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Welcome to the second issue of ClassicsWorld European, whether you're a returning reader, a subscriber, or this is your first copy. This, along with two sister series focusing on cars from Japan and Germany, will form a collection of publications focusing not on brands, but on individual aspects of our motoring heritage. In this series, we'll be looking at the very best classics Europe has to offer, discussing their stories and driving them to see if they're everything our hearts promised. The subject of this bookazine, the Alfa Romeo Spider, has certainly stolen several hearts not only during a 37 year production run, but in the 28 years since production ceased too.

Not only was the Spider one of the prettiest roadsters of the 1960s but it was one of the best - good enough, in fact, that it was still competitive in the early 1990s with very limited modification to its underpinnings. We've pitched it against its successor and its key rivals in order to contextualise its appeal further, and we've put together all the information you'll need in order to buy a top condition example.



We've looked at some of the best examples of the best models while putting this publication together, we've delved into the history of the marque, and we've examined the cars which came before and after in a bid to try to explain not only why these cars have the appeal that they do, but the wider market appeal of classic open Alfas. If you like the Alfa Romeo Spider, you'll love this publication.

Thank you for buying this bookazine. We hope you'll have as much fun reading it as we did making it.

Sam Skelton,
Editor





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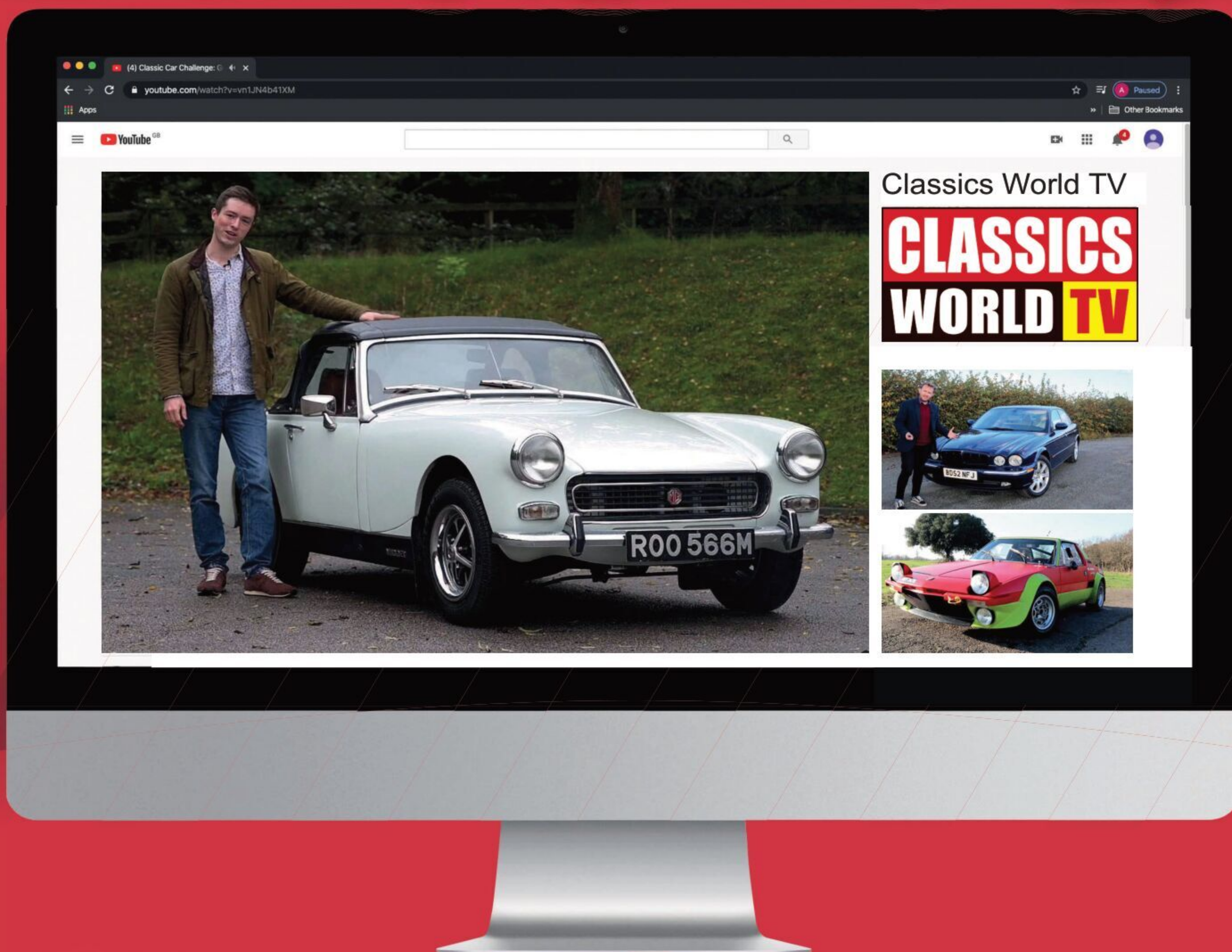
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THE STORY OF

