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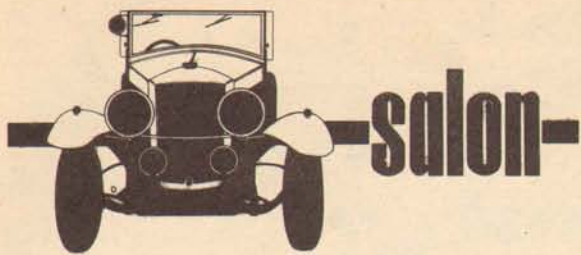
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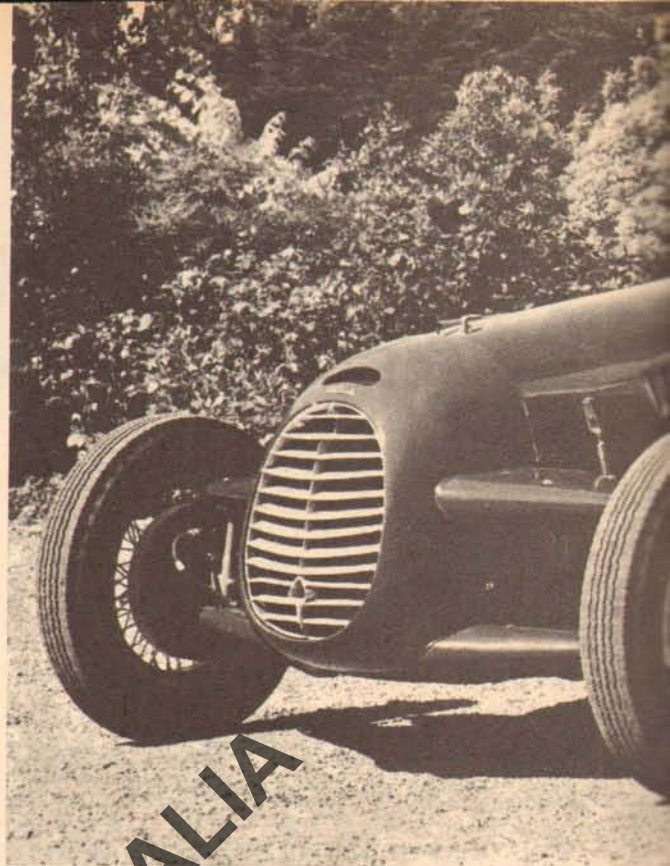
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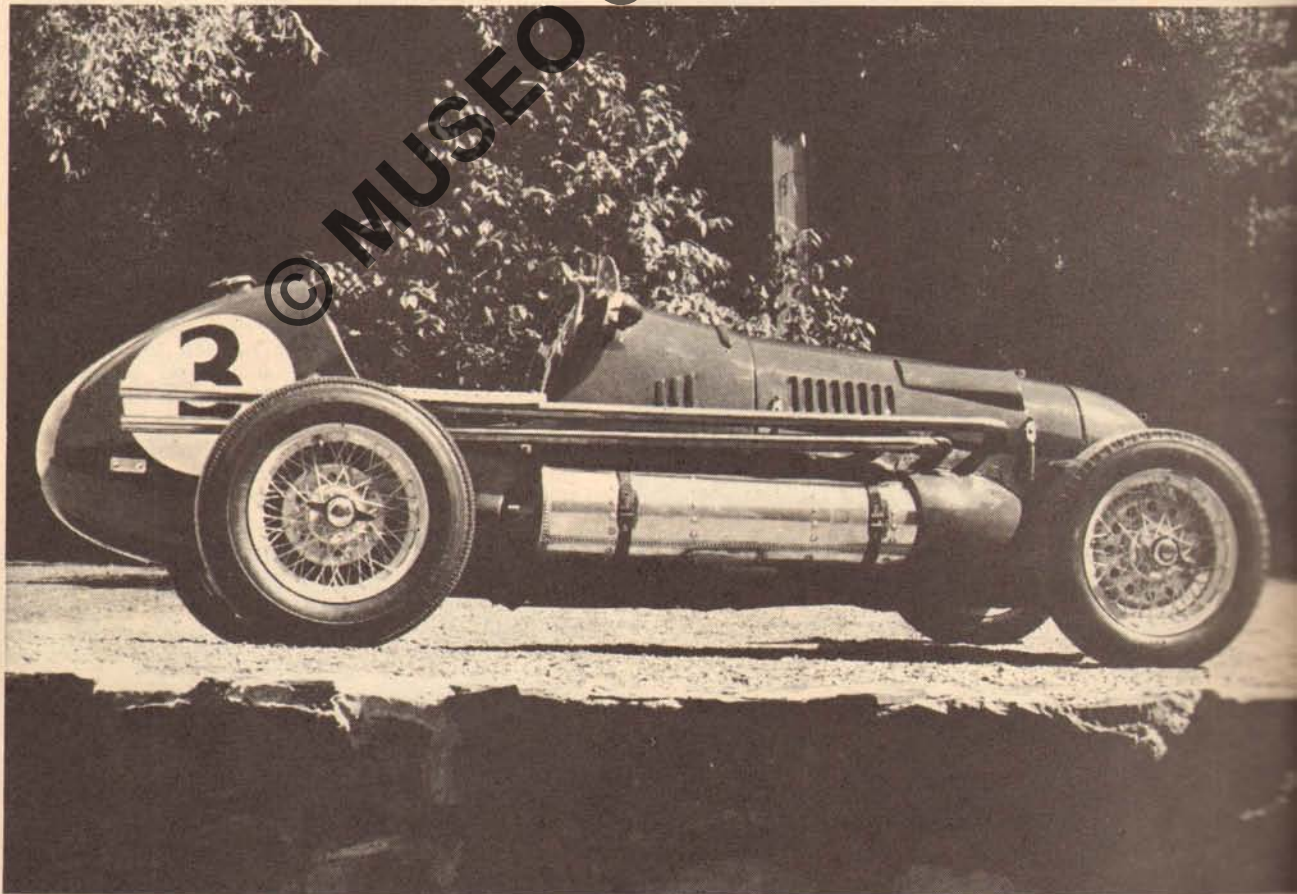
Words and photographs by Leonard J. Shaw

