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Maserati's GranTurismo MC Concept car features reduced weight and improved performance, and is an exemplary model of Italian innovation. The car features revised intake and exhaust systems and an upgraded brake system, among other enhancements.

# Automobile Italiana

Written by Motor Age Senior Editor Chris Miller

## A TASTE OF ITALY'S AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY REVEALS ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATIVE PROCESSES

**YOU'RE WALKING DOWN** a cobblestone street, and at once you are surrounded by the buzz of scooters, motorcycles, bicycles and cars, peppered with the rhythmic, song-like dialect of Italian spoken from every corner.

The spanning archways and medieval architecture tell the story of a city that sustained massive damage in World War II, but has retained a wealth of culture and architecture, from the portico-protected outdoor walkways, to the rustic Hotel Commercianti, walking distance from the majestic Piazza Maggiore, built in the 1100s.

You're in Bologna, in Northern Italy, capital of the Emilia Romagna region, a city where the distant past and technological future converge in the present. Bologna was once a medieval stronghold, and Dante attended the local university, the oldest in the Western world.

This is our gateway into the Italian automotive industry and home to a number



of significant vehicle parts and equipment manufacturers, along with some of the most sophisticated carmakers in the world.

Also significant, Bologna is perhaps the perfect location for Autopromotec, a biennial trade show that is global in every sense.

Our journey starts here, in this city that breathes history. But the heart of this country's automotive industry spans the entire Northern part of Italy, where the real money is made, some say, from the bustling metropolis of Turin, to the lush countryside bordered by the Alps, and then to Maranello, another town in the region of Emilia Romagna, also in Northern Italy, best known as the home of Ferrari and the Scuderia Ferrari Formula 1 racing team, and over to the verdant rolling hillsides of Ronco Scrivia, a comune (municipality) in the Province of Genoa in the Italian region of Liguria. So buckle up and enjoy this tour of Northern Italy, and an automotive industry that's unlike any other segment around the globe.



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The

# Cutting Edge

*Italy's technology is unsurpassed in the automotive industry.*



**Italy is sometimes referred to as the Old Country, but the country's automotive industry technology is anything but.**

A host of innovations are emerging from Italy, some of them directly following the cues of automakers. All in all, this means superior product quality, whether it's repair shop equipment, specialty parts and accessories or hard parts.

Those we spoke with say Italy ranks No. 1 in the world for tools and repair shop equipment. With the backing of top-tier automakers like Ducati, Ferrari, Lamborghini and Maserati, the shop equipment made in Italy is held to the exacting standards of these prominent vehicle manufacturers, and, in most cases, in conjunction with these high-end OEMs.

Approximately 50 percent of Europe's garage equipment is made in Italy, says Renzo Servadei, general secretary of the Italian Automotive Service Equipment Manufacturers Association (AICA), Italy's prominent service and parts organization. Servadei describes the cluster of automotive businesses in Northern Italy as being small and mid-size companies, but companies with the latest and greatest technological innovations.

In Correggio, service equipment manufacturer Corgi relies on its affiliation with OEMs and top-tier tiremakers when developing its products to accommodate low-profile tires, larger wheels, in some cases, and ever-changing body styles and makes.

Corgi, which has a distribution network covering 140 countries, also is the sole supplier for the



Renzo Servadei



**Corgi's blue-light wheel balancers use advanced technology to help the tech determine exactly where to place the wheel weights.**



The price of steel weighs heavily on Italian manufacturers, who face the same cost concerns as the rest of the world. Garage equipment maker Ravaglioli, above, houses about 1,500 tons of steel at any given time.

Ferrari Workshop Equipment line, including the Ferrari Formula 1 team. This is an esteemed position to be in for a shop equipment supplier, says Rolando Vezzani, business development director for Corghi.



Claudio Spiritelli

All the Italian manufacturers we spoke with underline the close association with OEMs as being vital to success. As costly as vehicles and wheels can be, mistakes made in the bay could be incredibly damaging to a company's bottom line, not to mention dealing with a tarnished reputation. Damaging tires and wheels, some of which cost more than entire vehicles of lower makes, would be dire. Claudio Spiritelli, Corghi's sales and marketing director, says being a market leader allows the company these types of relationships. "As a recommended brand, without that recognition, we could not approach the customers. When you are the recognized leader, you have this type of advantage."

