



BEAST to *Beauty*



Spyker sees the C8 Preliator as a "new dawn" for the company, although it has stuck to its tried-and-tested method of using high-quality materials for all aspects of the vehicle.

ALL CREDITS: SPYKER

Luxury automobile manufacturer Spyker presented its latest offering to the super sports car market, the C8 Preliator, at the 2016 Geneva International Motor Show. The Dutch company makes the bold claim that the interior of its new model features the “highest-quality leather available in the market”.

Spyker places high value on leather

When Spyker founder and CEO Victor Muller invited his sons, Oliver and Quinton, to slip off the cover and officially unveil the C8 Preliator at the 86th Geneva International Motor Show in March, there was a collective intake of breath as those present got their first look at the company's third-generation super sports car. Given the brand's challenging recent history (a merger with electric aircraft maker Volta Volare saving it from bankruptcy), he took great pride in announcing that it was a symbol of the “uphill battles Spyker [has] faced and won” in the past few years.

Mr Muller described it on that day as “a true worthy successor” to Spyker's last super sports car, the C8 Aileron, which had its grand unveiling at the prestigious automobile event in 2009 and was itself the heir to the C8 Laviolette from 2001. With the last few units of the Aileron being assembled in the UK city of Coventry, the company turned its thoughts towards the future with the Preliator, of which a limited run of 50 will be manufactured.

It may not be the electric-powered model that Spyker was rumoured to be bringing to the show, speculation fuelled by the company hinting at a move away from traditional combustion engines, but it impressed those in attendance nonetheless. Spyker's merger with Volta Volare in August 2015 further encouraged the chatter that an electric vehicle was in the offing.

The first incarnation of the company, which went out of business in 1925,



The honeycomb stitching that decorates the leather seats in the car's interior mirrors the mesh features on the vehicle's front grille.

made fighter jets during the First World War and the shape of the Preliator is a tribute to this aviation heritage. The glass panels of the car are designed to make the driver feel like they are in the cockpit of an aircraft.

Love for leather

Spyker has stayed faithful to the mantra that has guided it since its establishment at the end of the 19th century and after its rebirth in 2000. This means using authentic materials and trusting its workers to

transform them into a product that its customers are willing to pay a great deal for. It avoids using plastic in its vehicles, saying it prefers to incorporate the highest possible amount of “pure” materials.

Leather is one such material that Spyker values highly and the Preliator is the latest model to make ample use of it in the interior, where the company upholds a commitment to provide vehicles with the “rare combination of heritage, design, craftsmanship, performance and exclusivity”. The leather interior will be available in 14 standard colours, although customers will be able to request any other colour that they may want.

The leather for the interior of this century’s two previous Spyker models was sourced from Hulshof Royal Dutch Tanneries, which was highly commended in the 2011 Tannery of the Year programme. This relationship came to an end in 2013 when the Lichtenvoorde-based company filed for bankruptcy. Production has since been restarted under the ownership of another Dutch tanner, ROMPA Leather, but it’s still not clear if Spyker will attempt to carry on the relationship with the new owners of the former Hulshof facility. Upon announcing the decision to file for bankruptcy in November 2013, Hulshof director Dr Herman Hulshof said he had “tried everything” to save the company and that his concern was for “the workers, the environment and customers”, rather than the Hulshof name, but the company’s legacy certainly survives in the positive impact it had on Spyker.

Spyker’s relationship with Hulshof allowed the car manufacturer to develop a high appreciation of leather. This is exemplified by how much it emphasised the use of only “European, first-choice bull hides” for the Preliator when it was unveiled. It realises that being able to claim the use of “the highest-quality leather available in the market” would be of immense value to a company trying to thrive in the competitive luxury automobile marketplace.

The role that Dr Hulshof played was crucial in helping Spyker realise the value of high-quality leather and it will be intriguing



Louis Vuitton luggage

To complement the luxurious leather interior of the C8 Preliator, Spyker has partnered with luxury brand Louis Vuitton to offer customers the opportunity to purchase an exclusive five-piece luggage set. This option was previously available as an addition to the C8 Aileron and C8 Lavolette models and includes a bespoke tool kit designed specifically for the new model.

The origins of the relationship between Spyker and the French fashion house go back to the Peking-Paris motor race, a gruelling event which was first contested in 1907 and saw vehicles travel the 15,000 kilometres from the Chinese city -to the French capital. In that first edition of the race a privately entered standard model of Spyker’s 14/18HP Tourer caused a shock by finishing second. It was fitted with a bespoke Louis Vuitton luggage set and the idea was revived in tribute to the achievement. 🕒

to see if it seeks to recreate such a relationship elsewhere with an organisation that can offer the same passion for leather and expertise as Hulshof. Spyker is still to name a new long-term supplier; the launch in Geneva involved a concept car and could easily have sourced the small quantity of leather it required from a wholesale supplier of finished leather.

Future plans

World Leather will watch with great interest the next steps taken by Spyker as it searches for a leather supplier to provide material for all 50 specimens of the Preliator. With the manufacturing of the model set to take place exclusively in the UK, the company may be eager to show loyalty to its roots by continuing to source materials in the Netherlands in order to cement its identity as a Dutch luxury car brand, an identity it values highly. Obtaining a reliable supplier, as Hulshof was in

previous years, would also be of obvious benefit to Spyker.

The concept car shown in March had a saddle interior with white honeycomb stitching, designed to match the mesh in the grille at the front of the vehicle. Each Preliator will come with full leather interior as standard and customers will be able to add completely bespoke finishes to make their cars unique. The company calls this the “ultimate in personalisation” and will offer individual customers bespoke design proposals to help them make informed customisation choices.

Mr Muller said in Geneva that Spyker has chosen to manufacture such a small number of the Preliator so as to make it a car that “stands out among others for exclusivity”. His ambition is for customers to know that they will “never find another one at the traffic lights” – with a starting price of \$355,000 it is unlikely that they ever will. 🕒