BROTHERS Bill and Jim Leech of Frankston, Victoria, have probably the most exotic stable of vintage and historic racing machinery in Australia. Included in the stable are Type 37 and 37A Bugattis, a 300S Maserati, a Lombard — and a little Cisitalia D46 monoposto. They are all magnificent, but for many of us the Cisitalia is the sweetest of the lot.

Although the name of Cisitalia has now long gone from the motor racing scene, it was well known after World War II and had much to do with the revival of the sport through the years 1947-1950. Commendatore Piero Dusio, managing director and part owner of the Cisitalia works in Turin, was no newcomer to the racing game. Dusio had been a driver during the hectic 30s,



CISITALIA D46



which they can take any corner is only limited by the courage of the driver". Such was the esteem people held for Cisitalia's handling.

The Cisitalia had a brief and lack lustre career in Australia. It was not raced at all by Watson, and it was not until the car had passed through several hands and was eventually bought by the used car firm of Sabina Motors that it saw any regular competition. In the hands of Ray Gibbs, racing under the Sabina banner, it ran on a number of Victorian and interstate circuits but was already fast becoming a dated design and never really turned in a memorable performance.

The Cisitalia is based on an 1100 cc Fiat engine. Bore and stroke measurements are 68mm x 75mm and on a compression ratio of 9.5 to 1 the engine develops around 48 bhp at 5500 rpm. The three main bearing counterbalanced crankshaft uses copper/lead main and big end bearings which attach to H-section, polished, forged-steel connecting rods and alloy pistons.