At Corghi, many of its tire-mounting machines are automated, enabling users relief from the stress of lifting tires all day. Wheel diameter can be electronically preset, automating the lift that loads and unloads the wheel, along with an automatic bead breaker that mounts and demounts the wheel. The user simply controls the unit from an ergonomic console.

Its blue light balancer uses the most advanced technologies, so the tech can figure out, with use of a blue light and camera, exactly where to place

the weights, based purely on the machine's digital map of the wheel.

The company's "touchless, level-less" machines represent the present and future of shop equipment – ease of use for the tech. "At the end of the day, the technician still has the energy to go home to his family," says Spiritelli. With the touchless equipment, "everything is done by machine," he adds. Additionally, all tire equipment must be able to work around tire pressure monitoring systems (TPMS).

Another innovation in Italy is brought about by necessity: recycling. There's not as much landfill space in Europe as there is in other countries, so associations and companies are strong proponents of recycling. "It's imperative to have a strong level of recycling," says Servadei, who's also man-



#### MOUNT AND BALANCE ON-THE-GO

>> For those situations where a mobile tire tech is needed, Corghi, which makes wheel balancing, mounting and alignment equipment, along with vehicle lifts and diagnostic tools, can offer roadside service with its mobile van.

With a diesel generator that fuels the use of pneumatic tools, and a robotic arm that lifts the tire into and out of the van, this mobile unit represents convenience and state-of-the-art shop technology hard at work.

aging director of Italy's Autopromotec trade show.

"Now, perhaps more than ever, recycling efforts are on the radar of a number of businesses, especially as they pertain to tires."

In rural Reggio-Emilia, also in Northern Italy, MetaSystem Group Spa spearheads a sophisticated product mix of telematics solutions, broadcasting and telecommunications systems, security and safety devices such as alarms and sirens for vehicles.

MetaSystem Group represents cutting-edge technology, as 20 percent of its 1,300 employees are dedicated to research and development (R&D), according to the company.

“Quality for us is a need. We push the fact that everything that's made by us is produced in Italy.

■ FERDINANDO MORO,  
general sales director, Ravaglioli

With branches located throughout Europe, South America and Asia, the Group last year pulled in 190 million euros (\$270 million), which was an almost 30 percent increase over the previous year. A soft economy has done very little to deter the positive results of this company's cutting-edge research.

The company has a strong market share when it comes to vehicle telematics, and is increasing staff for the plethora of R&D required, while other companies are cutting people, officials point out.

"We have to continue to invest in innovation," says Giorgio Maldini, homologation and innovation manager of MetaSystem Group. He adds that around 8 percent of the company's annual profits is invested in R&D. "At the European level, we are the biggest representative of vehicle telematics applications for the automotive and insurance markets," says Maldini.

European vehicle electronics are complex, agrees Riccardo Buttafarro, coordinator of the aftermarket components group for the ANFIA trade association (Italian Association of the Automotive Industry), along with roles as a consultant, and president of parts distributor Autogamma. And automakers and government have strict guidelines in place for product development.

At Ravaglioli, its lifts, aligners, tire changers and wheel balancers are fashioned to comply with the string of stringent European certifications. "Quality for us is a need," says Ferdinando Moro, the manufacturer's general sales director. "We push the fact that everything that's made by us is produced in Italy."

And this "Made in Italy" stamp carries with it a superb artisanship that these companies stand firmly behind. □



Coming

# Technologies

*Italy's present offers clues into the future of vehicle technology.*



**Even Italy's independent aftermarket has some sort of stake in the OEM marketplace. This gives Italian companies a look ahead.**

At last year's Autopromotec show in Bologna, a number of paint and body repair equipment makers touted robotic painters, conveyor belts for the shop and improved paint-drying equipment. And if Italy is any guide, automation will continue to be integral to the factory environment. Laser-guided technology cuts raw materials into shapes and forms too perfect for those made by human hands.

At Polin, laser-precision machines are replacing the job once performed exclusively by humans, but the people still have a role — making sure the machines do their jobs.

More robotic hands than human hands are assembling products, and the computers communicate such details to the workers as how long it will take to finish a job; the machines even pick out their own pieces to cut.

Polin's factories make everything from food ovens to paint-drying booths, and although these items themselves aren't necessarily on the cutting edge, the business plan of crossing over into other industries represents an advanced mode of thinking that could be seen more with the footprint of manufacturers in the future. Some of Polin's ovens are so large they sell for \$2 million.

