

 **FORNASARI**

HANDCRAFTED DREAMS

THE MAKING OF FORNASARI **GT** CARS
FROM IDEA TO REALITY

Fornasari, 25 Years of Handcrafting Cars

Ebook

By Giuseppe Fornasari 

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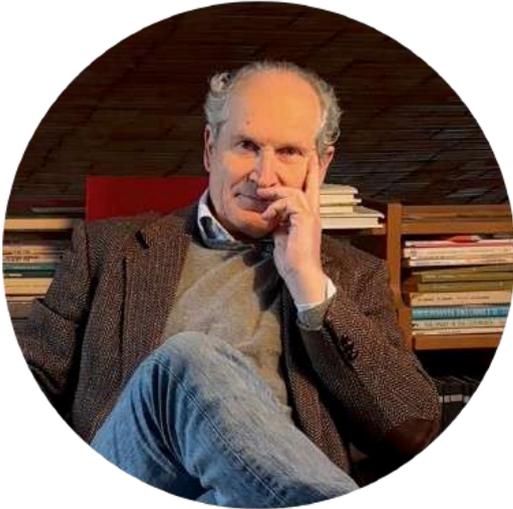
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We wish you a pleasant reading experience and look forward to your feedback.

*Best regards,
Fornasari*

GIUSEPPE FORNASARI



Giuseppe Fornasari, a car enthusiast, founded Fornasari in 1999 in Vicenza, Italy, with the idea of creating a unique car that combined the performance of a GT with family practicality and versatility on any terrain: thus the Fornasari SUV line was born.

Today, Giuseppe boasts 30 years of experience in the world of engines and in the artisanal creation of cars.

It all started for Giuseppe in the '90s, during a visit to the USA, where he discovered something that was destined to change his life: the Corvettes.

Impressed by the power and reliability of these cars and engines, Giuseppe decided to import and sell them in Europe. It was after meeting Reeves Callaway that his career as a car manufacturer began. Giuseppe created the first street-legal Callaway LM and in 2001, with Fornasari already established, came the moment for the first Fornasari SUV, the RR450, marking the beginning of an extraordinary adventure in the automotive world.

Over the years, 12 different models of Fornasari have been created, including SUVs and GTs, actively participating in national and international off-road competitions, as well as in major auto shows worldwide.

Today, Giuseppe wants to share with you part of these 30 years of experience, knowledge, and passion.

IN THIS EBOOK:

This ebook explores the relationship between GT cars and Giuseppe Fornasari, and their impact on Fornasari vehicles. It will delve into lesser-known stories and uncover the dynamics of a challenging world to penetrate, while also illustrating the artisanal process of creating Fornasari GT cars.

It all begins with the Callaways of the '90s. Giuseppe, still inexperienced in the world of motors, embarked on a journey to the USA where he was fascinated by the Corvettes, deciding to import them to Europe. Subsequently, a meeting with Reeves Callaway, introduced him to the world of automotive construction, leading to the creation of the first **street-legal Callaway LM**.

Moving forward, the narrative explores the years between 2001 and 2005, delving into the idea and dynamics of a potential **Fornasari LM** for the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

In 2008, the focus shifts to the development of a **Fornasari GT** for drifting, built on the foundation of a previously converted Callaway LM by Giuseppe. With nearly 700 horsepower and numerous customizations, this car stands out for its unique performance.

Finally, the iconic project of the **Gigi 311 GT** is deeply explored, starting from its original concept, delving into its sources of inspiration, and illustrating the artisanal production process, along with the challenges encountered along the way.

All of this is narrated by Giuseppe Fornasari in a light and captivating ebook that will transport you into a unique world, leaving you surprised and fascinated by the story told.

The beginning

Following these reflections, I began to consider racing with Corvettes. It was a friend from the Corvette Italia club who told me that Rupolo, a passionate collector from Friuli, was already racing in historic races with a beautiful Corvette C2. In a short time, I decided to visit him, and he directed me to Callaway Competition in Leingarten, Germany. This company was the official importer of Callaway Corvettes for Germany and successfully participated in the German ADAC Cup with a prepared C4. Giovanni Ciccone, an Italian who had moved to live in Germany, and Ernst Wore were the founding partners of the company.