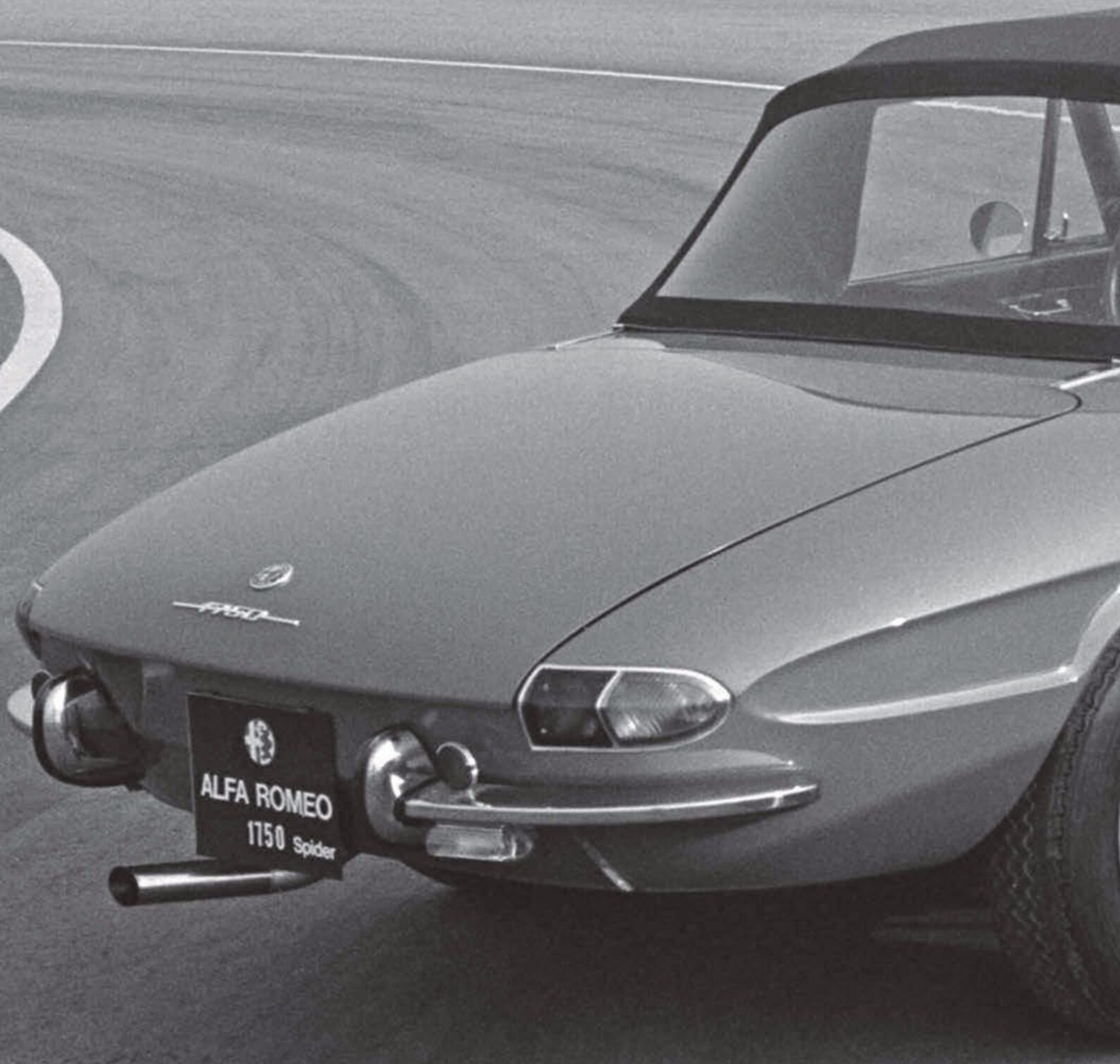
From cradle to grave, a brief history of the 105/115 series Alfa Romeo Spider. WORDS: SAM SKELTON