"All these machines work by themselves," President Giorgio Cometti says during a recent visit to Maranello. Cometti also is president of the Italian Automotive Service Equipment Manufacturers Association (AICA), Italy's prominent service and parts organization. And



Ravaglioli's Ferdinando Moro points out one of the garage equipment maker's scissor lifts.

Cometti's passion for the company is inherent, as he describes each machine in the factory like a proud parent introducing his children.

Other manufacturers nearby are fully immersed in automation. Garage equipment maker Ravaglioli, also is investing a lot of money in automating processes in its factories. "This allows our company to be a good partner in the long-term," says General Sales Director Ferdinando Moro. Ravaglioli makes entire vehicle lifts, aligners, tire changers and wheel balancers. A close association with OEMs greatly benefits this equipment production, says Moro.

And to meet the ever-changing demands of OEMs, Ravaglioli is altering the way it makes vehicle lifts, because of narrower underbodies and varying tolerances.

The goal of Italian manufacturers and distributors is to keep unneeded costs as low as possible, while carrying forth the tradition of high quality.

Telematics auto insurance represents Italy and Europe's present, but the future for the U.S. The telematics platform Clear Box, conceived and manufactured by MetaSystem, records nearly every possible detail surrounding an accident, tracking such elements as vehicle speed, location, time travelled and how the vehicle is operated. The data is automatically transmitted to Octo Telematics Multiservice Center that, thanks to

sophisticated algorithms and a database of 20,000 real crashes, is able to quickly deliver a detailed graphic regarding the crash. This information can help appropriate emergency response and also provide insurance companies and end-users with useful evidences for crash reconstruction and analysis.

The integrated solution also helps in stolen vehicle recovery and can act in concert with other data collectors to calculate the traffic conditions. "Date, time, street —insurance companies are able to provide this information in place of a claim," says Umberto Manfredi, Operating Director of Octo

Telematics srl. The company, which now boasts more than 650,000 subscribers to its services, is working with 36 insurance providers at the global level and is in talks to strike up a partnership with a major U.S. provider, whose name company officials were hesitant to share due to ongoing business negotiations. Insurance products can be customized or adjusted on a usage basis, depending on mileage driven, as well as when and where the driver travels, much like how a cell phone bill can be configured. This aftermarket telematics system rivals those in use by OEMs, and can be used to also provide remote diagnostic updates and upgrades for aftermarket service providers. In fact, GM's OnStar system has similarities to the platform MetaSystem Group has in use, say officials. Fighting a preponderance of insurance fraud, the integrated vehicle

### AFTERMARKET PARALLELS

>> When looking at Italy's aftermarket, there are likely as many similarities as there are differences to the U.S. aftermarket. Due to its narrow geography and the smaller size of distribution companies, getting parts and accessories into the proper hands through proper channels can be somewhat problematic, says Riccardo Buttafarro, coordinator of the aftermarket components group for the ANFIA trade association (Italian Association of the Automotive Industry). The dealership alignment to the aftermarket in Italy is incredibly strong, but the country also has its own aftermarket, unique to Europe.

telematics solution also aids insurance companies in finding out who is really at fault for accidents, including the fact that an accident, or "event," occurred. The company has collected information on more than 80,000 events in the past three years, say company officials. "We have a big problem with insurance fraud in Italy," says Giorgio Maldini, MetaSystem's homologation and innovation manager.

Training also is key to the success of the Italian automotive industry. Many of these family-originated companies must invest in their present-day workforce to ensure a successful future.

Training is especially integral to Corghi, whose

“ The Clear Box can chronicle nearly every possible detail surrounding an accident.

training center has the company's most up-to-date products, and is used to certify its distributors. "We are investing a lot of money in the training center," says Claudio Spiritelli, Corghi's sales and marketing director. "In some cases, we do not sell a product to a distributor unless he completes full training here."

There was once a time when every wheel was mounted and balanced in the same way. That simply isn't the case anymore, he adds.

Many of the Italian industry leaders we spoke with expressed concern that the country's size and workforce demographics may make it difficult to find the right employee mix moving forward, which makes training an even more important part of the industry's future than some imagine. □



Giorgio Maldini, from the MetaSystem Group, says that the Clear Box aftermarket telematics solution can help avoid insurance fraud and chronicle accident details.



