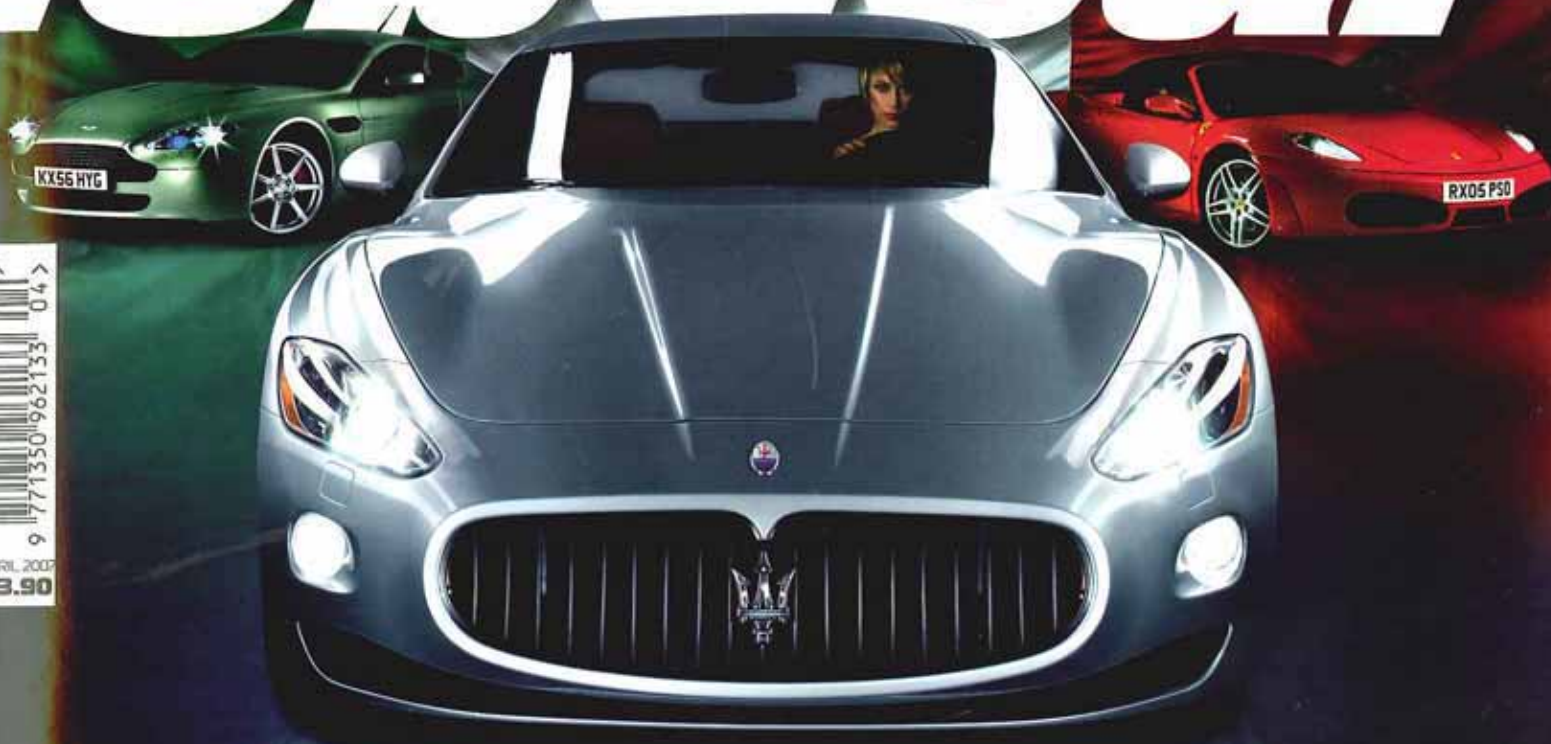


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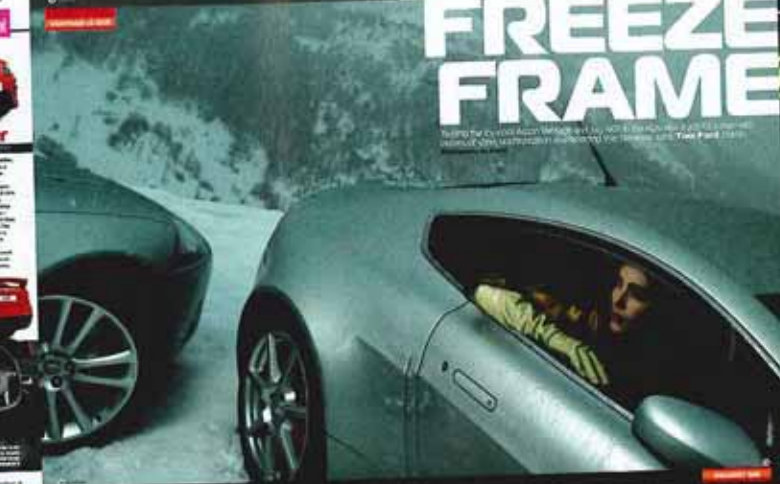
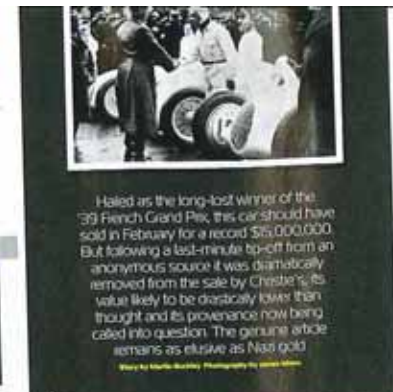
# MASERATI GT

THE WORLD JUST GOT A LITTLE BIT COOLER

**PLUS** NEW M3 (REAL PICS, NOT MADE-UP ONES), NEW MONARO

**AND** TOKYO'S ALL NEW MIDNIGHT CLUB

NEW SKYLINE, SUPRA, NSX AND LEXUS V10



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# metal

Edited by Paul Horrell

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## NEW METAL: MASERATI GT

The creative tension between the curved and angular forms makes it visually engaging. The more you look at it, the more you see. The more you see, the more you want to look.

'This car is going to be fast: 0-62 in 5.2secs, and a top speed of 180. The engine revs to 7,250 - that Maser howl is an aural treat'

# CURVES IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES

A PRICE TAG OF £70K PUTS MASERATI'S SEXY GRANTURISMO UP AGAINST THE XKR. WATCH OUT, JAGUAR...

"IT'S A BIG HUNK OF METAL," SAYS Guglielmo Caria, the chief designer at Pininfarina, the studio responsible for this new Maserati GranTurismo. 'A big hunk of metal' may not sound like designer-speak, but he's got a point. This is no pared-back dinky coupe. It's for people who like having it large. And it's meant to look that way. "It creates the significant size impression we wanted," Caria goes on.

