

LAZZARINO: RARE ARGENTINE RACER BACK ON TRACK



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STANGUELLINI IN THE FLESH



“I am very proud of the fabrication my guys have done—it is almost painful to think of covering the aluminum.”

BY CRAIG FITZGERALD
PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY JASON WENIG, CREATIVE WORKSHOP

Being a top-shelf metalshaper must be a frustrating existence. You spend weeks and months pounding, shaping, fitting and refitting, only to have your work covered up by mils of paint. But if the metal craftsman's work isn't 100 percent correct, the best painter in the world can't make it look right.

Well, today is the day we salute the metal craftsman.

Vittorio Stanguellini built small-bore sports racing cars by the handful immediately preceding and following World War II. He became known as one of the most prominent tuners of Fiats, but unlike Carlo Abarth, he soon began to branch out on his own, building racing cars and engines of his own unique design, to his own exact-

car racer Carl Keikhaefer then purchased the car and proceeded to blow the engine on the dyno. In its place, Keikhaefer fit a two-stroke Mercury outboard engine, and shattered a 750cc record at Daytona beach.

Trouble is, none of Stanguellini's cars looked the same, and they each had their own unique idiosyncrasies. And, in typical Italian fashion, the cars were never photographed all that well, and once they were finished, the company was on to the next product. The Germans would've photographed the cars from every conceivable angle, but all the Italians cared about was finishing the next project.

The challenge of restoring a car with very little supporting documentation makes it a daunting task for any restorer. Enter Jason



Originally sold to racing legend Briggs Cunningham, the car was eventually campaigned by Carl Keikhaefer's team, with a two-stroke marine engine under the hood.

because, “Looking at this car, with the perfect aluminum work—I am very proud of the fabrication my guys have done—it



"Eighty percent of the aluminum you see needed to be replaced," says Wenig. About half of the front fenders and half of the rear fenders are original, but the front sheetmetal had been completely destroyed. That meant figuring out—from a scant selection of period photographs—where things like the headlamps should go. These covers, held in place by a pair of Clecos, would be placed in the body when the car raced during the day with the headlamps lowered beneath them. For night racing, the covers were removed and the headlamps raised in place.



"We had a huge debate about the welting between the body and the fenders," says Wenig. Given the fact that very few photographs of the car existed, and even fewer focused on the rear of the car, it was nearly impossible to determine whether there was a welt between the body and the fender. "We could've gone either way," says Wenig, "but in one photo, there's one that showed a slight shadow along the bodyline. After we looked at it long enough, we figured the only thing that would be the cause of a shadow like that is if there was some kind of welting between the panels."

Since Creative Workshop had no clear idea what the grille may have looked like, they used several photos of other Stanguellini to come up with their best guess, backed by the folks at the Stanguellini museum. "With all due respect to the family," says Wenig, "they were pretty careless about detail. Their biggest concern was, 'Did we win that day or not?' I was calling, asking if they used black switches in the dash, and they thought I was nuts."



"With the aluminum taken off, the entire car looks like a go-kart you'd build in your back yard," says Wenig. Sheets of aluminum wrap around a steel framework, and since none of the aluminum received any protective coating, it started to corrode almost immediately, thanks to the reaction caused when dissimilar metals contact each other. Most of the original sheet aluminum was unusable. Post-war aluminum was largely recycled from old aircraft, and sixty years on, it gets brittle and unworkable.



Dan "Capt." John created the entire grille from one piece of aluminum, first cutting it to shape, then carefully cutting slats for cooling. Each of the slats was rolled over by hand to form the grille. To add strength and a bit of character, John rolled a bead around the entire piece. "If it was something that was going to be painted, we could've welded it if it had cracked in the process. But since this was a single polished piece, we had one shot. The work on the grille was one of the most impressive efforts I've ever seen at the shop," says Wenig.