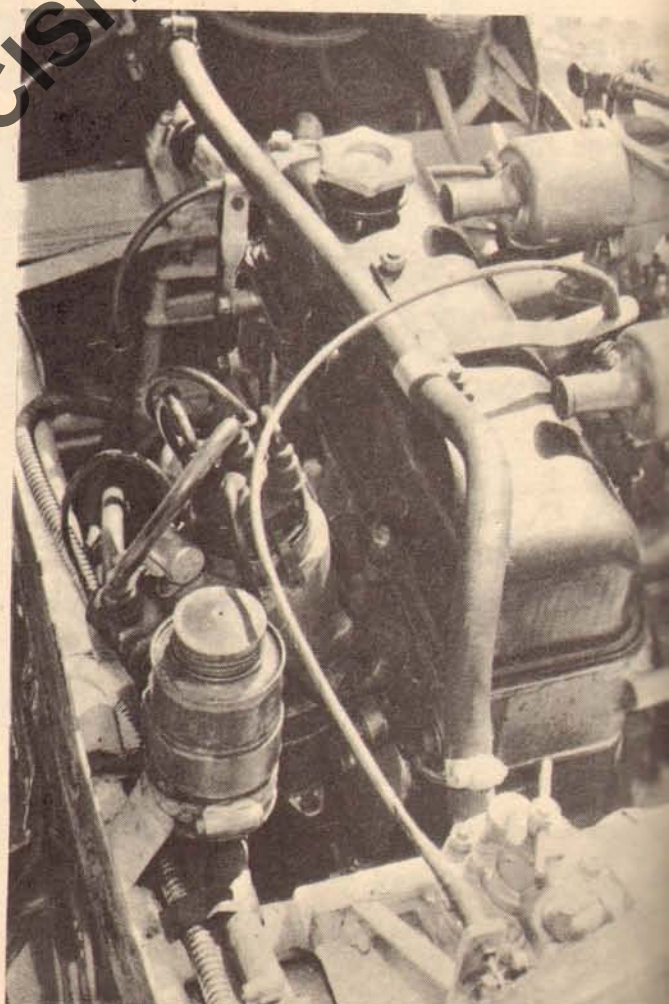
The engine is dry-sumped and pressure-fed by twin pumps with a separate oil cooler and tank, and the oil pressure is regulated by a valve on the right-hand side of the crankcase. In its original form the Cisitalia had a Zenith 36 VIF/C carburettor, but this has been replaced by a pair of downdraught SUs. Another necessary change has been the modification of the original semi-automatic gearbox to a full manual shift. Originally the car had a three forward and reverse

arrangement with first gear selected by lever and second and third gears by depression of the clutch. This worked exceptionally well and made the D46 a unique little car. However, by the time the car reached the hands of Bill Leech the original unit was past repair. The gearing now fitted gives about 17mph per 1000rpm in top gear and this gives the car a top speed of slightly over 105 mph.

The Cisitalia is a small car, measuring only 79 ins. in wheelbase with a front track of 48.2 ins. and rear track of 44.3 ins. The extremely neat chassis is made from high-tensile molybdenum tube steel, with front suspension by a transverse spring and wishbone and the rear a solid back axle mounted to coil springs. The maximum dry weight of the car is around 818 lbs and the fuel tanks, on either side of the cockpit, gave the car an endurance distance of 190 miles.

By today's standards the cockpit is particularly roomy and instrumentation consists only of a tachometer to 6000 rpm flanked by oil pressure and water temperature gauges. The front suspension struts are enclosed by aerofoil type sections which in conjunction with the relatively small frontal area combine to give the car a particularly smart and uncluttered appearance.