The story of the Alfa Romeo Spider in truth begins in the previous decade, with an Austrian born New Yorker called Max Hoffman. In the immediate post war years, unsurprisingly the majority of cars on the roads of America were built in Detroit – only the very rich could

afford to import very special models from Europe. Hoffman wanted to change that, and established a business importing numerous desirable European brands into the United States, starting with Jaguar in 1947 and expanding to Volkswagen in 1948. By the early 1950s, almost

every European brand was queuing up for a slice of Hoffman's business, and the influx of marques had reached a level that even Hoffman could never have predicted.

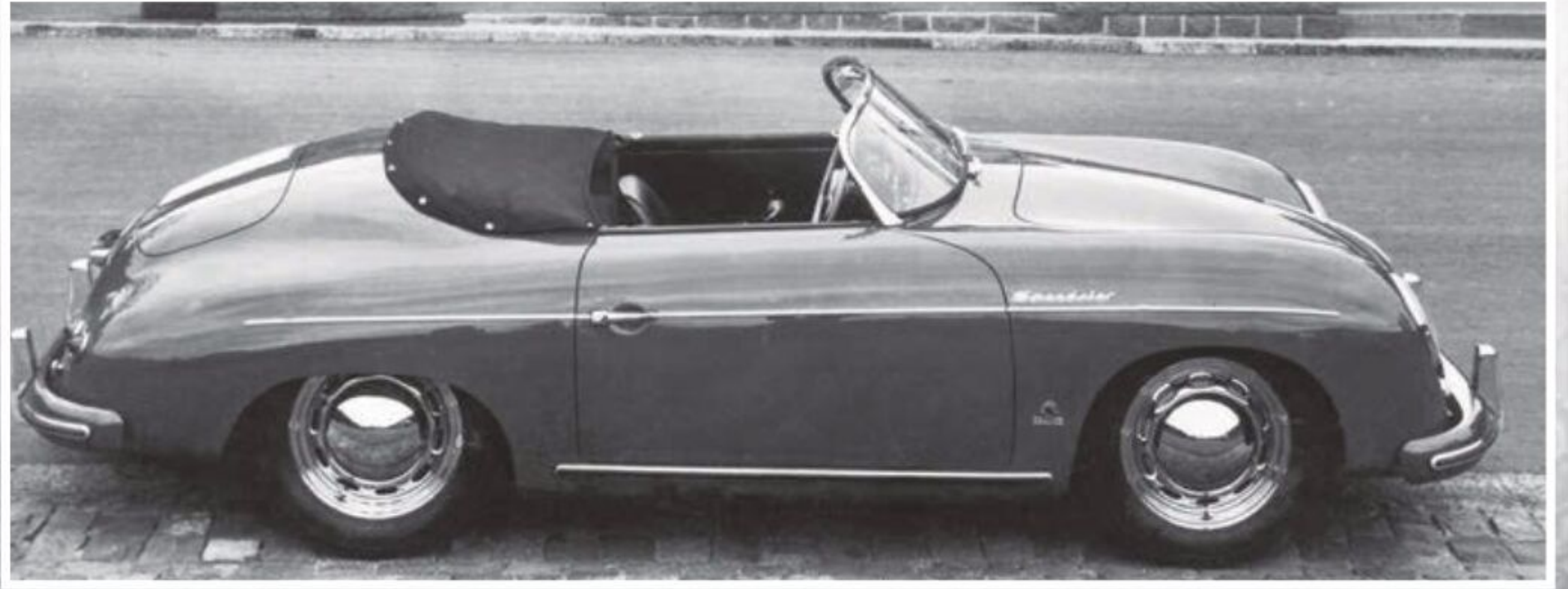
Part of his business was to convince the Europeans to build risky models, models he felt would sell well in



