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Three times Three makes a Mathis

During the chaos of war the French factory owner Emile Mathis took on the new challenge to develop a small and affordable car, which should appeal the French people.

He defined his ambitions for the car precisely with the designation VL 333. The abbreviation "VL" stood for "voiture legere" – light car – and the three times mentioned number three signified the three wheels, a consumption of three liter gas per 100 kilometer the space for three passengers! On 3 July 1942 the first running prototype had to prove if it could meet the fuel consumption requirements of Emile Mathis on a test drive. In the end the only 3.4 meter short three-wheeler had a consumption of only 1.95 liter gasoline per 100 kilometer at a speed of 40 km/h. This result and also a second test drive in September, which was only dedicated to the consumption and where the car consumed only 3.475 liter respectively 1 Gallon over the distance of 100 kilometer, proved that the development was on the right track. The

three-wheeler was initially presented to the public at the Paris Motor Show in October 1946. The visitors marveled at drop-shaped car with a car body made off aluminum sheet and a drag coefficient, which is rated A 1 even today, of only 0.28 cd (This value was measured by Renault in 1980). As drive served a water-cooled four-cycle engine with two cylinders, 700cc and a performance of 15 hp, which transferred its power through a four speed manual to the front axle. However in the end all the efforts were not successful, as the French governments did not give their authorization for the production of the car.

In total eight, some sources mention ten, prototypes of the VL 333 were built. One of them has survived to this day.

AutoCult GmbH

Äußere Further Straße 3
90530 Wendelstein
Germany

Tel. +49 / 9129 / 296 4280
Fax +49 / 9129 / 296 4281
info@autocult.de

www.autocult-models.de