THE BIRTH OF A PROJECT (FIRST PART)

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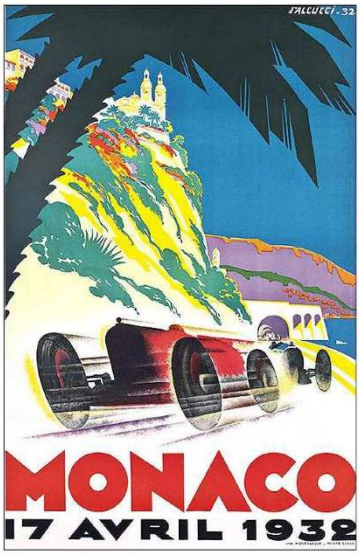
UNITY IS STRENGTH!

This saying, used many times in our daily talks, can certainly be applied to the harmony existing between Tazio Nuvolari and Alfa Romeo; a great driver and a great car Company who combined their talents to achieve amazing results. And this, in a small way, is what I and my brotherly friend Stefano experienced in our common modelling passion (we are affiliated with the "**San Giusto Modellers Club**" in Triest), when we set out to realise this particular project, which consisted of marrying the car with the man, true icons of such a motto!

It all started in the summer of 2021, during a holiday in the beautiful city of Mantua, when we visited the "**Tazio Nuvolari Museum**" and remained fascinated by the story of the driver from Castel d'Ario and his incredible exploits. A few months later, wandering around in a model shop, I came across a beautiful box of the Alfa Romeo 8c 2300 'Monza' in 1/12 scale by ITALERI in the livery of when it won the "Monaco Grand Prix." on April 17th 1932 with "Nivola" behind the wheel and, of course, I could not resist the temptation to buy it. This is how the project began. **(Pictures 1 & 2)**



Pic. 1 & 2: NUVOLARI TRIUMPHS WITH ALFA ROMEO AT MONACO G.P. IN 1932

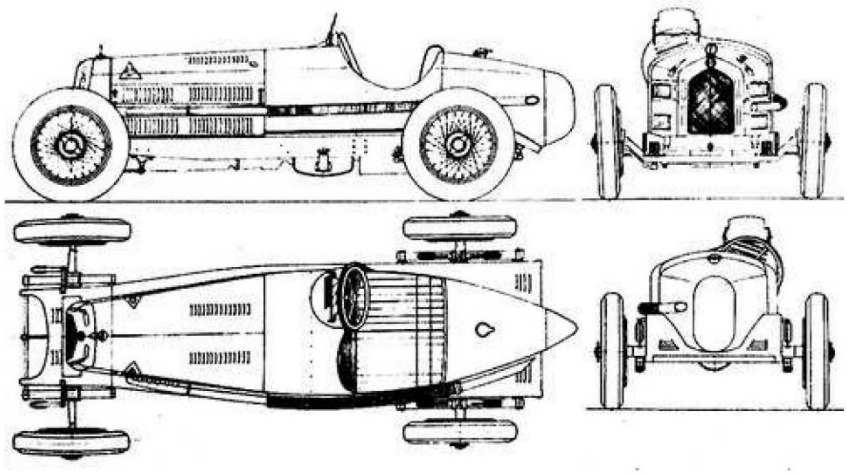
THE ALFA ROMEO 8c 2300 "*MONZA*".

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS (Picture 3)

The Alfa Romeo 8c 2300 was undoubtedly one of the most interesting and famous sports cars of the 1930s, and because of its performance, reliability and technology, it could be considered at the "top" of the automotive scene of that time.

With a 2336 cc 8-cylinder in-line-block engine and a Roots lobe compressor, it delivered a power of 165 hp. This was due to the ingenious solutions of its designer, engineer Vittorio Jano from Turin who, in addition to the bi-block engine, introduced another revolutionary innovation with the splitting of the camshaft, coupling the two parts at the centre; by means of helical gears, the first of which, in steel, drove the two portions of the shaft while the second, in bronze, drove the compressor, dynamo and water pumps. The vehicle's other mechanical features were more or less similar to those of the time, with a 4-speed gearbox, drum brakes, rigid axle suspension and semi-elliptical leaf springs with friction shock absorbers. All this brought the car to a weight of 1260 kg on an empty tank.