# Reaching

# Across the Pond

*Doing business in Italy is more attainable than many realize.*



**To successfully do business in Italy, it's important to keep one thing in mind: We're not that different.**

Despite the language barrier, there are a number of similarities between the U.S. and Italy. Italy prides itself on maintaining solid interpersonal relationships. Like the U.S., Italian businesspeople prefer to do business with people, not with numbers and dollar amounts.

There are plenty of opportunities to sell and distribute U.S.-made vehicles and their replacement parts and accessories in Italy. Or there's the strategy of acquiring Italian businesses or seeking Italian business partners, as some have done.

Those seeking Italian business partners may also want to consider a complete European strategy. They'll have 42 countries to choose from, 27 of which are in the European Union.

Now could be a good time to enter into the European market if you haven't already considered doing so, says Emanuele Vicentini, promotion and development director for Promotec, which manages the biennial Autopromotec trade show. He says exports are an integral part of Italian business, as members of the Italian Automotive Service Equipment Manufacturers Association (AICA), Italy's automotive service equipment association, export two-thirds of their products, Vicentini adds. Because of the country's size, many Italian companies have been glob-

alized by sheer necessity for some time.

In order for Italian manufacturers to survive, they must embrace these export-friendly business models. Ravaglioli, which makes garage service equipment, exports more than 80 percent of its products. Additionally, "our sales in Italy have not decreased," says

Ferdinando Moro, Ravaglioli's general sales director. In the Italian business world, knowledge of English also is imperative, but it would behoove your compa-



**Ferdinando Moro**



“ Price is not really the problem. It’s logistics, time to market.

**RICCARDO BUTTAFARRO,**  
*coordinator, Aftermarket Components Group, ANFIA trade association (Italian Association of the Automotive Industry)*

panies to learn Italian for an ease of business with Italian companies.

In Europe, you cannot sell products without proper testing and certification being achieved, much like the U.S. automotive industry. But regulations differ from country to country, so prospective businesses should be cognizant of the disparity.

“The important thing to understand is that every market is different,” cautions Moro. One can’t use a business model from Japan when doing business with a European country. In comparison, a company should also deal with each European country as a separate entity.

OMP Racing, which makes racing apparel, seats and other gear, along with selling private branded parts, sells 80 percent of its products globally, says Luigi Rossi from the company. Though OMP has a wide product range, its racing suits are the best sellers, he adds.

If you choose to distribute products in Italy, an important fact to remember is the geography

can make this a tricky road. This should definitely be factored into distribution plans, as delivering a part or component 10 miles could be simple in one region, but nearly insurmountable in others.

For example, Eastern Italy is mountainous, so local distribution is imperative, says Riccardo Buttafarro, coordinator of the aftermarket components group for the ANFIA trade association (Italian Association of the Automotive Industry), along with roles as a consultant, and president of parts distributor Autogamma. Northern Italy, on the other hand, lends itself to more frequent delivery, he adds. “Price is not really the problem,” adds Buttafarro. “It’s logistics, time to market.”

Another difference Italy has from the rest of Europe is the way the country’s broken out into regions, much like the U.S. is parsed into states. Distribution throughout Europe can be tricky as well due to the diverse population of vehicle makes and models.

Italian companies also participate in purchasing groups, which offer smaller businesses the buying power that U.S. distributors would find by being members of programmed distribution groups, points out Buttafarro. This enables the

**A GLOBAL MIX**

**>> On Italian roads, a casual observer will see such brands as Fiat, VW, Renault, Citroen, Daewoo, Hyundai, Peugeot, Skoda and Innocenti, among a dozen others. If you look closely, a few smaller Fords may pass by as well, but for the most part, American makes are conspicuously absent. And many Italian suppliers and distributors do not specialize in U.S.-made vehicles, supporting a potential market for U.S. companies.**

Italian companies to purchase quantities of auto parts as a collective.

So, why should U.S. companies do business with Italy, or the rest of Europe for that matter? “You’re buying quality, garage equipment needs assistance, maintenance, reliability,” says Renzo Servadei, general secretary of AICA. It may cost a bit more for Italian-made parts and equipment, but Servadei refers to the adage that states, “Pay less today, and pay more tomorrow.”

Areas in Northern Italy such as Bologna and Maranello are chock full of smaller companies that have a large impact on the global stage, and many of these busi-

nesses are born from humble beginnings, yet they implement detailed craftsmanship and advanced technology into their operations.

Most AICA members have adopted this “small but large-minded” mode of thinking, making these companies true global players.