We arranged a meeting, and in March 1994, I went to their headquarters. During the visit, we discussed the possibilities of modifying the cars and their experiences in racing. It was at that moment that they showed me the project they were working on secretly with Reeves Callaway: the return of the Corvette to Le Mans after 25 years of absence.

The car under construction that I was presented with was magnificent. Based on the C4, the chassis had been constructed using thinner sheet metal than the originals to reduce overall weight. The design was captivating, somewhat retro with soft lines of the hood featuring large headlights with Lexan covers. This detail was the most distinctive feature.



(Callaway Le Mans in front of the pits at the 1994 24 Hours of Le Mans)

The Debut in Italy

We reached an agreement with Reeves and his team in Germany to participate in the 4 Hours of Vallelunga, a race valid for the GT World Championship, which would take place two weeks after Le Mans. Thanks to a friend, we got in touch with Enrico Bertaglia, an internationally renowned driver with a significant past in single-seater racing. We offered him the opportunity to race with the Callaway alongside Andreas Fuchs, hinting at the possibility of developing future opportunities in closed-wheel racing.

In short, at Vallelunga, the Callaway qualified second overall, first in the GT2 class, effectively securing the first official victory for the Callaway LM GT2. Bertaglia became the official driver for Callaway in the following years. On our part, we obtained the exclusive distribution contract for Italy and Austria.



(Vallelunga 1994, first victory in the GT World Championship for the Callaway LM GT2)



(Pit stop, Vallelunga 1994)



(Enrico Bertaglia, Gabriele Folco and Giuseppe Fornasari. Vallelunga 1994)



(Callaway LM racing car GT1 GT2)



In short, starting from my personal car, we had created an unbeatable GT.

Meanwhile, the relationship with Callaway Cars became increasingly complicated, leading to the termination of the distribution contract, leaving behind some iconic cars and a piece of automotive history.

DRIFTING

In 2008, our workshop was bustling with activity. By October, we were gearing up for the Paris International Motor Show, where we would showcase four vehicles: the new Group B, an RR600, a race-ready RR450, and a Fornasari GT specially prepared for drifting.

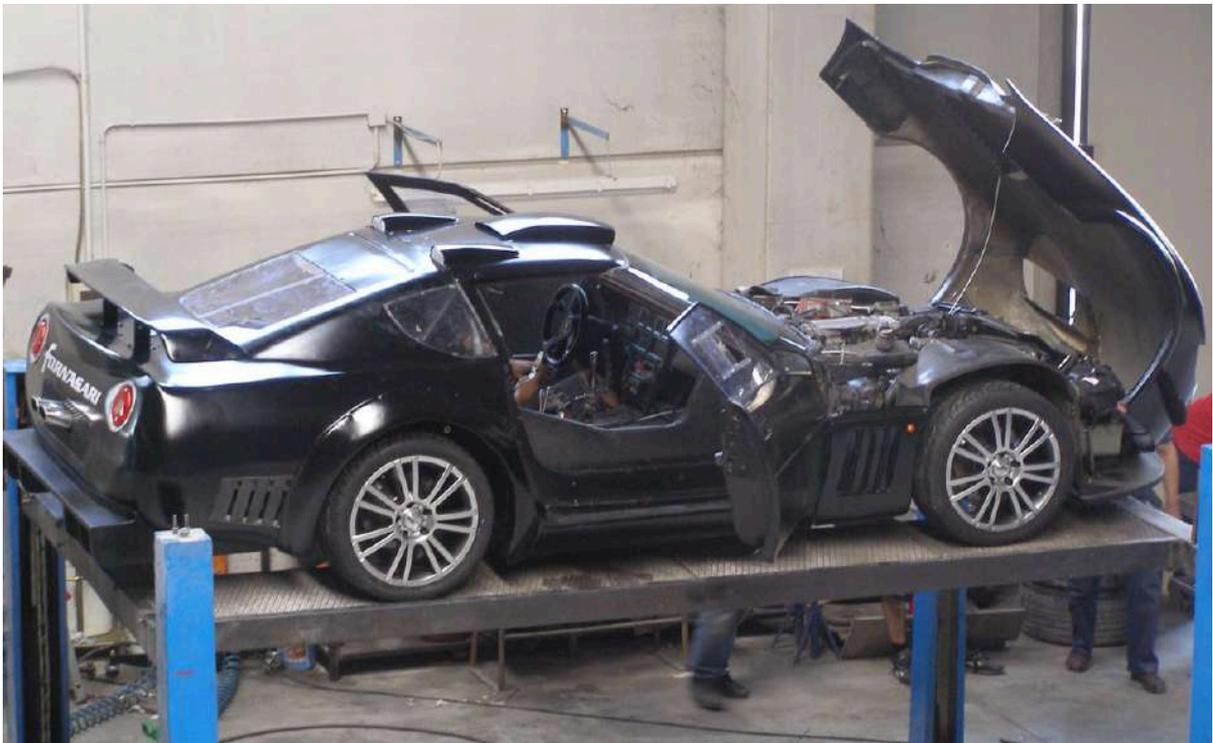
During the spring, we had modified a car I had built years earlier with the intention of entering it into the Italian and European drifting championships. The starting vehicle was my personal Callaway Convertible, built in 1997 with extreme specifications for its time. The engine, a powerful 7-liter Corvette V8, had been fully race-prepped by Myron Cottrel, an American expert in the world of Corvettes, who built many of our engines, often in collaboration with Doug Rippie, a well-known name in the Vette world.

