PEBBLE BEACH: BUGATTI CELEBRATES THE WORLD PREMIERE OF ITS LEGEND "JEAN-PIERRE WIMILLE"



During the Monterey Car Week, one of the most prestigious automobile shows in the world, Bugatti will debut the first of its sixpart exclusive Bugatti Legends edition, ''Les Légendes de Bugatti''. As part of the weekend, the French luxury brand is celebrating the world premiere of its first Legend model, which has been bestowed the name ''Jean-Pierre Wimille''. As with all five subsequent editions, this Legend will be limited to three vehicles.
With this latest edition, Bugatti aims to honor its former factory race driver, who took home the brand's first victory in the 1937 Le Mans 24-hour race and repeated this triumph a mere two years later. The Legend vehicle is based on the Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Grand Sport Vitesse and its design pays tribute to Wimille's racing car in 1937, the Bugatti Type 57G Tank.

''With our first Legend 'Jean-Pierre Wimille' we are celebrating Bugatti's racing life, which experienced a meteoric high point with the Le Mans victory of 1937'', explains Dr Wolfgang Schreiber, President of Bugatti Automobiles S.A.S.

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''Bugatti has a strong tradition. Our customers and fans have a great understanding of the brand's history'', he continues. ''The Legends reflect the incredible creativity and unbelievable feats of craftsmanship which distinguish a modern Bugatti. In addition to the outstanding dynamic characteristics, the use of authentic materials and high-quality craftsmanship lie at the very core of this brand's ethos.''

''Reinventing history with a modern twist is an extremely exciting challenge,'' notes Achim Anscheidt, Bugatti's chief designer. ''For the Wimille Legend, we developed the theme of Le Mans and the exceptional graphic design of the 57G Tank through the paintwork and details of the exterior and interior, in particular.''

Bugatti Legend ''Jean-Pierre Wimille'' The Bugatti Legend ''Jean-Pierre Wimille'' is based on the Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Grand Sport Vitesse, whose 8-litre W16 motor delivers a magnificent 1,200 PS and an unparalleled torque of 1,500 Nm at 3,000 to 5,000 rpm, not to mention its acceleration from nought to one hundred km/h (62 MPH) in 2.6 seconds. Having hit a top speed of 408.84 km/h (253 MPH) in April 2013 with the top down, the Vitesse holds the world speed record for open-top production sports cars.

Design The similarity of the car's interior and exterior design to that of the historical race car, the Type 57G Tank, is apparent even at first glance.

Exterior. The body of the ''Jean-Pierre Wimille'' Legend is composed entirely of carbon and pays tribute to the Type 57G Tank with its blue paint finish, a color characteristic of French racing cars of the era. The dark and light blue color split of the historic vehicle has also been implemented in the Vitesse, often running across whole body parts — an artistic endeavour demanding great technical expertise and craftsmanship. Perfectly crafted dark blue exposed carbon creates a harmonious contrast to the light blue ''Bleu Wimille'' paint finish, which was developed especially for this model to remain faithful to the original color of the 57G Tank. The entire front area of the vehicle, side doors and the part behind the doors, the so-called ''medaillon'' (French), are finished in ''Bleu Wimille'' paint. Only the upper part of the front wing panels remains in dark blue exposed carbon, thus reflecting the striking design of the historic racing car's ''Wimille stripes''.

The light blue paint finish also graces the underside of the distinctive rear wing, which bears an eye-catching silver silhouette of the Le Mans race circuit reminding of Wimille's first victory there. Further references to Wimille include the driver's signature, which has been lasered into the dark blue tank and oil caps.

Interior. The dual-tone color scheme and attention for detail are also reflected in the interior. The headliner, footwells, and seat inserts have been upholstered in ''Bleu Wimille'', with the dark blue seat bolsters offering a sense of contour. This dark blue, known as ''Lake Blue'', is carried through in the dash panel, centre console and doors and creates a color dialogue in the vehicle's interior. Decorative stitching in contrasting light blue delivers subtle accents.

As an homage to Wimille, the vehicle and the brand, the Bugatti designers have developed a special decorative stitching in the French national colors of blue, white and red which has been used on the steering wheel and gearshift lever, lending both parts a real sense of elegance.

The headrests have been embellished with the stitched signature of Jean-Pierre Wimille, adding yet another highlight in ''Bleu Wimille''.

And references to Le Mans can also be found in the Bugatti's interior: the silhouette of the race circuit gleams as a milled and polished aluminium relief embedded in a prominent position below the EB logo in the lid of the rear centerbox, which is itself made of dark blue exposed carbon.

Further Legends-specific features include exposed carbon inserts in the centre console extension bearing the ''Les Légendes de Bugatti'' logo with the renowned Bugatti elephant and on the door sill plates decked with the portrait and signature of Jean-Pierre Wimille.

The Wimille Legend alongside its historic predecessor In a coup pulled off especially for the world premiere of the Legend ''Jean-Pierre Wimille'', Bugatti brought the 1937 winning Le Mans racing car to Monterey. The Type 57G Tank has been made available to Bugatti by the renowned Simeone Foundation Automotive Museum in Philadelphia.

''Our 'Jean-Pierre Wimille' Legend Vitesse is the modern interpretation of the 57G Tank. We are delighted to be able to present this meeting of Bugatti's past and present in such an impressive manner and would like to thank Dr Fred Simeone for his fantastic support,'' explained Dr Wolfgang Schreiber, President of Bugatti Automobiles S.A.S., during the presentation.

A racing success story with the Bugatti Type 57G Tank The Type 57G Tank was built in Molsheim in 1936 and 1937. Only three cars were produced at the Bugatti manufacturing plant in the Alsace. With these racing cars, Bugatti aimed to lead the world of French motor racing to new victories, as at that time only foreign brands were constantly winning.

Jean Bugatti, son of the company founder Ettore Bugatti, pushed through an initiative to develop a sports car which could be used for long distance competitions. In order to ensure the lowest possible centre of gravity, it was decided to combine the standard type 57S chassis with the Bugatti 3.3-liter row eight cylinder and a wheelbase of 2.98 m. The engine of the 57G Tank delivers approximately 200 hp and, thanks to the aerodynamically designed body, could quickly reach higher speeds than that of the competitors at the time.

The car was on the road to success from the very beginning, with Jean-Pierre Wimille a fixture at the wheel. His first victories in the 57G Tank were won in 1936 at the Grand Prix de l'A.C.F in Montlhéry and the Grand Prix de la Marne.

For the Le Mans 24 hour race on July 19 and 20th, 1937, Bugatti registered two racing cars of this type. The first car was driven by test drivers Pierre Veyron and Roger Labric, with JeanPierre Wimille and Robert Benoist taking control of the second Tank. After only a short while, Wimille took the lead and ultimately won the race with an average speed of 136.99 km/h (84 MPH) and a total distance of 3,287.938 km (2,043 miles). Thus, he was able to claim Bugatti's very first victory in this legendary race, and became a brand legend himself.

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[1] Veyron: