

Arena Modelli

In the last issue we spoke with one of the newer manufacturers of 1:43rd models, but this time we're back with one of our more traditional kit makers, **Valerio Comuzzi** of **Arena Modelli**.

FSW - When and how did you get into modelling in the first place?

VC - I began modelling at about 11 years of age, making the 1/72 airplanes from Airfix. I then started to develop a passion for motorcycles and started to search for motorcycle models, at this time the only ones available were from Protar, not easy to assemble but with a fine look when finished. In those days cars were used only to play and I didn't have much interest in car racing.

Then, in 1972, in Verona where I was born and still live, the local car club organised a rally, the first edition of Rally 2 Valli and I discovered a new world and a new great passion. In the same year I visited a motor sport exhibition that had a part dedicated to the model cars and I saw for the first time the model car world, with many models based on die-cast models (Politoys, Solido and so on) and the first special models like John Day, FDS, Conti. It was extremely interesting and I spent a lot of time looking at the models that to my eyes appeared fantastic.

I then started collecting magazines, buying Autosprint every week and all monthly magazines that were available (not many), I bought my first Rally books and made the first contacts with the world of model cars, the Tron brothers who I met in Loano.

In 1979 I got married (to Luciana) and model collecting became a reality for me, making my first experiments in assembling and painting model cars using Mini Racing and Tron transkits. The first results were not very good!

Then at the shop where I bought the die-casts and the transkits I met Fabrizio Pitondo (Pit) and Stefano Carrara (SC) who were also just starting in model making. Together with the owner of the shop we decided to reproduce our own model car. It was the Ferrari 212 from the Carrera Pan Americana, the trade mark was CL Modelli (as the initial of Comuzzi e Lorenezetti). It was a brief experience, after the second model (the Ferrari Daytona Arciero) the partnership was closed, though I continued and made the Ascona SR, after this the closure.

At this time I met for the first time Vincenzo Bosica who helped us a lot in preparing the prototype of 212 Ferrari.

One day, with Stefano Carrara, we went to Cartograf because Stefano needed some decals for a new model. Mr Chiapperino, Cartograf's owner, showed us some samples and after a long conversation he showed

us a lot of decals that he had decided to sell. They were the surplus of decals commissioned by many model makers. We (me and Stefano) decided to buy the stock. Among these we found a lot of interesting decals and, in particular, for me, some of these decals had been made for BAM in Paris and were for the modified Porsche 934/5. There were three versions available, Brumos, Franz Blam and Andial so I prepared a prototype using the Solido base and making the essential modifications with putty and plasticard, the models were moulded by BBR in Saronno. These models were the first Arena.

After this the story continues with two of my preferred cars, the Chevrolet Corvette and the Ferrari Daytona. The prototypes of these two cars were made by myself with help from Stefano Carrara and they had a good sales success.

In the middle of the 1980's I met Stefano Adami when I bought some rally Porsches (still now in my collection) for which the decoration was hand made by Stefano. I showed him my models, my projects and we immediately got on, Stefano becoming an essential part of Arena Modelli. His first work was the prototype of Opel Kadett GTE and then the Stratos (the original one was bought from Starter and strongly modified by us) till the last Porsche. And the history continues.

FSW - What inspired you to take the direction that you have with your modelling?

VC - The decision to make a certain model is only a "heart" decision. When I decided to produce the Stratos Alitalia of WRC 1975/76/77 many of my friends said that it was crazy because those models had appeared on the market many, many times but I believed in this idea and it was right. The Alitalia Stratos was one of our best sellers ever.

On the other hand some models don't arouse the collectors attention but I don't want to change my way and will take that chance.

Do you have a favourite subject, and if so why?

I have been collecting rally cars for more than 30 years and for this reason the Arena range is strongly oriented to the rally cars of the 70's, but also the racing Porsches and the great cars with front engine (Ferrari Daytona, Chevrolet Corvette, Ferrari GTO).

Do you collect yourself, and if so, what?

VC - As said in the previous answer I collect rally model cars. I have more than 5,000 pieces in my collection



Stefano Adami and Valerio Comuzzi (right) of Arena, with just a small selection of Valerio's collection.

(die-cast, special models, special version realised in one or two pieces and so on, unfortunately the most part still in kit form), including Mille Miglia, Tour de France and Carrera Pan Americana, but also books (more than 1300 books about cars and motor racing) old magazines from Italy, France, Great Britain, Germany, race photos and all that can allow me to know more and more about motorsport and have an important reference for realizing model cars.

FSW - Which is the model that you have produced that you were most pleased with/proud of and why?

VC - The most satisfactory model produced was and is the Opel Kadett GTE that, in all versions, has sold more than 3 thousand pieces and is still in the hit parade of my range.

The most important, as usual, is the next, the beginning of the idea, the research of documentation, the contact with photographs and so on is one of the most exciting parts of model creating for me.

FSW - Do you have any preferred starting points when creating a new model and any preferred materials to work with ?

VC - Due to big problems with my eyes, for some years I have had to step back from the actual modelling and, now, only Stefano and another man create the patterns. They generally use synthetic wood to prepare the biggest parts (like body, interior, seats, dashboard) and brass for the small parts that need to be reproduced in white metal.

We also make drawings for the photo-etched parts. After prototyping nothing is made by us, resin moulding, white metal parts, turned parts, photo-etching and decals are all made by outside companies.

FSW - How much of the time to create a new model is spent researching it in relation to the actual modelling time?

VC - As previously mentioned a lot of documentation and research is necessary to make any kind of model.

From my point of view I think that track, wheelbase and glass dimensions are the most important parts for a correct model car modelling.

Personally I'm always afraid when I read on special magazines that a certain model of my range has a fault. This could be a simple decal or a different position of the exhaust of something like this but I try to get it right first time!

My collection of motor sport documentation is complementary to my research because after purchasing of the necessary photographs for professional use, I can add them to my own archive.

All the research is made, obviously, before we begin the modelling and some times it's necessary to wait months or even years to find all that you need. Then when you have all in your hands that you need you see that someone else has just realised the same models that are still in your mind. For this reason I like to read everything available about the model car world.

FSW - What would be a typical working day for you?

VC - Model making is not my first activity. My work is credit manager in a multinational company, near my town.

I get up at 6:30 in the morning and come back home about 12 hours later. The evening, Saturday and Sunday are dedicated to model cars. It's a great passion so it's not so hard for me to work till midnight almost every day.

FSW - What's next?

VC - I'm always looking at the evolution of the model car world with great attention.

Strongly involved in a continuous development of the Arena range but have no interest in the Chinese opportunities that some others are now following. In the next years the Arena range will continue to produce model cars of rally and racing cars with a particular attention to the 1970's and the early 1980's as this is the era of my passion.