This engine churned out 700 horsepower at 7500 rpm, and the rest of the vehicle was adjusted accordingly: lightweight flywheel, racing clutch, special exhaust manifolds, and a high-performance exhaust system. The 6-speed ZF gearbox had its gear linkage modified by Nicodemi in Padua to allow for rapid and precise shifts - the best I had ever experienced. Braking was handled by Brembo gold brakes with Pagid Racing pads, and coil-over suspension completed the technical setup of this true street missile.

I distinctly remember a test day when I was cruising at about 220 km/h in fourth gear when I floored the throttle: the car instantly shot up to 260 km/h, with two more gears to spare.



(Transformation of the Callaway LM convertible into a Fornasari GT)



(Fornasari GT in the workshop)

FORNASARI 311 GT “GIGI”

The idea

The idea of creating a visible connection between my father's history, his passion for cars and fast driving, and my activity as a builder of unique automobiles had been on my mind for a while. Finding a way to pay him a worthy tribute without doing something tacky or cliché was not an easy task.



(First studies for the Gigi 311 GT, starting from the Maserati Zagato A6G. Photo taken from AutoCapital's 1984 review of the original car owned by Luigi Fornasari, known as Gigi)

The Tuning

From the first moments, the Gigi provided excellent driving sensations. Compared to the Corvette, from which it inherited the mechanics and electronics, it was significantly lighter. The shortened wheelbase and wide tracks further improved drivability.

Starting from September 2017, we focused on the electronics, which were quite complex in the Corvette, as in all modern cars. We couldn't conduct speed tests on-site, so we focused on verifying the functionality and evaluating the behavior of the chassis and suspension.

At that point, the car was not yet complete: the glass, soundproofing, and part of the interior were missing, which made the weight at least 150 kg lower than what was expected for the finished version. It was certainly a significant difference, but it was already evident that it would be more agile and responsive than the original C7.



compartment, the wheel arches and the ventilation trough under the windshield were changed, along with a newly designed windshield wiper. All these components were made of carbon fiber.



(Engine bay detail with carbon fiber finishes)

The soundproofing was improved, following the experiences made in Italy. Like the first car, the initial road tests were conducted with the vehicle still incomplete, but after verifying the general functionality, the car was sent for painting during the summer of 2018.

Unlike the first two-tone model, we opted for a single color for the second Gigi, a magnificent metallic red, very bright. The all-black interior was more practical for testing and demonstration phases compared to the beautiful but delicate white and blue of the first model.



(Vicenza and classical beauty. Villa Capra, also known as La Rotonda, a masterpiece by Andrea Palladio, serves as a wonderful backdrop for the Fornasari Gigi 311 GT)