THE SPIDER

America – and he had enjoyed early success when he convinced Mercedes-Benz that the a roadgoing version of the 300SL Gullwing racing car would be a Stateside hit. More than 80% of Gullwing production went to America courtesy of Hoffman's insistence that Mercedes build the car. He had also been key to Porsche's success, pioneered the Porsche 356 Speedster, and pushed BMW to make the 507 roadster.

In 1954 he had commissioned

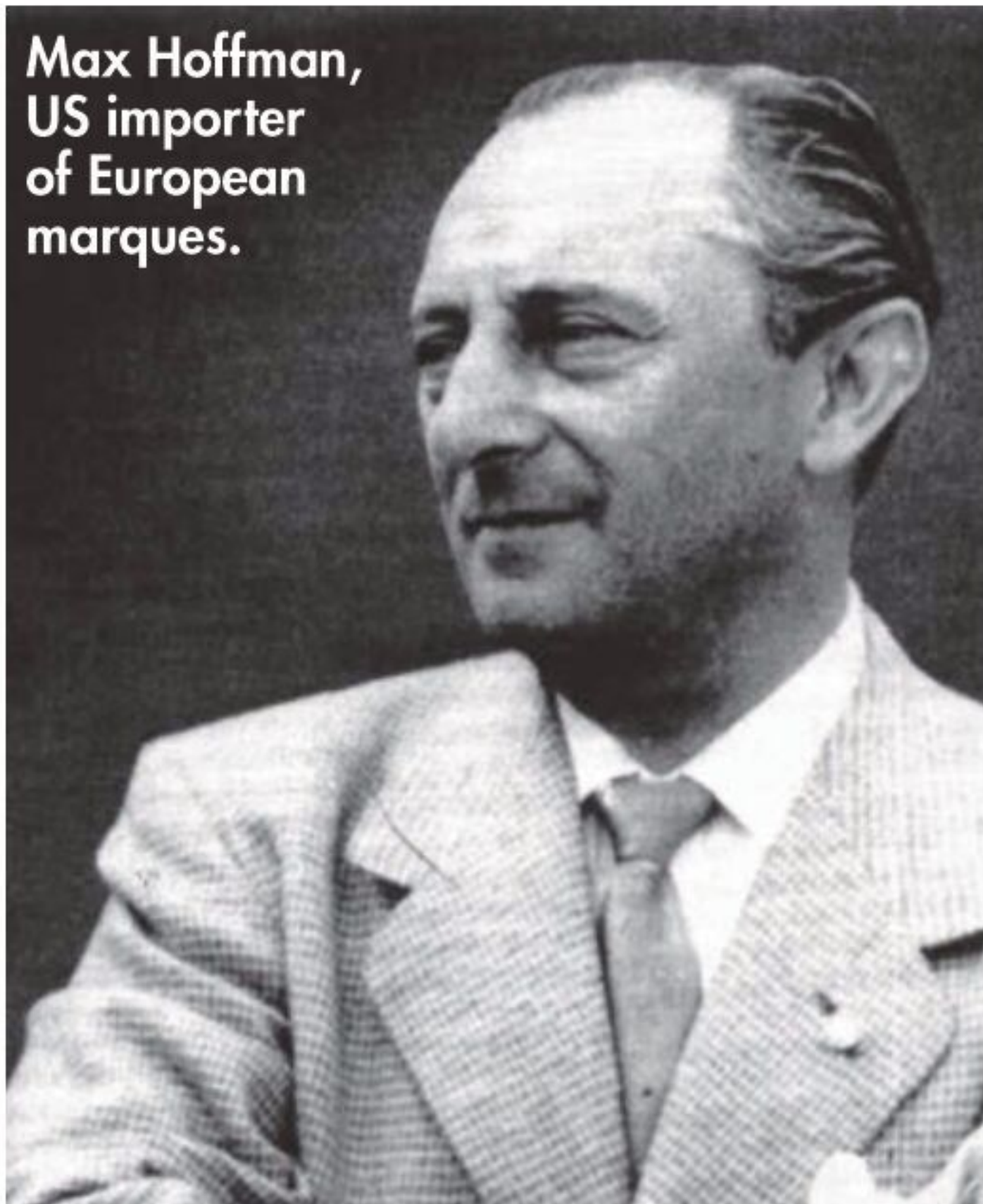


The Porsche 356 Speedster was another Max Hoffman success story.



HISTORY ALFA ROMEO SPIDER

Max Hoffman,
US importer
of European
marques.



The Alfa Romeo Giulia GT Spider prototype was abandoned in favour of Pininfarina's aerodynamic proposal.

