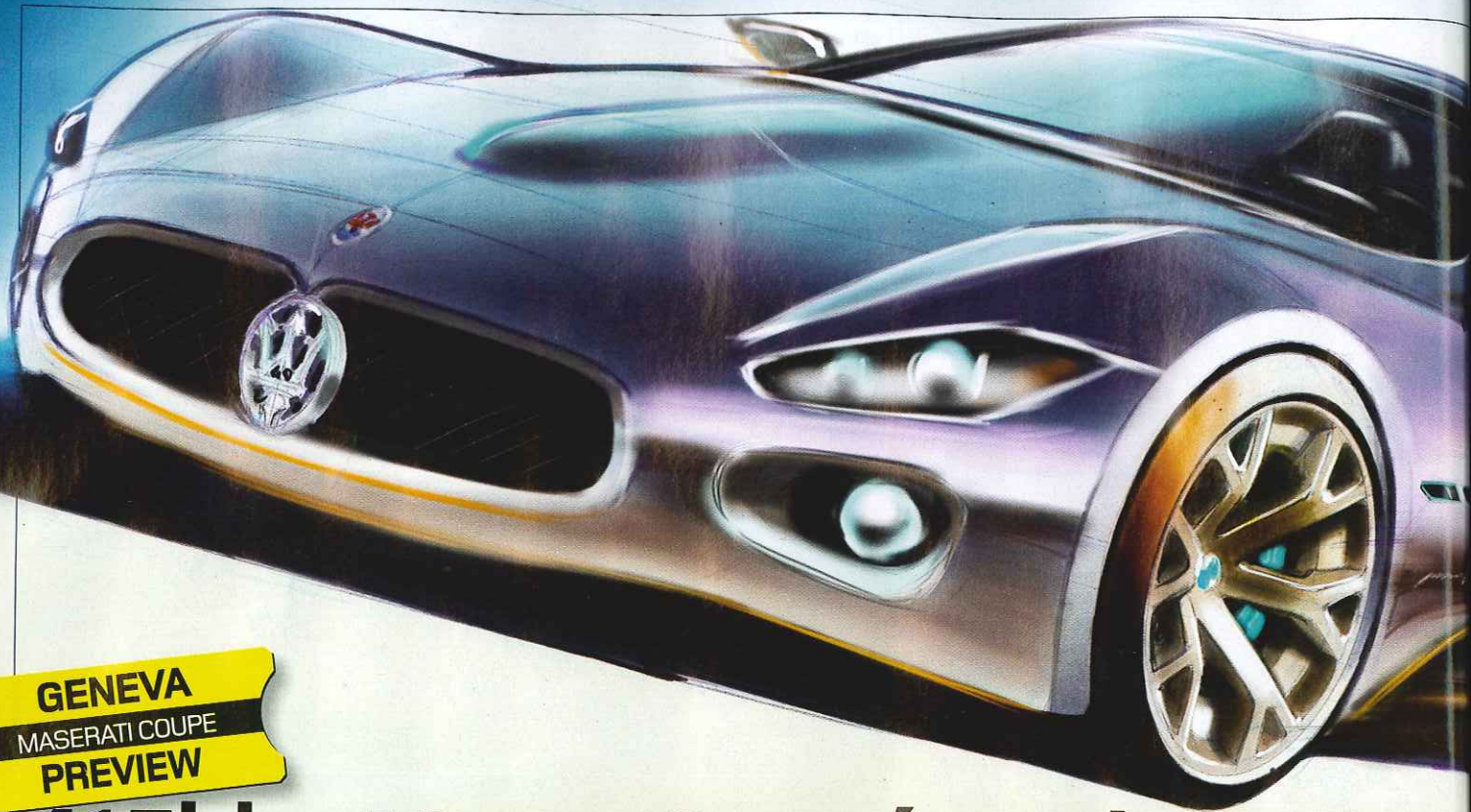


THIS WEEK



GENEVA  
MASERATI COUPÉ  
PREVIEW

# 415bhp Maser Coupé on the way

Pininfarina-designed two-seater to offer 911 grunt but Bentley comfort; in UK by autumn

MASERATI IS AIMING a two-pronged attack at rivals like the Jaguar XKR, BMW 6-series and Porsche 911 with a new £70,000 Quattroporte-based Coupé to be launched in Geneva next month. It's previewed here by Maserati's own sketches.

The Pininfarina-designed

two-door aims to match the others for sportiness, heritage and performance, while also offering full four-seat accommodation plus luxurious cabin appointments more like the softer, pricier Bentley Continental GT.

The Coupé starts production this summer, with right-hand-

drive versions reaching UK customers around September. It uses the Quattroporte's 4.2-litre V8 with an extra 20bhp (from 395bhp) to clear what Maserati marketing men see as the 400bhp threshold.

Power is transmitted through the paddle-shift version of the ZF six-speed auto just adopted

for the Quattroporte (see p66).

The new Maser is about 15cm shorter than the Quattroporte's 5.05m, and uses similar but re-rated suspension. The wheelbase is 40cm shorter than the saloon – about 15cm longer than the existing Coupé.

The new model (plus the Quattroporte auto) should

boost total Maserati volume from the present 5500 cars per year to around 7000 in 2007 (including around 4000-4500 Quattroportes and 2000 new Coupés). The company hopes to be in profit by the end of 2007, but wants to be making 10,000 cars a year, including a third model line (see story, right)



New Coupé is only 5cm shorter than the Quattroporte



by the end of the decade.

This initial version of Maserati's new Coupé will be joined late next year by a 4.7-litre, 470bhp performance edition, possibly with a competition-inspired body by Zagato.

That car will feature the rear-mounted 'F1 gearbox' on which the Quattroporte has depended until now. There have also been whispers about a Maserati GT1 race programme in 2008, which could feature this model.

Maserati is keen to launch a performance line, similar to Jaguar's 'R' and BMW's 'M' cars and possibly using the MC initials (for 'Maserati Corse') it already uses on the successful mid-engined MC12 GT racer.

**Steve Cropley**



Spyder has been seen testing but it might be axed

## Maserati's next trick

WITH THE CURRENT Spyder bowing out of production alongside the Coupé, Maserati knows it needs a third model to reach its '10,000 cars by 2010' target.

The presumption until now has been that a 'small Quattroporte' saloon might be the likeliest option, utilising running gear from the latest Alfa Romeos. But a rival proposal has emerged for a smaller two-seater coupé based on a 'cut-down' Quattroporte platform.

With the new Coupé growing to become a CL rival, Maserati bosses have been favouring a cheaper coupé as the most dependable way of growing the brand.

A Porsche Cayenne-rivalling 4x4 would be, they say, "too ungainly

and aggressive for the brand", and a smaller saloon too far removed from the current range. "Maseratis should occupy the gap between €70,000 and €120,000 (£47k to £80k)," said Maserati CEO Roberto Ronchi.

The entry-level Maser would be a sub-£50k rival for the BMW M3 and Porsche Cayman S. It would use the firm's 4.2-litre V8 detuned to around 350bhp, and its paddleshift 'DuoSelect' gearbox. Abandoning the Maserati Spyder for a smaller coupé, however, would leave the current Spyder without a successor, and Maserati without a convertible model.

**Matt Saunders**



Maserati could replace current Coupé with two models