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181

# SPORTS CAR ALBUM

By John Wheelock Freeman

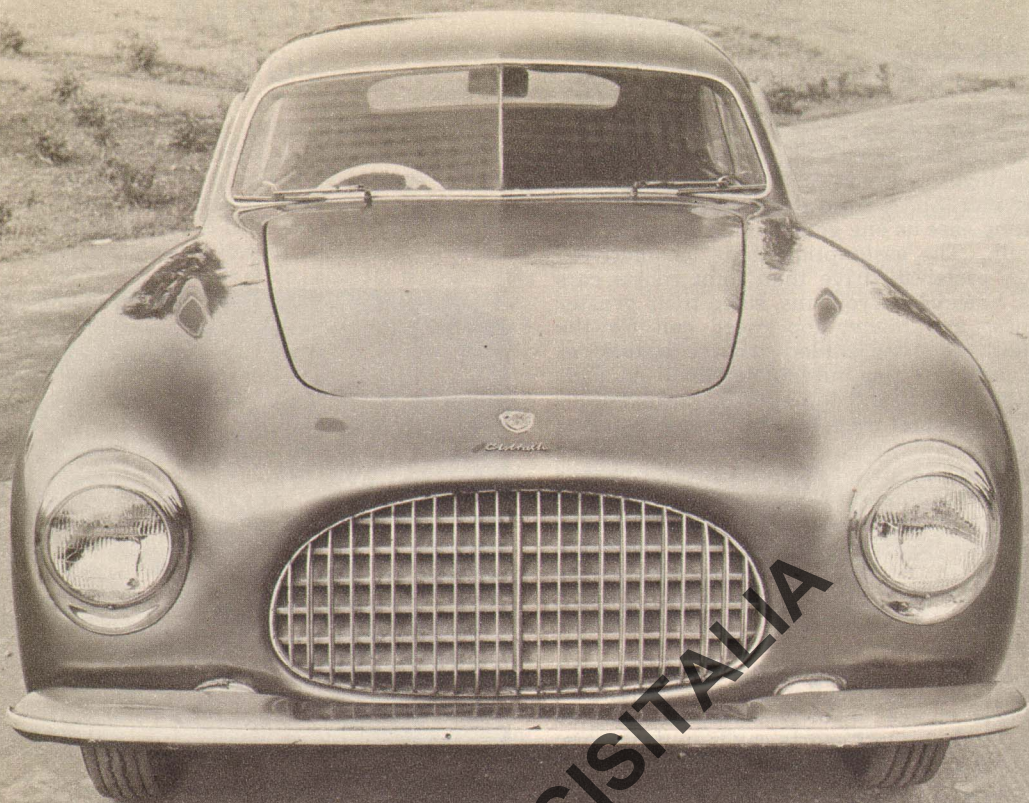
Photos by Alexandre George

MUSEO CISITALIA



**AN INTERNATIONAL REPORT ON FOREMOST MAKES OF SPORTS CARS  
PERSONAL VISITS TO FACTORIES • INTERVIEWS WITH DESIGNERS**

Allard • Aston Martin • MG • Jaguar • Bugatti • Mercedes  
Porsche • Ferrari • Alfa Romeo • Lancia • Pinin Farina



Created by Pinin Farina in 1946, "Gran Sport" coupé set the style for all Italian coachwork.

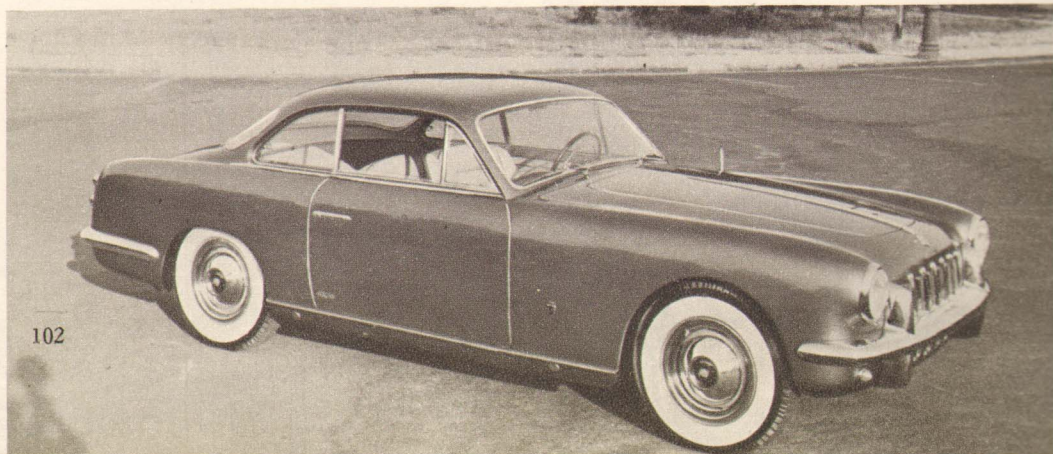
cisitalia

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Originally an aristocratic "hot rod," this car became a classic of body design into the bargain.