a batch of Alfa Romeo Giulietta Sprint based convertibles, bodied by Bertone, and while in Milan to collect them he arranged a meeting with the management of Alfa Romeo. At this meeting he stated his intention to buy and import into America no fewer than 600 Giuliettas with the possibility of a further 2000 – on the proviso that Alfa would develop a factory convertible version for him. He felt that a Spider would be a strong seller, bringing amusing handling and performance

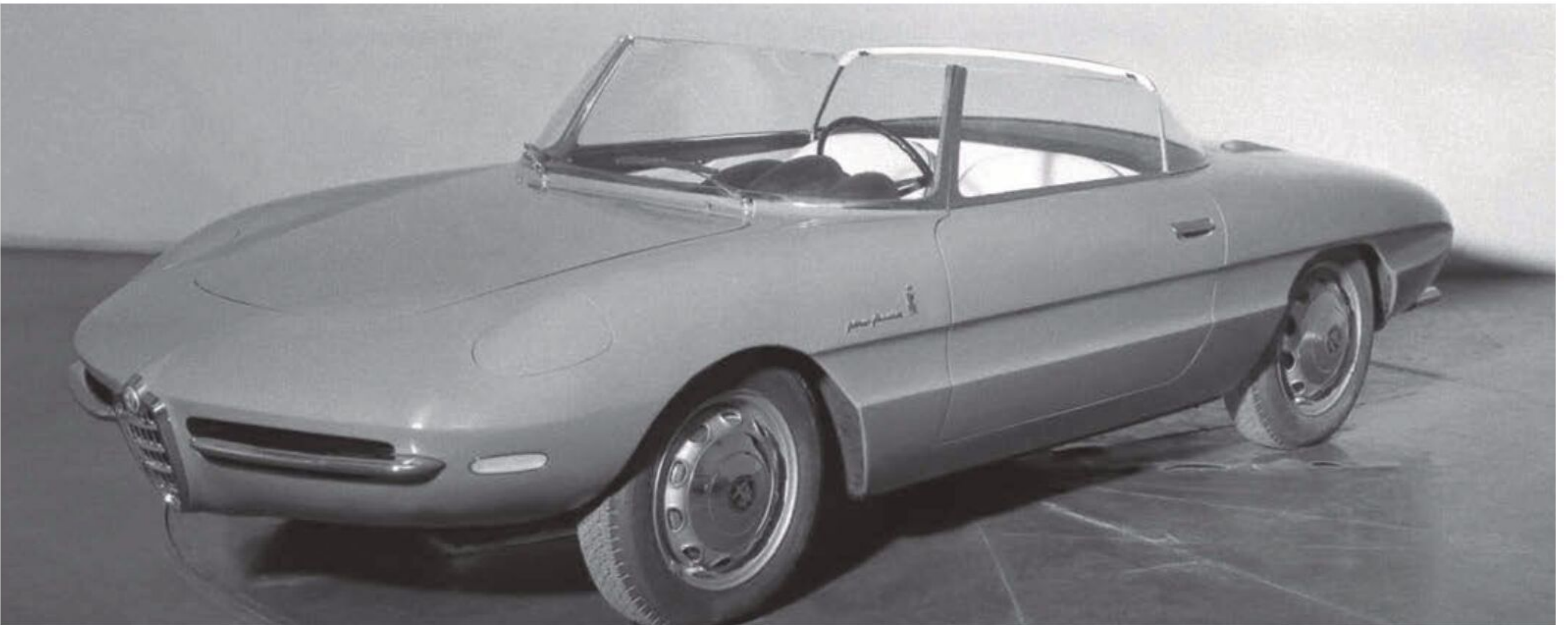
“ Billed as the 1600 Spider, Alfa Romeo took advantage of the motor show to launch a competition to name its new bambina.

