



Pininfarina Hyperion, a one-off custom built car derived from the Rolls-Royce Drophead coupe.

The Jazz Age



Many people would consider themselves to have well and truly arrived if they could afford a £250,000 Rolls-Royce Phantom and a £100,000 Girard-Perregaux tourbillon, but for American horolophile and car collector Roland Hall the standard offerings were simply a little too common. QP explains what Mr. Hall did next...

Simon de Burton



The Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance is well known for being the most prestigious classic car gathering in the world, but it is also one at which you'll find some of the most spectacular contemporary concept vehicles and one-off creations; essentially, the collector's cars of the future.

At this year's event, the spotlight fell on a bespoke Rolls-Royce convertible named after the Greek Titan, Hyperion. Based on a new Phantom drophead, it had been extensively re-worked by the Italian design house Pininfarina to feature a body made primarily of carbon fibre with wooden doors, no rear seats, a more steeply-raked windscreen and a canted radiator grille.

The man who commissioned it, a somewhat enigmatic tycoon called Roland Hall, specified a finished vehicle that would pay homage to the finest bespoke cars of the pre-war era that were famous for their rakish yet muscular lines, shamelessly selfish accommodation and continent-crossing capability - the sort of wheels that would have been ideally suited to a Jay Gatsby or, perhaps, a Cruella de Vil.

Old is the new new

The consensus of opinion is that Pininfarina hit the bullseye with the Hyperion, which combines classically elegant looks and traditional craftsmanship with plenty of modern technology. The feline-looking headlamps, for example, light the way using bi-xenon LEDs, yet the electrically-operated roof folds away to be neatly concealed by a wooden panel that emulates the type of flawless, high-gloss teak planking more normally seen on Riva speedboats. A similar panel in front of the windscreen hinges to reveal a storage area for the owner's hunting rifles.

Doing away with the rear seats has resulted in a body 400 mm shorter than that of the original, lending the car that taut 'coiled spring' look that enhances the aura of speed and power, neither of which, of course, are lacking: under the Pininfarina skin, the Hyperion's mechanicals remain pure Phantom - a 6.75 litre V-12 engine, churning out 453 horsepower and offering a restricted top speed of 150 mph.

How much all this cost has not been revealed, suffice to say that invoking the services of Pininfarina's Special Projects division rarely comes cheap. At a conservative estimate, we would say that Mr. Hall is unlikely to have been left with much change out of \$2 million for the pleasure of owning the Hyperion - but he did get a rather remarkable little extra into the bargain.

Hidden treasure

Look between the car's dashboard-mounted fresh-air vents, and the eagle-eyed will notice a timepiece that appears rather more substantial and significant than the usual quartz-powered apologies for clocks that continue to let the side down in even the most expensive of modern cars. Girard-Perregaux fans will, of course, recognise the Hyperion's 'clock' as a Vintage 1945 Tourbillon wristwatch with gold bridge, one of the classic G-P timepieces and highly covetable on its own, let alone as an accessory to a bespoke Rolls-Royce.

The inclusion of the watch came about as a result of a long-standing friendship between Pininfarina's erstwhile chairman and CEO, Andrea Pininfarina, and Girard-Perregaux chief Luigi Macaluso. Their shared Italian roots and mutual love of all things to do with motor cars resulted in a close relationship, so it was



THE CAR

Dimensions:	115 inches long, 78 inches wide (approx).
Water Resistance:	N/A
Movement:	Naturally aspirated 6.8 litre V12, 453 horsepower at 5,350rpm. 531 ft/lbs torque at 3,500rpm
Weight:	In excess of 5,250 lbs
Function:	150 mph
Frequency (0-60):	5.7 seconds
Case:	Carbon fibre bodywork with wooden doors and teak decking.

almost natural that Girard-Perregaux should be chosen to devise and supply the timekeeper for the Hyperion project, which Pininfarina had been heavily involved with.

Such car-watch liaisons have become more common of late, with TAG Heuer working with Japanese automotive designer (and some time Pininfarina employee) Ken Okuyama to create a demountable version of its Grand Carrera RS2 for the dashboard of the K07 lightweight roadster, and Hublot meanwhile are in discussion with Morgan about the possibility of a similar idea for the Aeromax.

Since the Hyperion is a one-off vehicle, however, it did not face the stringent type-approval regulations that apply to the K07 or Aeromax, which would not be allowed to go into production with a dashboard fitting that posed any threat of flying off.

Finer details

That is not to say, of course, that the Vintage 1945 is anything but secure in its Hyperion housing, thanks to a fiendishly clever fastening system based on a series of sprung balls that allow it to be extracted from its alligator strap and clipped safely into

the dashboard. The reverse operation is equally easy, enabling the watch to revert to its usual wrist-worn state in a matter of seconds.

While in place in the car, the watch is held secure by a support in the shape of the celebrated G-P tourbillon cage, and to make the combination even more exclusive the dial is finished in exactly the same colour as the Hyperion's paintwork.



Girard-Perregaux customised Vintage 1945 Tourbillon with gold bridge and Hyperion colour scheme, which can be housed within the dashboard of the car.

A tale of whimsy, lavish expense and admirable indulgence

THE WATCH

Dimensions:	32 x 32 mm
Water resistance:	30 meters
Movement:	Girard-Perregaux automatic GP9610C
Functions:	Tourbillon, hour, minute,
Frequency:	21,600 Vib/h (3 Hz)
Jewels:	30
Power reserve:	48 hours
Case:	Pink gold



Rakish yet muscular lines, shamelessly selfish accommodation and continent-crossing capability

Yet while this is a tale of whimsy, lavish expense and admirable indulgence, it does, sadly, end with a cruel twist: On August 7th, just days before the Hyperion was due to be unveiled to the world at Pebble Beach, Andrea Pininfarina, a 51-year-old father of three, was killed near his family firm's Turin headquarters after his Vespa scooter was struck by a car.

Mr. Macaluso has retained a characteristically dignified silence about the loss of his dear friend, while Mr. Hall announced at the Hyperion's unveiling that he wished the car to be dedicated to the memory of Pininfarina who, tragically, never saw the expressions of awe and amazement that his final project invoked from an admiring public. ☹

Further information: www.girard-perregaux.ch www.pininfarina.com



From left: Roland Hall, Jason Castriota (Pininfarina Chief Designer), Lowie Vermeersch (Pininfarina Design Director), Paolo Garella (Pininfarina Special Projects Dept. Manager).