Photo by Moiso

One of the few 3-litre, 155-horsepower jobs with Ghia body; this one was built for Henry Ford II.



# ITALY

## cisitalia

**CISITALIA** (pronounced CHEECE-ee-TAL-ya) has occasionally been described by unkind souls as a "fly-by-night outfit." They really have no right to talk that way, just because the factory has been in and out of receivership about four times, never answered mail or supplied parts, and demonstrated a few other outward signs of whimsicality. An accomplished illusionist named Piero Dusio was behind the original Cisitalia idea. No one knows just where the car came from, but all of a sudden there it was, with a "hopped up" FIAT 1100 engine and a superb tubular chassis attributed to Dr. Ferdinand Porsche's engineering staff. Dusio persuaded his friend, Pinin Farina, to overlook common sense about the company's prospects and to produce a body design. The result of this collaboration is history, both from an engineering and an artistic viewpoint. Farina's fears were realized, however, and the company found it could not sell FIAT 1100's for very high prices, so the Cisitalia today is something of a museum piece.

Several stages of tuning were available for the 1100-based jobs, using such speed equipment as "hot" cams, high-compression heads, dry-sump lubrication systems and dual carburetors. The higher-powered engines earned a reputation as being temperamental, but they ground out half again as much power as the standard 1.1 litre FIAT. Competition versions were capable of 120 m.p.h., and the spectacular D-46—a 770-pound single-seater—copped first three places in the Brezzi Cup Race at the Valentino Circuit near Turin.

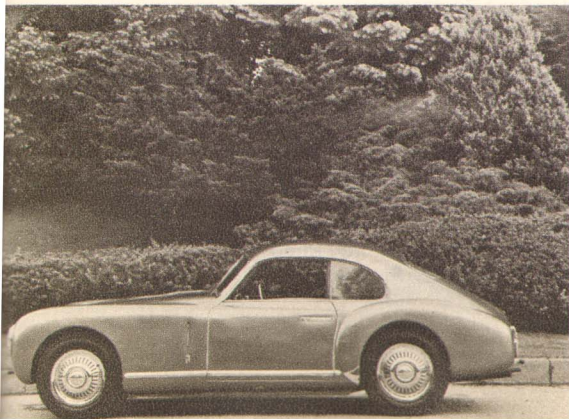
Grim realities obliged Dusio to retreat to his branch in Argentina, where Cisitalia supported itself with various odds and ends while tinkering with its greatest investment, a "dark horse" Grand Prix

Formula I racer of Porsche design with centrifugally-blown, horizontally-opposed twelve-cylinder rear engine. Argentine drivers, being dedicated (like Italians) to "a short life and a happy one," took the Cisitalia sports car to their hearts and set the streets of Buenos Aires buzzing with FIAT-inspired exhaust reports.

In 1952, a new company was set up in Italy, financed by a Swiss group who announced the resumption of the "Gran Sport" series 1100, accompanied by a larger car of 2.8 litres with a four-cylinder marine-conversion o.h.v. engine capable of 155 horsepower. This "bomb" was to be supplied in both sports and competition versions, the former with a variety of closed and open coachwork. Although the price of this car was within reason, the company wasn't able to make a go of it. I recall being bitterly disappointed by the failure of two of these new Cisitalias to appear as promised at the '52 Bridgehampton race, where the dealer had sworn up and down that they'd not only run but win everything as well. Who said something about a "fly-by-night outfit?" A trifle unreliable, maybe.

For American sports car fans, the 1100 Cisitalia is seen often enough (usually in the lead) to be regarded as the first-class sports car that it is. The plaint of "underpowered" is secondary when you consider that no car—not even an overpowered locomotive like the Cunningham—is more fun to drive than this delicate, beautifully balanced and suspended little jewel. It's not often that such a combination of pure sporting temper and beautiful body design crosses the horizon. At an exhibition held in 1951, New York's Museum of Modern Art picked the Cisitalia as one of the world's best-designed automobiles. •

Articulated rear fender gives illusion of length, tilts up suggesting tension of body's fit over frame.



Tightly drawn rear deck increases illusion of metal skin pulled over tubular structural frame.