to a market keen to enjoy open-air Europeans, in the face of rivals such as the Austin Healey 100 and the MGA. While Alfa was uncertain of the market in general, with such a large order and the backing of a name like Hoffman it looked into the situation.

The result was the Giulietta Spider of 1955, a model which forced Alfa Romeo to instigate a second shift at its factory to maintain production at a level which matched demand. The car - unsurprisingly for a Max Hoffman brainchild - was a big hit, and Alfa



The Giulietta Spider which preceded the 105 was the brainchild of Max Hoffman – and inspired its successor.



Pininfarina's Giulietta Spider SS Aerodinamica previewed the eventual lines of the Spider.

knew that this new string would be a very worthwhile addition to its bow. When the Giulietta was replaced in 1962 with the Giulia 105-series, the Spider was refined into the Giulia Spider. It kept the same shell, but gained the new car's 1.6 litre twin cam engine and a subtly restyled bonnet beneath which to hide it. Sales remained strong, but Alfa was already working on the development of a successor based wholly on the new 105's drivetrain.

Initially, plans centred around a continuation of the theme – a two seater Spider derivative of the forthcoming Giulia Sprint GT, styled by Bertone and resembling an evolution of the outgoing model. The prototype ultimately remained just that, with development beyond 1963 taking a different direction.

That direction lay with Pininfarina, the styling house responsible for the Giulietta Spider, which had created a number of concept cars which

would influence the appearance of the new model. Key was the 1959 Alfa Romeo Spider Super Sport, a concept based around the chassis of a retired 6C racing car. This first previewed the tapering tail, the side scallops and the basic proportions of the car which would endure for generation. Pininfarina had followed this up with a roadster based on the Giulietta Sprint Speciale, the Giulietta SS Spider Aerodinamica, which was shown at the 1961 Turin Motor Show. While

HISTORY ALFA ROMEO SPIDER



Guidobaldo Trionfli collecting the car he had named. Duetto title never appeared on the car.

its grille arrangement differed slightly, replace its retractable headlamps with fixed units and you could easily be looking at the Spider as we know it today.

It would take five further years, however, before that car was seen by the public for the first time at the 1966 Geneva Motor Show. Billed as the 1600 Spider, Alfa Romeo took advantage of the motor show to launch a competition to name its new bambina. Over the next eight weeks, it would invite submissions from enthusiasts with proposals for names for the new car – the entrant responsible for the winning name would not only get to enjoy seeing his or her name on every example, but would receive a brand new Spider as a prize. Some sources state that as many as 140000 ballots were cast, but it's widely acknowledged that the true figure is somewhere around 100000 – many of these entries came from the Spider's native Italy, and around 8000 names were pitched to the board of directors at Alfa Romeo. The two most popular options were Pinin and Pininfarina – both in homage to the designer of the car who has recently passed

away. Management, however, thought this a trifle distasteful, and instead chose the third most popular suggestion – Duetto. This had originally been pitched by Brescian-born Guidobaldo Trionfli, and translated as “duet” – two seats, two camshafts, and “double harmony, a harmony between grace and strength and at the same time harmony in pairs,” as noted by the president of the naming jury, poet Leonardo Sinisgalli.

There was one small fly in the ointment. Duetto was already a registered trademark. It's believed that the first 190 Spiders were branded as Duetto in acknowledgement of the competition, though little evidence survives to support this fact. What is known is that snack company Pavesi was unimpressed by Alfa's choice of name, holding its own existing copyright. Lawsuits were threatened, and Alfa Romeo backed off, reverting to the rather less romantic “1600 Spider” nomenclature.