The GranTurismo will replace the Coupe, a car that was designed by rival Italdesign. For the Quattroporte, Maserati went back to tradition and appointed Pininfarina, a house that tends to draw a more flamboyant Italian shape. The QT hit everyone's emotional buttons, so you can understand why Pininfarina's initial sketches won the GranTurismo gig.

Under the skin, we find Maserati's delicious 4.2-litre V8 at its most powerful yet, 405bhp. The platform and suspension are basically the same as the Quattroporte Automatico, so it's a

six-speed ZF automatic transmission, one of the best autos around - it serves well in BMWs, Astons, the Bentley Continental GT and the Jag XK, but it won't feel the same because Maserati has done its own driver-adaptive programming.

It's certainly going to be fast: 0-62 in 5.2secs, and a top speed nudging 180mph. The engine revs to 7,250, which is stratospheric for an auto, and that Maserati howl is a treat for the ears. You'll be grateful for the big six-piston Brembo brakes. Weight distribution is 49 front, 51 rear, which is right where you'd want it for friendly handling and decent traction, aided by a limited-slip diff. Suspension is set up more sportily than in the QT, we're told. But it has to deal with a car weighing 1,880kg, so if it's super-nimble, there's some kind of Italian magic going on.

You might guess those wheels are 18-inchers. They're actually 20s, which puts the car in some sort of proportion. The overall size has been used to good advantage. This is a genuine 2+2, not a

car with two front seats and rears that are a glorified parcel shelf. Our Creative Director Charlie, six feet and more, fits the back seat.