A total of only 10 models were manufactured (afterwards a road version was also produced, with some modifications to the bodywork) and during the Italian Grand Prix in 1931, with Tazio Nuvolari at the drive, the car reached the unbelievable speed for that time of 167 km/h, arriving first at the finish line and thus earning itself the nickname "Monza".



Pic. 3: ALFA ROMEO 8C 2300 MONZA'S TECHNICAL DIAGRAM

THE MODEL

Presented in a very neat and generously sized package, the kit is in an appropriate 1/12 scale and consists of more than 300 pieces, including 30 chrome parts. **(Picture 4)**

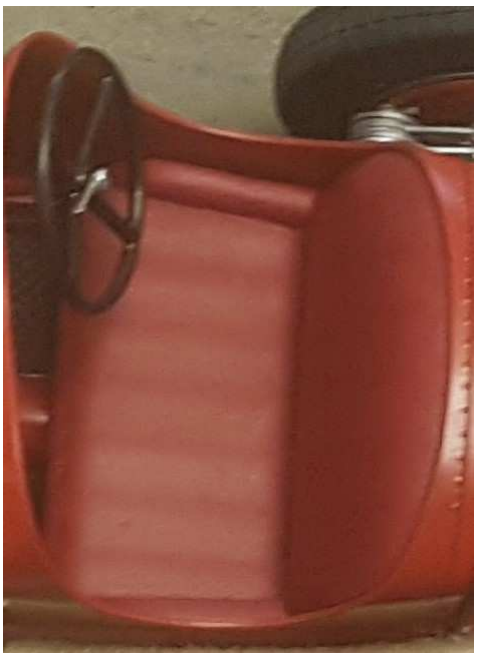
The price is not cheap but it is commensurate with the level of accuracy. In fact, there are extremely detailed parts with photoengravings, real metal screws and bolts, rubber hoses, cordage for the exhaust pipe, a nylon net to protect the radiator and very well made rubber tyres. The engine is also very detailed and when the model is assembled, due to the side bonnets that can be opened, its quality can be appreciated. The wheels are steer-controlled by the steering wheel and the suspensions, which are particularly complex in their construction and contribute to giving the whole model a further effect of realism.

