

DRIVING AMBITION

As Automobili Pininfarina introduces its ground breaking electric hypercar, design director Luca Borgogno tells Tempus how the brand is gearing up to make history

Words: Michelle Johnson



By definition, the best hypercars must be both powerful and beautiful, at the peak of automotive performance and usually featuring an eye-watering price tag. But even the top luxury brands may be left in the dust now that Italian newcomer Automobili Pininfarina is making history with its flagship car – the all-electric Battista.



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features a stunning defined wing effect that climbs over the rear wheel, connecting the rear of the car to the front visually while at the same time maintaining the functional purpose of creating downforce and acting as an airbrake. Dramatic butterfly-wing doors makes it easy to get in and out of the car, while the cabin combines style and comfort – a classic teardrop shape allows for fairly generous legroom, while Italian leather upholstery sets off the seats handsomely. And although the three-screen display may be more confusing than futuristic to some, the brand's daring design risks more than pay off.

Announced at the Geneva Motor Show in March, the \$2.6m (£2m) Battista is generating serious hype, despite the fact the first model will not hit the road until 2020. "The Battista is the realisation of a dream, a hypercar that's already breaking the rules of our segment," says Automobili Pininfarina design director Luca Borgogno. "For a designer who looks to the future, there's nothing better than this – and I can tell you that, for me, it's a very emotional thing to drive."

With a limited-edition run of just 150, the Battista is designed to marry "beauty, purity and rarity" in both form and function, and is the first step towards the brand's aim of creating purely zero-emission vehicles. "The Battista is the core of our brand, but it's really just the beginning," he says. "It's a huge step toward our journey to achieve a car that really has zero emissions. We're not at zero just yet, but we're much better than everybody else in the industry."

"The good thing is that people are really embracing the power of electric vehicles in the luxury market. When EVs were first introduced, people struggled to accept the idea. But now we're pushing the boundaries of the kind of performance you can achieve, the look of EVs, this kind of thing," he adds. "With the Battista, and with Automobili Pininfarina as a whole, we want people to fall in love with electric cars. It's so important to us – just liking the concept isn't good enough. We want our clients to enjoy the cars just as much as they enjoyed petrol cars, as well as knowing they are having a positive impact on the environment."

On the surface, the Battista's body is electrifyingly modern even while referencing the 90-year heritage of the brand's sister company and supplier – legendary design studio Pininfarina SpA.

"The design is very Italian, with sensual curves that echo Pininfarina's car designs of the past," explains Borgogno. "Although we are a young company, we wanted to relate to Pininfarina's tradition of making

cars that stand the test of time. We've always been about staying very balanced between innovation and tradition – the beauty is in its simplicity and elegance. We want the Battista to still be as beautiful in 40 to 50 years as it is today – just as Pininfarina's 1947 Cisitalia 202 is still very much a beautiful car today.

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"The Battista takes EVs to another level," says Borgogno. "Even if you just take the change from a single heavy engine to the four motors serving each wheel. The driving dynamics and performance – how each wheel connects to the computer and the sheer level of control you have over your driving – no one could ever expect that for a car like this."

While the car is, in itself, tantalisingly rare, the brand further ensures that opportunities for custom personalisation mean no two Battistas will be alike. "Bespoke is something that's very important to us," he explains. "We've designed the car in a way that each customer will be able to choose elements to reflect their taste, such as the colour, and make it even more likely to be driven every day. We want to create a relationship with our customers that goes far beyond the sale – we want them to be part of our journey and share in our dream. Now we've released the Battista hypercar, we're getting ready to start sharing three more products that we have in the pipeline."

It's a strong first outing from a new brand balancing expertly between start-up status and a 90-year design heritage, whose dedication to electric cars might just provide the shake-up we've been waiting for.

"We'll never create mass-produced cars, as we are dedicated to our craftsmanship and beautiful driving experience, alongside the purity of the Pininfarina style," Borgogno concludes. "But we do believe our focus on creating a truly zero-emission car will see us become pioneers in this sector and, we hope, help people really embrace and become active in the electric power trend." 

Left: Automobili Pininfarina design director Luca Borgogno
Below: Battista is the world's most powerful electric hypercar



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