade he decided to become a coachbuilder. After training in Germany, and working in the Pomilio aircraft factory during World War I, he struck out on his own.

Before long Zagato of Milan was famous for its light and strikingly stylish bodies on Alfa Romeos (many of which won important motor races), and this business was expanded to include Fiat work in the 1930s. During World War II, the factory was destroyed by Allied bombing, and new premises were built on the northern edge of Milan in 1946.

In the 1950s and 1960s Zagato coachwork, always ultra-light and usually outrageously styled, became a feature on many cars, not least the Fiat 8V, various 'double-bubble' Abarth coupés, the Alfa Romeo Giulietta SV and SZ, the Aston Martin DB4 GT Zagato, the Alfa Romeo TZ, the Lancia Flaminia and Fulvia Coupés and the Alfa GT 1300 Junior Zagato. All the time the company was expanding, and a lot of business was done with Ferrari, Jaguar, Lamborghini, Maserati and other less exotic concerns, but financial control was often shaky.

Before Ugo Zagato died in 1968, to be succeeded by his sons Elio and Gianni, the business had been moved to yet another factory, this one

Right: The Zagato name has long been synonymous with light, aerodynamic and distinctive car bodywork. Ugo Zagato had worked during World War I in an aircraft factory, where he pioneered the use of lightweight metal skinning, a technique ideal for sporting cars.



close to the autostrada into Milan. During the 1970s the company seemed to lose its edge, and slipped back compared with Pininfarina, Bertone and especially Itai Design. Zagato made a design comeback in the 1980s, by styling the Aston Martin Vantage Zagato coupé and spider, and 50 per cent of the business was bought by Victor Gauntlett and Peter Livanos of Aston Martin fame.

Even though the cars styled by Zagato in the 1980s and early 1990s were sometimes described as clumsy and even ugly, their brutal character and (some say) awkward planes and shapes appealed to a small but definite clientele. The Aston Martin was matched by the Maserati Biturbo Spyder, the Alfa Romeo SZ by a pair of Nissan 300ZX show cars, but with a third generation of young Zagatos in charge of the business a real breakthrough seemed likely following the launch of the smoothly-detailed Hyena coupé, which was not only based on an excellent 'chassis' (that of the rally-dominant four-wheel-drive Lancia Integrale) but which had a style everyone seemed to love.

Zagato Hyena 1992-present

The rebirth of Zagato, a coachbuilding company which had struggled to survive in the 1980s, was completed in January 1992, when the company chose the Brussels Motor Show to launch a smooth new coupé which it called the Hyena.

Here was a machine which combined a great chassis, a shape which combined everyone seemed to admire, and a great deal of high-tech engineering content. Zagato stated that it would like to build and sell this car on its own, rather than selling the rights to the manufacturer on whose chassis it was based, and there was talk of 60, 70 or maybe 90 examples being produced.

If prices could be kept in check, the Hyena looked very promising, for it was built on the extremely famous and

Below: A production run of just 75 Zagato Hyenas was planned, with a possible larger run of cars built in less exotic materials.

Right: Styled by Marco Pedracini, the Hyena was intended to look like the animal. Light, smooth and with hints of retro-styling, it offered significantly more performance than the standard Delta HF Integrale.

capable base of Lancia's four-wheel-drive Integrale HF, a machine which had been dominant in World Championship rallies for many years. The show car featured an aluminium two-seater body shell, with the spare wheel sitting on the rear floor, in full view through the sloping rear window.

With Lancia's fine chassis, which included ABS braking, OZ rally-style wheels, and Pirelli P Zero tyres, the Hyena also took weight-saving to great lengths, which explains why the bumpers, sills and door panels are constructed from Kevlar, while much of the stripped-out interior was finished in carbonfibre. This way, Zagato claimed, the



Hyena weighed 441 lb less than it would otherwise have done.

Zagato described the new machine as looking 'functional and innovative'; it featured a squashed Lancia grille, flared wheel arches, and almost a complete

lack of drag-raising detail. The front end naturally, was full of slats to help keep the turbocharged Lancia's engine and inter-cooler at the right temperatures.

The company gave the go-ahead to this exciting new car in mid-1992, and the first few of a production run of 75 machines were delivered before the end of the year.

Specification (1993)

Engine: four-cylinder, twin overhead camshafts

Bore x stroke: 84 mm x 90 mm

Capacity: 1999 cc

Maximum power: 210 bhp

Transmission: five-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel drive

Chassis: steel/aluminium/carbonfibre monocoque body/chassis assembly, using Lancia Integrale floorpan

Suspension: independent with MacPherson struts front and rear

Brakes: discs all round

Bodywork: aluminium/carbonfibre two-seater coupé

Maximum speed (approx): 137 mph (220 km/h)