The strong euro is noted as an obstacle in European companies’ attempts to do business with the U.S., but American companies that want to sell and distribute products in Europe will benefit from this currency discrepancy.

Additionally, currency, like the stock and real estate markets, will fluctuate, so today’s exchange rate is almost certainly not to be tomorrow’s exchange rate.

Fausto Lettieri, president of specialty exhaust maker Tubi Style, says the currency disparity has changed the market a bit, “but I don’t think it’s a matter of a stronger euro or a weaker dollar. We don’t really fear this situation.” □



**Fausto Lettieri**



Sabell, which makes racing seatbelt and harnesses and child restraints, has been doing business with the U.S. for years, says Federico D’Ormea, the company’s export area manager.



The Mirafiori Motor Village in Turin is an impressive mini-city, all centered around a super dealership with every Fiat make and model imaginable.



# Autopromotec

## Trade Show

International gathering is growing with an increased spare parts presence



**In just a handful of months, the global automotive industry will converge on Bologna for the 23rd biennial Autopromotec trade show, but this show promises a number of changes from its predecessors.**

For one, the presence of spare parts will increase thanks in part to the partnership of trade association ANFIA, the Italian Association of the Automotive Industry.

The show has grown exponentially from its humble beginnings as a domestic exhibition that focused on garage equipment and retreaded tires.

Now, Autopromotec encompasses many auto repair and vehicle maintenance sectors, from collision repair to tire service and car wash companies, along with dozens of product categories.

For next year's show, "Autopromotec will be even more international, at the same time keeping quality high inside the halls," says Renzo Servadei, general secretary of the Italian Automotive Service Equipment Manufacturers Association (AICA) and managing director of Autopromotec.

Additionally, the upcoming show will focus on hybrid vehicles, fuel cell suppliers, biodiesel, bioethanol, hydrogen and compressed natural gas (CNG), among other alternative technologies. What's more, a showcase of "green" vehicles will be displayed.

AICA, along with AIRP, the Italian Tire Retreaders Association, and its members, are the owners of Autopromotec. "There's no revenue for the association," says Emanuele Vicentini, promotion and development director for Promotec. Servadei emphasizes this by pointing out, "Autopromotec has been created by exhibitors for exhibitors."

Last year saw the biggest attendance ever for Autopromotec, a key automotive business-to-business event that's becoming ever more global with each installment.

The show is certified under the U.S. Department of Commerce Trade Fair Certification program. Additionally, the show is supported by leading U.S. trade associations, like the Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association (AAIA), the Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association (MEMA), the Tire Industry Association (TIA) and the Automotive Service Association (ASA), the signatories of a memorandum of understanding.



**The Autopromotec show is divided into easy-to-navigate pavilions for different industry segments.**



**Last year's Autopromotec show in Bologna boasted record attendance, and U.S. attendees may see some familiar exhibitors.**

The show covers a wide range of industries, and the pavilions are designed so those looking for a particular type of product or service machine can easily know where to find them.

The biennial show has picked up prominence and widened its scope over the years, signs of a convention that's still growing. Now, the partnership with ANFIA will mark Autopromotec as the de facto Italian automotive trade show.

The partnership will surely bolster Italy's presence in this marketplace.

Add this to AICA's approximate 100 members and the two groups represent the majority of the country's auto industry.

Autopromotec offers a "big window" into the Italian automotive marketplace, admits Giorgio Cometti, president of AICA, who also owns Polin, maker of everything from collision repair spray booths to industrial ovens for the food industry.

Cometti also points to the quality inherent in Italian brands. "Italy's recognized around the world for Armani, Prada," he says. "We're the Armani of the automotive business," he adds, referring to the Italian automotive industry. The 23rd biennial Autopromotec takes place May 20 to 24 in Bologna.

For more information, visit [www.autopromotec.it](http://www.autopromotec.it) or [www.anfia.it](http://www.anfia.it), or contact the Italian Trade Commission's Chicago office at [chicago@chicago.ice.it](mailto:chicago@chicago.ice.it).

**AUTOPROMOTEC:  
THE NUMBERS**  
Here are some facts and figures from Autopromotec's 2007 show:  
**EXHIBITORS: 1,404**  
**COUNTRIES EXHIBITING: 49**  
**FOREIGN BUYERS: 16,806**  
**COUNTRIES: 118**  
**DOMESTIC PROFESSIONAL VISITORS: 82,376**  
**TOTAL VISITORS: 99,182**