Surprisingly and very disappointingly the firm of Cisitalia did not go on with its promising cars. Piero Dusio had high ambitions and the successful little 1100 cc car was not enough. To

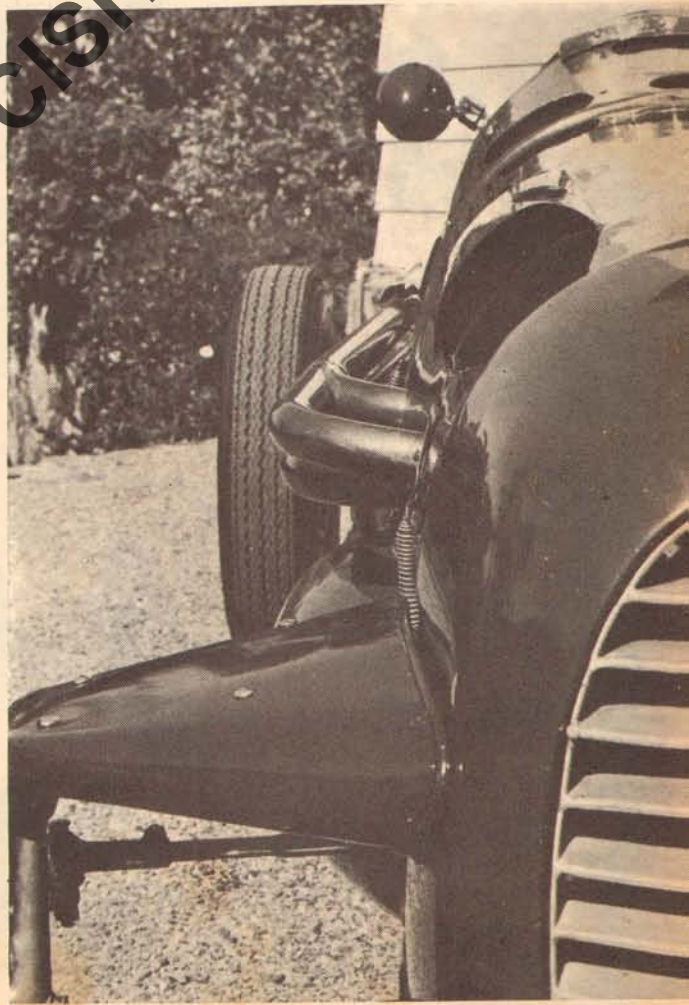


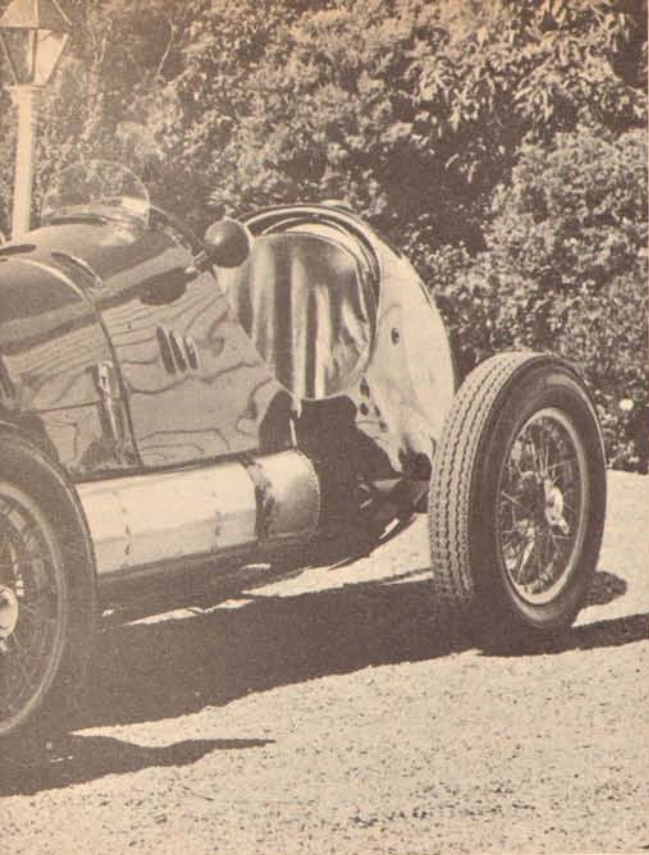
acquire world acclaim it was essential to create a Grand Prix car and, as the Porsche company in Austria was not too well off after the war, Dusio started negotiations with it in December of 1946. The discussions saw Cisitalia place four orders with Porsche; a 1500 cc sports/racing car (Porsche Type 370), an 11 hp small tractor, a water turbine — and a full GP car which was designated the Porsche Type 360. The latter was stipulated as the most important and despite rumors which circulated throughout the motoring press that the new Cisitalia was simply an extension of the 1500 cc Auto-Union racing car it was in fact a completely new design — albeit at that time an ill-fated one. Technically, the Cisitalia was so advanced that it is little wonder, in retrospect, that it failed to achieve anything expected of it — had it in fact done so it could well have revolutionised motor racing. During the discussion with Porsche it was decided to use a flat-12 cylinder 1492 cc engine of 55.5 mm stroke and 56 mm bore. It was estimated at 300 bhp with a maximum torque figure of 195 lb/ft at 6000 rpm. It was to be supercharged by twin Centric blowers feeding through two Weber twin-choke carburetors. Into the bargain it was to have four-wheel-drive which could be engaged or disconnected from the driver's cockpit.

