

MOTORING



Defining greatness

Guilherme Marques

Lancia turned 119 years old last week and it seemed like a good excuse to write about a fascinating brand that is fighting to become relevant again

The first car I ever bought with my own money was a Lancia Delta Integrale Evo II. In yellow. When I was a small kid I knew from a very young age that cars were my thing, despite not really knowing why; it was no specific event or something like my dad or my granddad being car fanatics.

decades, obviously, and I know a few things more about cars and the industry nowadays, but ask me what two cars I would most want to own today, and the answer would be the same: a Ferrari F40 and a Lancia Delta Integrale. I accomplished 50% of that dream, so no complaints here.

You see, Lancia is one of the most incredible constructors in the history of the automobile and was, at various times in history, building the most advanced cars in the world. So advanced, in fact, they bankrupted the company, as they were so ahead of their time.

I remember watching Formula 1 at my father's house on Sundays and we did go to a few rallies in my teens, but that was it. None of my parents ever had a collectible car, they never had a sports car and I cannot remember a single conversation they ever started that mentioned the words V8 or V12.

Lancia & C. Fabbrica Automobili was founded on November 27, 1906, in the city of Turin, by two Fiat racing drivers: Vincenzo Lancia and his friend, Claudio Fogolin. Founded by racing drivers - now that is the best possible start.

Vincenzo Lancia was a man larger than life, a dreamer, a visionary, someone who had the

deepest love for cars and for racing and who wanted his machines to be the best, bar none.

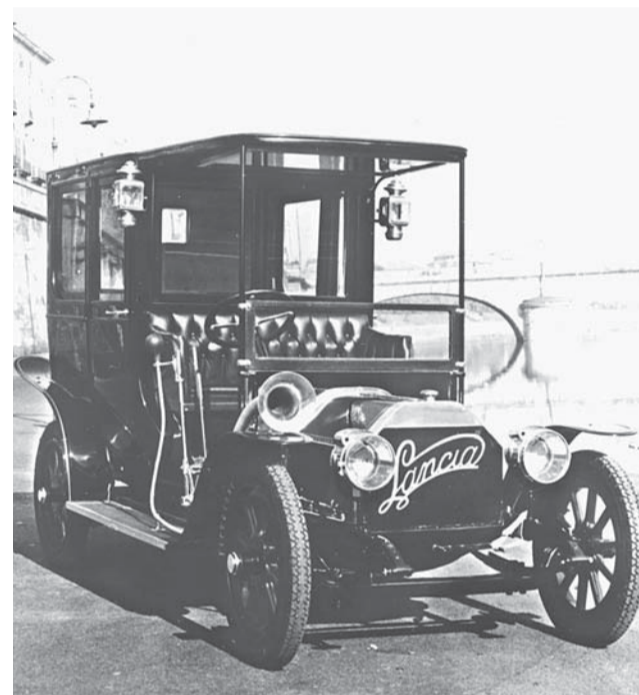
The first car manufactured by Lancia was the Alpha 12 HP (Tipo 51), in 1907. It had a small four-cylinder engine producing 24 horsepower. That was the beginning of something great - and even this whole newspaper would not be enough to tell the Lancia tale.

However, here are a few things that show why Lancia is one of the greatest: they were the first ones to

Lancia turned 119 years old on the 27th of November. It's make or break time for the Italian constructor at the moment, but there are signs of a possible future ahead.



11 World Championships



The Lancia Alpha 12 HP

sell a car with a monocoque chassis; the first to develop a V4 engine; the first to offer a five-speed gearbox; the first to offer a road car with a V6 engine; the first to supercharge and turbocharge the same engine and the first to incorporate an active rear spoiler on a series-production car (that car was the Thema 8.32, which came with a Ferrari V8 engine under the bonnet - insanity in an executive saloon!).

To this day, Lancia is still the most successful name in rallying history, having won the world title for constructors a total of 11 times, despite having withdrawn from the series in 1993. With the Fulvia, the Stratos, the 037 and the Delta, Lancia achieved what no one had before or since. The Delta, a little Italian hatchback designed by Giorgetto Giugiaro as a rival for the VW Golf, won the



Ypsilon Rally2 HF Integrale

World Rally Championship six times on the trot from 1987 to 1992 - a record still unbeaten to this day.

Although Lancia in 2025 means only the small new Ypsilon - and I am still to see one on Portuguese roads - there was some great news last month when the brand announced its return to the World Rally Championship on the Rally 2 series with the Ypsilon Rally2 HF Integrale. No, it isn't the fully fledged return to the top-tier level all Lancia fans want, but it's something.

With Massimo Biasion as ambassador - a two-time world champion with the Delta Integrale - the HF badge is making a comeback and giving the fans a long overdue dose of hope.

The car looks amazing and everyone involved in the project has high hopes for next year. If it goes well, Lancia could well be on the way to where it belongs: rallying at the highest level.

And if the Italians have learned something from the past (and with Toyota's recent GR Yaris) it is this: there are many of us who want to drive a homologation car, the road-based version of the competition machine. So get cracking, Lancia: forget the electric nonsense and for the 120th birthday next year give us the greatest present ever: the Ypsilon HF Integrale Evo, with the bodywork of the rally car, a turbocharged petrol engine under the hood and that unique Lancia magic.

I will be there on that day, with my Delta, first in line to put my name down for such a car and get on board with the continuous quest for Lancia's greatness.



Yours truly and the Delta

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