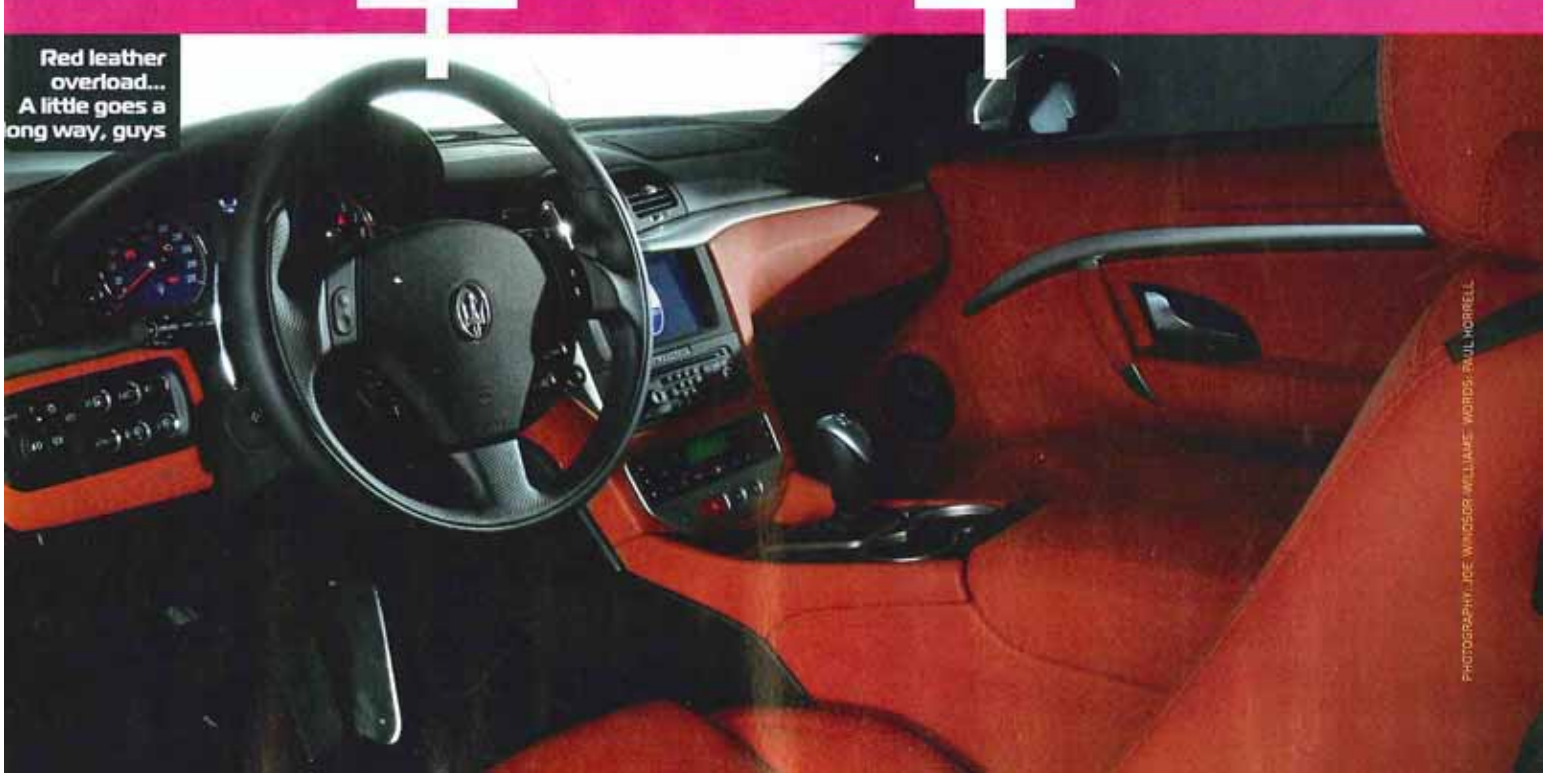
Pininfarina has worked miracles to make sure such a big car doesn't come across as brutish. There's a voluptuous bulge over front and back wheels, a nod to the Birdcage concept car. (The inward-chamfered sills are like the Birdcage's too, and the wheels are dead ringers.) The concave grille - which echoes coachbuilt cars by Pininfarina on Maserati's mid-Fifties A6GCS chassis - scoops back into the bulbous front wings, creating a giant mouth that seems to draw you in.