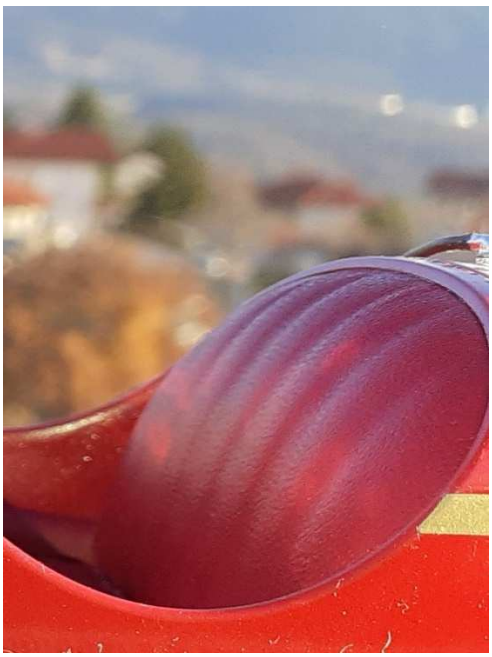
Picture 4: THE ASSEMBLY BOX

CONSTRUCTION AND MODIFICATION

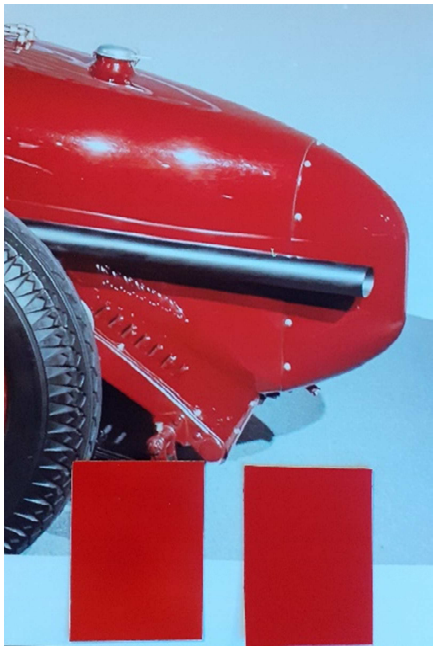
Although the construction, in its complexity, requires a good level of technique and experience, the high quality molded parts always allow for a precise assembly and thus very little putty is required in the final phase (this is a real joy for any modeller!). Nevertheless, the detailed instruction booklet must be followed step by step so that no mistake is made when assembling such a complicated model. In the development of the assembly and for the details, I based my work on the photos of the model shown at the Alfa Romeo Historical Museum in Arese (near Milano) but, essentially, the entire construction was done with the box pieces.

The only relevant modification concerned the seat and, considering the great quality of the kit, I approached a particular solution (and a new one for me), by buying a pack of "Adhesive cloth Genuine Leather tone for Seat" from the Japanese company "MODEL FACTORY HIRO". This allowed me to line (practically with real leather) the driver's seat, cutting the soft pieces of adhesive leather to size, to which I still had to add - albeit very moderately - some slow-drying cyanoacrylate glue so as to obtain a perfect adhesion of the covering over the entire shape of the piece. **(Pic. 5 & 6)**





