

THE ABARTH SAGA, A TASTE OF THE SWISS COLLECTION OF ENGELBERT MÖLL AT THE RETROMOBILE SHOW

Reborn 10 years ago, the Italian racing car market with the scorpion outstripped all the major names during the post-war boom. This amazing adventure will be recounted during the Retromobile show through 22 models taken from Engelbert Möll's magnificent Swiss collection



The Engelbert Möll's collection
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Fiat Abarth 1000 TCR (Radiale) 1968
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Fiat-Abarth 2000 Sport SE010 4-fari 1968
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CARLO ABARTH, A CHARACTER !

When it comes to wizards with mechanics, France had Amédée Gordini. Italy had Carlo Abarth.

On 15 November 1908, Dora Taussig, heir to a textiles company, gave birth to a baby boy with a strong character: Karl Abarth, mostly know under the name of Carl. As a teenager, he showed a strong interest in mechanics, particularly everything to do with motorcycles. Initially, he worked for Castagna & C in Vienna, but then his career path changed when he joined the Motor Thun workshop (run by Count Thun). When one of its drivers defected, he found himself competing in Austria's motorcycle grand prix. He raced the fastest time in the free trials and the qualifying heats: Karl had entered the big boys' playground. The die has been cast and it was the beginning of a series of victory. His reputation extended well beyond Austria: he managed to win a wager that he could beat the Orient Express on the Vienna-to-Ostend stretch. In 1938, he was asked to race for Italy – the birthplace of his own father who had come back to live in Merano, in the Trentino. In 1946, Ferry Porsche asked him to represent Stuttgart's prestigious Porsche Konstruktionen agency in Italy. With the help of engineer Rudolf Hruska, Abarth once again found himself centre stage, entering into an agreement between Porsche and Piero Dusio (founder of Cisitalia) to design a single-seater car with a centrally-mounted engine.

BIRTH OF THE MAKE

On 31 March 1949, a Bologna notary registered a partnership between Carlo Abarth and Armando Scagliarini. Thus was born Abarth & C. Then on 17 June, a subsidiary of the company established its headquarters at 10, Via Trecate in Turin. As compensation from his former employer, Carlo left with five Cisitalias that he went on to modify and then race under the Abarth name. The birth gift of the brand ? A coat of arms featuring a stylised scorpion on a yellow and red background. As well as designing and racing race cars, Abarth also became involved in manufacturing accessories to improve the performance of mass-distribution cars. The Italian craftsman thus became well-known for his steering wheel-mounted gear-change systems, intake manifolds and special exhaust pipes.

1950 is an important year for the brand. The Cisitalias, which Abarth had transformed, took part for the first time in the Mille Miglia open-road endurance race, resulting in a fifth-place finish overall.



Fiat-Abarth 750 Bialbero Record Monza 1959
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Fiat-Abarth 2000 Monoposto World Record, 1966
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The Turin Motorshow of the same year served as a launch pad for the first fully-fledged Abarth – the Type 204 A berlinetta Monza Vignale (derived from the Cisitalia Tipo 204) – while celebrated champion Tazio Nuvolari sung the praises of the young company in adverts. . Bertone, Ghia, Boano, Michelotti, Pininfarina, Vignale and Zagato – the finest Italian coachbuilders – contributed their craftsmanship to Abarth vehicles. Although Fiat provided most of the fundamental mechanics used in the vehicles, Abarth also had dealings with Alfa Romeo, Simca and Renault.

A new milestone was reached in 1956 with the launch of the Fiat-Abarth 750 GT. That year, to demonstrate that his models could easily vie with competitor cars in terms of reliability and safety, Abarth embarked on a speed record campaign. The result was a clutch of success stories.

Its growth continued unabated throughout the 1960s. Operating throughout the automotive sector, Abarth was even tasked with building the Porsche 356 B 1600 Carrera GTL, designed by Franco Scaglione. Starting in 1962, Abarth's relationship with Simca – Fiat's French cousin – resulted in a series of extremely high-performance berlinettes. At the same time, the Fiat Cinquecentos that had been converted into Abarths were often found among the leading vehicles in touring car championships.

The lightness and agility of these cars also proved highly successful in the European Mountain Championships. The crowning point came in 1967 when the Abarth OT 1300 won the Division 1 World Championships. That year also saw the unveiling of the Fiat-Abarth 6000 Prototipo, the Le Mans 12 cylinder was called T140– an endurance machine powered by a 610 hp 6 L V12 engine. Changes in regulations meant the end of this project, and subsequent prototypes were fitted with 3 L V8 engines.

On 15 October 1971, Fiat announced that it was buying out Abarth. The scorpion became the Fiat group's competition arm and represent its sports model label. Just as the 131 Abarth cars were winning all the rallies, Carlo Abarth died on 24 October 1979 at his home in Vienna. In 1981, Abarth & C. ceased to exist within the Fiat Group. At the end of 1986, the discontinuation of Lancia's endurance and rally sports programmes signified the hibernation of most of Abarth's activities. It was not until the 2007 Geneva motor show that the Abarth name was reborn.

PRATICAL INFORMATION

Dates: from Wednesday 7 through Sunday 11 February 2018 at the Porte de Versailles Exhibition Centre – 75015 Paris

Opening hours: Wednesday and Friday from 10 am to 10 pm, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 7 pm

Admission: €20, free for children under 12 years old

To be noticed! Preview Tuesday the 6th of February from 7 to 10 PM

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