The small, snarky glasshouse and thunder-thighed haunches tell you a lot about the power within. At the back, the sharp-cut boot is softened by rear lights that melt around the rear corners. Light flows over the curves and straight lines, creating a powerful sense of movement.

So the basics are elegant and sculptural. But Maserati wanted to go further, to add some >



Pininfarina design flair is evident, even in the rear lights



Red leather overload... A little goes a long way, guys



Maserati's trident emblem features heavily through the cabin



The projector elements in the lights insinuate a pseudo-scowl





If you want the Cambiocorsa transmission, you'll have to wait. But you might get a tasty car in reward for your patience'

character, but not a dose of the uglies. To that end, sharp geometric detailing has been melded in to offset the fluid forms. The result is an intriguing balance between hard and soft visual cues, and some clever tweaks that allow the car to look its size without seeming to have run to fat. For instance, the very sheer lower body-sides don't reflect as much light as the curved upper sections, so the bottom of the bodywork is de-emphasised and looks trim and lean.

The angular headlights use small projector elements pushed into the corners to create an expression that Guglielmo Cartia likens to a frown. The base of the A-pillars dive down into curved flanks, keeping the car looking low. The soft curves of the boot are offset by sharp lateral cut-lines that draw the eye towards the rear wheels.

The creative tension between the curved and angular forms makes the car visually engaging. The more you look at it, the more you see. And the more you see, the more you want to look at it.

Cartia explains his thinking: "Today, many cars do one thing well. They are either straight and geometric, or sculptural and voluptuous. This car is both. There is a constant interplay. The sculptural surfaces at the front and the rear transmit the Italian-ness that every Maserati should have, while the clean flanks and geometric details convey restraint and control and hint at the advanced technical aspects of the car."

Compare photos and you can easily trace a direct line of Pininfarina's philosophy from the Birdcage and even the one-off Ferrari P4/5 (both based on the MC12-slash-Enzo chassis), through the Ferrari 599 and into the GranTurismo. Look at the 599's proportions and basic graphics in the section from the headlights back to the rear wheels, and you'll find strong echoes in the GranTurismo. But the Ferrari has more strongly-angled cut-lines, harder shapes, more bulges and vents and scoops. You can see it's the hardcore two-seater, the Maserati the languid 2+2.

The sculptural surfaces of the Maserati's exterior are mirrored in the convex fascia which bulges towards the driver, and in the arm rests and door handles that are picked out in aluminium. The whole interior is leather-lined, crafted like some subtle but monumentally expensive piece of Italian luggage. On second thoughts, maybe 'subtle' ain't the word for the photo car's bloodbath colour scheme.

In effect, the GranTurismo replaces the current Coupe, even though it's bigger and will be a touch more expensive at around £70,000 when UK deliveries start in the autumn. But then at first glance £70,000 doesn't seem so steep for a car like this. In fact, while Maseratis have had their flaws, they've always been cheaper than people tend to guess. Maserati did some research and found that people thought their cars were in

the Aston DB9 or Bentley Continental price league, not the XKR level – which was sort of a compliment, but sort of a disadvantage because very few people can afford £100k-odd. So people who could actually afford a Maserati were ruling it out because they thought they couldn't.

At the moment Maserati is talking about just this one model: auto 'box, hard roof. If you want the Cambiocorsa transmission, with its attendant rear-mounted gearbox and even sportier weight distribution, you'll have to wait a year or two. But you might get a very tasty car in reward for your patience, as it's likely the Cambiocorsa will be paired with a higher-powered 4.7-litre version of the engine. As for a convertible, well, it might be a short-wheelbase two-seater or it might be a 2+2. Apparently it's not signed off yet. But we also hear word of a shorter two-seat coupe. Think Aston Vantage size. But that's years away, and susceptible to changes of plan.

Meanwhile, this car is enough to be getting on with – something about it makes us imagine ourselves behind the wheel. There's a feelgood aspect to modern Maseratis that comes from the fact they always seem to have something new to say. The design chief says that's the aim here too: "The GranTurismo is like a person with a varied and interesting character," says Cartia. "It evolves in front of your eyes over time – just as a compelling person does during a relationship." ■