Pic. 5 e 6: DETAILS OF THE LEATHER COVERED SEAT



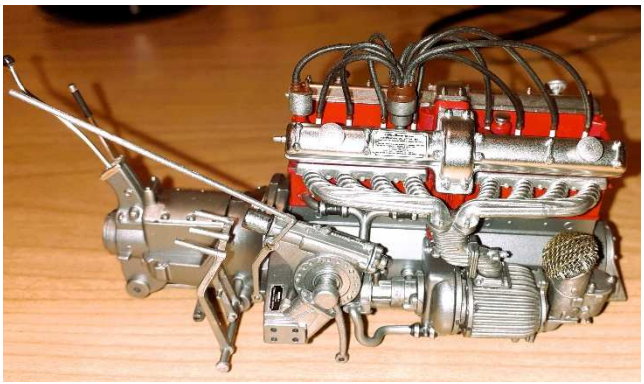
Pic. 7: TEST SAMPLES FOR PAINTING

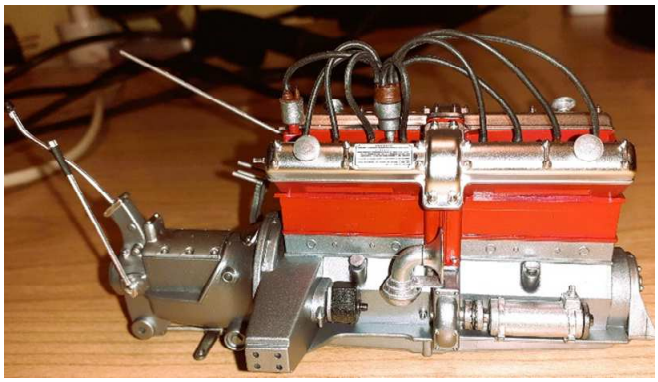
THE VARNISHING

This was, one might say, the “cathartic moment” of the whole job, since for the first time I found myself airbrushing a model of such a large size and which therefore did not allow for the slightest imperfection (a problem that does not occur in smaller scales). Thus, before starting I did a lot of research on the web to find advice on how to proceed and, once I had clarified my ideas, I started painting using a double-action airbrush with a 0.35 mm nozzle and 0.8 bar pressure. First I applied the primer (Tamiya Surface Primer diluted 70%), making sure that the entire surface was completely homogeneous; then I applied an aluminium-coloured base coat (Tamiya LP 63 Titanium), on which I then sprayed Tamiya Italian Red LP 21 (a colour that is indicated on various websites as being the closest to Alfa Romeo redIn any case, just to be on the safe side, before proceeding to the final coat, I did some paint tests with the sequence I was going to use, painting some sheets of plasticard and then comparing them under the sunlight with the photos of the Alfa Romeo exhibited at Arese (I learned this technique from my uncle who was a auto body repairer and used it to make sure to obtain a correct colour mix) **(Picture 7)**. Then, again by spraying and using the handy paint masks supplied in the kit, I painted the race numbers on the bodywork and radiator with Tamiya LP 2 white. **(Pictures 8 & 9)**

Pictures 8 & 9: CAR BODY AND RADIATOR DETAILS

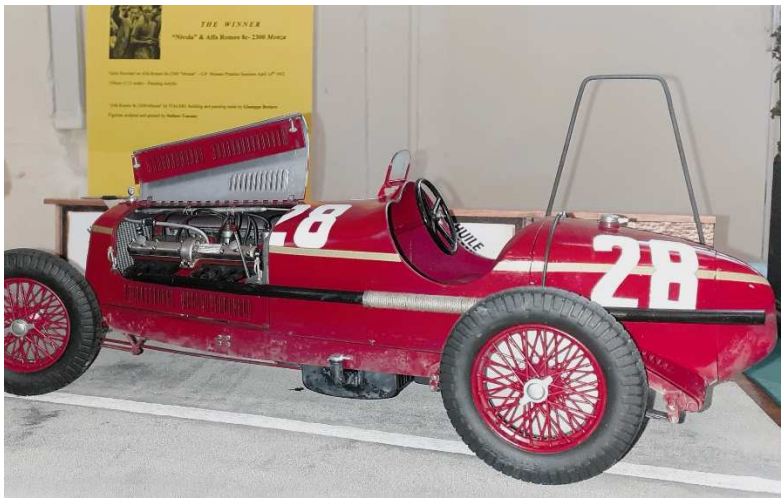
The painting of the engine deserves a separate chapter; for this I used “ALCLAD II” colours, which in my opinion are unsurpassed for achieving a real metal effect! For the engine block I used White Aluminium alc 100 and Tamiya Italian Red, for the gearbox Duraluminium alc 102, for the tappet area and accessories Polished Aluminium and for other minor details Stainless Steel alc 115 **(Pictures 10 & 11)**. I would also like to emphasise two fundamental concepts for the use of these special colours: first, the perfect cleaning of the surfaces to be painted and secondly, painting the parts with a gloss black base coat before applying the metallic colours (I use Humbrol’s Black Gloss 21).





Pictures 10 & 11: ENGINE DETAILS

Finally, wanting to represent the vehicle during the G.P. pre-race trial sessions, I did a very light weathering with oil paints, both on the engine and in some areas of the bodywork and, after putting on the finishing touches, I sealed everything using Tamiya Clear LP 9 clear coat. **(Pictures 12 & 13)**



Picture 12: MODEL’S “WEATHERING”

Picture 13: THE COMPLETED MODEL

CONCLUSION

Having finished the model with its generous dimensions and richness of details (first and foremost the engine), to me it seemed incomplete without its famous driver, a figure so impetuous and adventurous that he not only entered the “Gotha” of the most important race drivers and champions of all time but also was the subject of a multitude of essays, models of wristwatches and even songs (like the one by the unforgettable Italian singer Lucio Dalla!). Unfortunately, there was no compatible replica in 1/12 scale on the market and so, ... pursuing the motto “unity is strength” ... I thought of launching a challenge to my friend Stefano, an excellent figurine maker, asking him if he would be able to reproduce the great “Flying Mantuaman”.

And so it is that I now hand over the word, or rather the pen, to him for the next part!

(TO BE CONTINUED)