

WHEELS

The Bugatti EB 218 is great art

Italdesign, the famed Italian styling house headed by Giugiaro and Fabrizio Giugiaro, recently invited Europe's pre-eminent autowriter, Paul Frere, to test the Bugatti EB 218, VW's upcoming super premium luxury car.

The Bugatti name and all its heritage are now owned by Volkswagen. VW chairman Ferdinand Piech has already promised to produce the Bugatti to out-lux the DaimlerChrysler Maybach and BMW/Rolls-Royce. The car will be built at a new factory in Molsheim, France on the site of the original Bugatti factory.

Offered initially as a sedan, and to be followed by a coupe, the car will have an all-aluminum frame with the aluminum body riveted on in the same fashion of an Audi A8. The four-speed automotive transmission and suspension system is also borrowed from the A8. The engine, however, will be like no other. It is a W18 with 18 cylinders made up of three banks of six-cylinders producing 555 horsepower.

Like the Maybach, it is a very large and wide car with short overhangs front and rear and very flat panels along the side.

Seen in the front view, the design is a highly effective solution to the problem of harmonizing the technical and regulatory requirements for such an ultra-powerful modern car with the need to form a visual link with the past of a famous marque, Frere said.

The radiator grille in particular is an admirable modern interpretation of the classic Bugatti original. You'd think it's the latest phase in Ettore Bugatti's own evolution of his Type 35 radiator which he widened over the years.

The profile of the EB 218 is both imposing and exquisitely elegant. In its dimensions, its proportions and its classic Bugatti wheels, it inevitably evokes memories of the old Bugatti Royale. The design of the windows, in particular, is a triumph both at the front where it follows the line of the windscreen pillars along the roof of a smooth curve, and at the rear where it rounds out into a tear drop shape. "This is great art."

Finished on the inside in wood, polished metal and yards of beige suede leather, the listing of special features almost defies believability.

An example is an elevator in the trunk. Because the tapered rear offers little cargo room, the EB 218 has been designed with a very deep trunk.

The problem has been solved by an electrically powered lift on which you drop your luggage and then just press a button to have the load transferred to the depths of the boot," Frere said.

The Bugatti EB 218 is the third version Italdesign has created on the new Bugatti theme starting with the EB 112 shown at the Geneva Motor Show.



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