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# ALFA ROMANCE

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→ 1938 →

# Alfa Romeo

8C 2900B Speciale

Touring Coupe

Produced by CMC

Story by Terry O'Neill

Every time I review a new CMC model I say it can't possibly be bettered, but as usual the people at CMC continue to prove me wrong. This time it's CMC's superlative 1938 Alfa Romeo 8C 2900B Speciale Touring Coupe (item #M107) that's inherited the champion's laurels. CMC has a reputation for producing replicas of some historically interesting cars, but this Alfa Romeo is beyond all expectations. By combining a classic name with a singular body design, CMC has created

yet another highly desirable miniature collectible.

Alfa Romeo's 8C 2900B Speciale Touring Coupe was a one-off build based on Alfa's earlier 8C 2900A Mille Miglia version, but constructed specifically to contest the 24 Hours of Le Mans endurance race of 1938. It was fitted with a closed body designed by Carrozzeria Touring of Italy. Touring's unique 'Berlinetta Superleggera' (closed-top superlight) aerodynamic body and

spaceframe design incorporated extremely *avant-garde* lines, with fenders incorporated into the body, 'bug-eye' headlights, teardrop-shaped cabin, a sharply tapered tail, and covered rear wheels.

Motive power was provided by an optimized Vittorio Jano-designed eight-cylinder inline engine of 220hp, the same reliable engine as used in the successful Grand Prix Alfa Romeo P3. This motor had two updraft Weber carburetors and two Roots-style superchargers, plus a dry sump lubrication system. All-round independent suspension and hydraulic brakes completed a very competitive package. Many other parts from the Grand Prix car gave the coupe the





best possible chance of winning the 1938 Le Mans race.

However, during the race, and despite drivers Raymond Sommer and Clemente Biondetti (from France and Italy, respectively) establishing a superior lead, the 8C was unable to finish. In the 20<sup>th</sup> hour, the Alfa 8C 2900B was leading the next best-placed competitor by 11 laps (or 160km/99mi) when its right front tire burst. Sommer managed to keep the car under control and stay on the track, enabling him to make a pit stop. The ruptured tire had caused damage to an engine mounting bracket, and there was severe oil valve leakage. Refusing to give up, Biondetti took over and drove the car for two

more laps until the damaged valve forced the team to call it quits, dashing hopes of a seemingly certain victory.

After the race, the car was completely repaired and sold into private hands. It passed through a succession of owners before finally ending up in an English museum, from where it was brought home in the 1980s by the Alfa Romeo Museum (Museo Storico Alfa Romeo) in exchange for a Type 158 Alfetta Grand Prix racing car. At Storico the car was restored as a street version with original dark red finish, and that's how it is currently displayed.

CMC has captured this unique car's shape perfectly, from its bulbous roof through to the steep teardrop shape at the rear, and finishing

at the 8C's almost flat trunk. The body covers a scaled-down tubular spaceframe that is a wonder of construction on its own. At the back of the cabin roof is a clear 'skylight'-style window, through which you can glimpse the spare tire and cabin's rear compartment. The two-piece hood is held shut with four fine leather straps complete with working buckles. Fine-point tweezers and a dressmaker's 'unstitch' tool will be handy when attempting to undo the delicate straps to open either side of the centrally-hinged hood. After opening, the straight-eight Alfa engine can be viewed along with spark plugs, fabric-covered electrical wires, various metal cables, coolant hoses with clamps, and



CMC has captured this unique car's shape perfectly, from its bulbous roof through to the steep teardrop shape at the rear

many other accessories.

To see more you have to remove four tiny screws from each of the louver-vented covers on either side of the massive front fenders. These removable panels were on the real car to provide mechanics with access to the engine sides, as space was very limited in the engine bay. The rear wheel covers can also be removed, along with the black-painted wire wheels, to expose the brake drums and axles. Viewing a CMC model car is a journey of discovery, because as each item is removed it reveals another that has to be undone or simply marveled at for its complexity. CMC does provide small tools for this purpose inside each model package.

Tiny engraved metal nameplates and Alfa Romeo emblems abound, and even the 'Storico' museum emblem is attached on either side of the fenders. A hinged fuel filler door on the driver's side swings open to reveal a silver metal gas cap that itself can also be opened – wow! Each door has external hinges, and when opened the whole interior becomes accessible, although prudence is advised, such is the delicate nature of the interior parts. Leather trim with pockets, gearshifter, pedals, pull-knob switches, dials with glass faces, chrome-edged trim around the dash, 'banjo' spoked steering wheel, sliding side windows – the list goes on.

CMC does this detailing with an ease that

must be disconcerting to its rivals, because it is simply what CMC does best. The Alfa's front grille is real wire mesh painted matt black, with a chrome center support strip and photo-etched metal Alfa script on it. The dual headlights and driving lamps are reminders of the night racing element of Le Mans, and between the two driving lamps are small oval brake ducts with chrome trim. Each intricate gloss-black wire-spoke wheel is removable by loosening the main wheel nuts. The wheels include valves for the treaded balloon tires that are correctly gray, not solid black in color. Such is the level of accuracy that, as per the real car, the wheel lock nuts turn counter-clockwise on the left





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1938 Alfa Romeo 8C 2900B  
Speciale Touring Coupe

SCALE: 1:18

ITEM NO: M107

PRODUCER: CMC

AVAILABLE FOR: \$475

side, and clockwise on the right.

To open the externally-hinged rear trunk, you must turn two handle-style latches to release the locks. You can then prop the lid up and see the spare wheel inside, plus some minuscule wiring for the taillights. The front windshield and chrome frame are inserted as a separate assembly on the body, and incorporate the finest little wipers I have ever seen. These alone are an assembly of parts including the arm, rubber blade, rivet, and blade holder – what amazing engineering this is.

Just behind each door on the outside are turn indicator arm housings surrounded by tiny rivets. The real arms used to pop out to

inform other motorists that you intended to turn left or right – anyone remember that era?

Flipping the model over shows just how much attention CMC gives to these little gems. Steel cabling, electrical wiring, hydraulic fluid plumbing, hoses, individually assembled leaf springs, shocker dampers, hammer-finish exhaust system, fuel tank, and working suspension – this Alfa's got the lot.

Each time I returned to look at the model I discovered more new items to marvel at. This hefty Alfa Romeo replica is definitely of museum model quality, and CMC can rightly be proud of what it has achieved. But I have one suggestion. This isn't a criticism, and in no way reflects on quality, but for oldies like

me those fragile leather straps and buckles are not easy to manipulate and cause me much grief at the thought of undoing them and vice versa. I am afraid I will damage them. So, is there another way to do this? Perhaps CMC could make each strap as an assembly that is permanently attached to the hood and overhanging the sides, so they don't have to be undone in order to open the hood. Food for future thought?