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NEW MINI PICK-UP

Castagna does it again with the Crossup



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"There really isn't anything else in the US that's so much fun"

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"You know you've just seen something interesting, but what exactly was it?"

THE CROSSUP
CASTAGNA
MILANO'S NEWEST
MINI VARIANT IS
THIS COOL
PICK-UP



● On the cover

On The Up

After the Tender last month, we return to Milan to see the final install in the Castagna series: *The Crossup*.

Words: Bryn Musselwhite
Photos: Dave Woodall



These days, you can buy any number of things that fulfil more than one function. You know the sort of thing we're

talking about: you buy a phone and also get an inbuilt MP3 player to listen to while your altimeter tells you how high up you are, plus you can video the whole thing to show your mates. The trouble with this jack-of-all-trades approach, though, is the other half of that old saying: master of none. But we've found something that avoids falling into this trap: the Castagna Crossup. It's a bizarre thing to describe, half Mini, half pickup, but it's definitely got a certain integrity to it.

There are a number of reasons for this. For a start the quality of the materials used; there's leather and wood in heavy doses, without the Crossup feeling like it weighs three tonnes. Then there's that trademark Italian coachbuilding quality. We've come to a garage in the middle of a secure compound north of Milan to collect the Crossup, and this is where it's been built. It's no bright, floodlit studio or immaculate workshop; instead there's a random selection of vehicles undergoing (in some cases radical) reconstruction and the usual tools you'd expect to see littered about the place. It's the people that count here, the craftsmen, and of course the quality of the cars produced.

In keeping with this, one of the first things that strikes you when you see the Crossup — despite the significant changes from the Mini — is its subtlety. There aren't any gaudy decals down the side shouting about 'extreme this' or 'radical that', or any associations with a lifestyle company. The Crossup just serves a purpose; or, to be more precise, a number of purposes.

Supercar Inspiration

As usual with the brains behind Castagna, Gioacchino Acampora, inspiration is never that far away or complicated. "I needed to lose some weight," he laughs, "so I bought a bicycle and then needed a way to carry it." Those of you who really know your motors might recognise a supercar in the mix too. When Gioacchino mentioned the incredible Lamborghini LM002 that he'd seen on a trip to the Middle East a few years ago, the Crossup started to make a lot more sense. ▶



"The Crossup is hard to describe, but it's definitely got integrity"

If you're not familiar with it, stick LM002 into a Google image search and you'll see what we mean. The big off-roader was marauding across deserts long before the Humvee (and even longer before the Hummer), and it had a big effect on Gioacchino. His Crossup pays homage to it, most evidently in the four-seater body, pickup style and the wheels. The latter may look like Weller eight-spokes, as favoured by the '80s kit car brigade, but put them in the context of the LM002 and they suit the Crossup perfectly.

OK, so you still don't like them? Well, if you're one of the lucky few that buys a Crossup, you can of course have whatever wheels you want. They'll have to be something suitably chunky to carry the raised profile and section of the off-road style tyres, and the suspension is also raised and uprated to make sure there's no contact between rubber and arch. The damping specifications are defined to suit each separate application's constraints.

The Crossup shares its extended profile with the Tender (see last month's issue of *GoMini*) and Gioacchino is keen to point out that virtually all the body modifications are carried out using original panels, so that rear three quarter panel is

simply a second panel overlapped and joined on to the original. Sounds simple, but it obviously isn't, and it does mean that you're assured of getting proper Mini-quality metal. After the side panels, the original boot lid forms the front of the pickup bed and another one forms the fold down access. The whole area is topped off with bespoke wooden panelling and rice plate alloy — form and function both neatly ticked off in the options list. All this is done without shouting about it: out on the road the Crossup attracts attention, but it's usually the double-take kind. You know you've just seen something interesting, but hang on... what exactly was it?

The Choice Is Yours

As with all of the Castagna cars, the finished article is heavily influenced by the client. So as this is Gioacchino's personal transport, the materials are all his own choice. And what does a man who travels the globe, picking up inspiration and designs for a living, choose? "In London I saw a Bentley in the most beautiful colour, so I asked the owner what colour it was," he smiles. "It was Connaught Green, so I used that as the colour for the Crossup."

It's as black as green can get, whilst still being a very rich colour on its own. Solid and traditional, it gives the Crossup a gentrified air, which suits that gorgeous interior perfectly. Inside, the specially patterned leather, which smells gorgeous, is everywhere — even the headlining is covered in it. There's also beautiful bespoke wood detailing in the bezels, formed using a technology initially developed by Gioacchino himself.

Believe it or not, all this work is done to a budget. Sure, you can ▶

Below: The Crossup's extended rear is perfect if you want more space but could never part with your Mini.



The Crossup's off-road styling is perfect for outdoor pursuits. The uprated wheels and suspension ensure it can walk the walk, too.



Even right up close, the attention to detail is astounding. Castagna Milano has already made a reputation, but the Crossup is further fantastic proof of the company's artistry and expertise.



"Castagna takes the search for Mini originality to new levels"

have whatever you want, from a humidor to a fridge, or as we've seen in these pages before a shower unit in the rear and wetsuit material sewn into your Works seats, but this series of models based on the Mini are just calling cards for Castagna. Gioacchino sees them as an invitation into the world of Castagna for new clients. This year you may buy a Crossup or Tender for running around in, and then next year you might fancy a coach-built Bentley for crossing continents with ease. The company can build anything for you, so you're only limited by your imagination.

The client's wishes are key, then, and Gioacchino is keen to emphasise that you don't have to buy an entire conversion either. If you just like the look of the interior or only want your bodywork to get the Castagna treatment, then speak to the company to get the separate parts that you like. As in the case of renowned classic Mini companies like Wood & Pickett and Downton, you can simply pick and choose your preferred modifications.

The Crossup will be the last of Castagna's Mini-based projects.

after the Wagon that we showed you last year, the SUV and the Tender. We'd love to see Gioacchino's firm build a van from a Mini to really complete the job though, and who knows — if a client comes along and wants such a thing, it'll happen.

They'll have made the right choice of company: Gioacchino is someone who has taken the search for individuality that all Mini owners share to new levels. He can turn a page in his sketchbook, safe in the knowledge that in 50 years' time his designs will be sought after, revered, restored and exhibited.



Contact
www.castagnamilano.com

Thanks
GoMini would like to thank Glover here and Jessica for all their help.



Above: Rear-end riders. Castagna's Gioacchino Acampora says the inspiration for the elongated Crossup came because he needed some space to carry his bicycles. A simple idea, but it took plenty of complicated modding to make it a reality.



Right: The Crossup's interior is finished with a beautiful patterned leather, which smells almost as good as it looks.