In short, the Cisitalia GP car was designed to be just as revolutionary as the V16 BRM and to cut a long, and rather sad story short — it had about the same success. For financial, and

political reasons the Cisitalia concern was transferred to the Argentine, where it languished and eventually died. Renamed the Autoar-Cisitalia, the car was entered in the formula libre Buenos Aires GP of 1953 but it failed to start despite the fact that a few days earlier it had been tested at 280 bhp at 8000 rpm. The car was later used for a record attempt but following a dismal showing it was pushed aside and left to gather dust in a small garage. Gianni Rogliatti, a technical writer for an Italian paper wrote: "And so ended, forgotten, one of the most interesting cars of all time, a vehicle that demonstrated the intelligence of the person who had designed it . . . a mechanical jewel fit to occupy the place of honor in a museum." Eventually this did happen. The car was returned to Germany where it now holds a prominent place in the Porsche museum at Stuttgart.

All of this is rather incidental to the story of the Leech 1100 cc D46 Cisitalia monoposto — except for one very interesting fact. Despite there being no doubt that quite a number of these cars was produced a visiting president of the American Vintage Drivers Club told Bill Leech that to the best of the club's knowledge this was the last remaining such car in existence. If that is so, then it could have hardly found a better home, as the Leech brothers are two of the most devoted classic car aficionados in the world. The little Cisitalia is a jewel in their considerable collection of gems. #





when there were two types of championships in Italy — one for works drivers and one for private owners. Dusio, driving a 2.6 litre Alfa Romeo, became Italian champion of the "amateur" class in 1934, when names like Johnny Lurani, Carlo Pintacuda, and Count Castelbarco were making their mark in the "works" section. The 1934 Mille Miglia (and in those days this was a real man's race) saw Dusio finish seventh against the heavily-backed works teams.

After the war he started building the little 1100 cc Cisitalia, which in racing and sports form soon started winning not only its own class but also placing well for outright honors.

From 1946 to 1949 drivers like Bonetto, Lurani, Nuvolari, Ascari, Stuck and Taruffi all tried their hands on the Cisitalia with Taruffi scoring a memorable win in the 1100 cc race before the 1948 Grand Prix of Switzerland from Bonetto and Stuck — thus vanquishing the then top-name Simca-Gordini equipe. In the sports car field the Cisitalia was also making a name for itself and in the 1947 Mille Miglia Nuvolari was beaten only by Biondetti in a 2.9 supercharged Alfa.

The European history of the car owned by Bill and Jim Leech is obscure, although it is believed to have been owned by Ecurie, Paris, and raced as one of a pair in the 1950 Formula II season. In early 1951 it was imported by a Mr A. Watson through the agency of Peter Dale at an advertised landed price of "£1250 in Australian currency on the wharf at Melbourne". A rather enlightening section of the advertisement read "and the maximum speed at

MONOPOSTO