Fitted with twin Weber carburettors, the 1600 Spider had 108bhp when

Ecco il nuovo Spider Alfa Romeo. Dategli il nome. Diventerà famoso.



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it was launched, but with retail prices similar to those of the Jaguar E-type at £1895 it appealed to a very different clientele than the average 100bhp two seater. Consider that a larger, more powerful Triumph TR5 could be had for two thirds of the cost of the Spider just



Alfa Spider 1300 Junior lost the headlamp covers and offered a simplified interior.

two years later, or that that MGB could be had for around £1000 depending upon whether you wanted roadster or GT bodywork, and you'll see that the Spider was ambitiously priced in Britain in 1966. Only the Lotus Elan offered four cylinder competition at the price.

Not that this mattered to the kind of person who might consider a Spider. People such as Sophia Loren were ardent admirers of a car which offered adequate performance matched with Mediterranean beauty the competition couldn't match. The formula was only improved two years later, when in January 1968 Alfa Romeo invited the world's press to Vietri sul Mare to unveil the new 1750 range – the 1750 saloon, 1750 GTV, and 1750 Spider Veloce. A new 1779cc variant of the existing twin cam engine was used, giving the Spider 116bhp and a smidge more torque than the original. No Spider badge was fitted – just a 1750 badge under the Alfa unit. Apart from this, the sole visual change was the wheels – while the 1600 had had 15" steel wheels, from the 1750 on the standard size for the Spider would be 14".

Alfa Romeo opened up the Spider experience to people whose income might not previously have permitted ownership.

It was at around this time that Alfa Romeo began its experiments with fuel injection. From 1969 US specification cars were fitted with a system known as SPICA – or Società Pompe Iniezione Cassani & Affini. Cassani and Affini was a subsidiary of Alfa Romeo, which had developed this mechanical system as a cleaner alternative to carburetors. European cars continued to be fitted with carburetors – though there was a new Spider derivative in town. The 1300 Junior came in May 1968, alongside the 1300GT Junior coupe. Both were targeted at their home market first and foremost, where the punitive taxation levied upon larger engines made the 1750 Spider something of a luxury. By removing unnecessary trimmings to lighten the car and fitting a 1290cc version of that revvy twin cam, Alfa Romeo opened up the Spider experience to people whose income might not

previously have permitted ownership. The Junior had fixed quartlights, a two spoke plastic steering wheel in place of the three spoke wooden unit, and wasn't fitted as standard with a centre console – all of which meant a cost saving in production which could be passed on to buyers as well as the tax savings. From outside, the primary difference was the loss of the fairings over the headlamps. Juniors were also imported into Britain – and their 103bhp meant that they were competitive against larger engines Brits such as the Triumph GT6 and MGB. These were the final iteration of the original "Osso di Seppia" – or "cuttlefish bone" Spiders – to named for their long, tapering tails. The next Spider would sacrifice that for practicality.

The Kamm tail of the 1970 Series 2 may have been 5 inches shorter than that of the Series 1, but it was

HISTORY ALFA ROMEO SPIDER

also deeper – meaning an overall increase in luggage capacity while saving in sheet metal. New door handles, top hinged pedals and a more steeply raked screen with angled quarterlights were included in the revisions too, making the new car a far sharper looking prospect for the 1970s. Conventional wipers replaced

the clap-hand originals, while the painted dashboard gave way to a new moulding with hooded dials. Initially the range continued as before – with a 1750 Spider Veloce at the top of the range and a 1300 Spider Junior at the bottom.

For 1972 the range would change again, as the 1750 Spider Veloce

was replaced with the 2000 Spider Veloce. This car used the new 1962cc engine from the larger Alfa Romeo 2000 saloons, which meant 133bhp. To bridge the now wider gap between the 1300 Spider Junior and the 2000 Spider Veloce, Alfa Romeo brought back the 1600cc unit from the Series 1 in the form of a new, intermediate



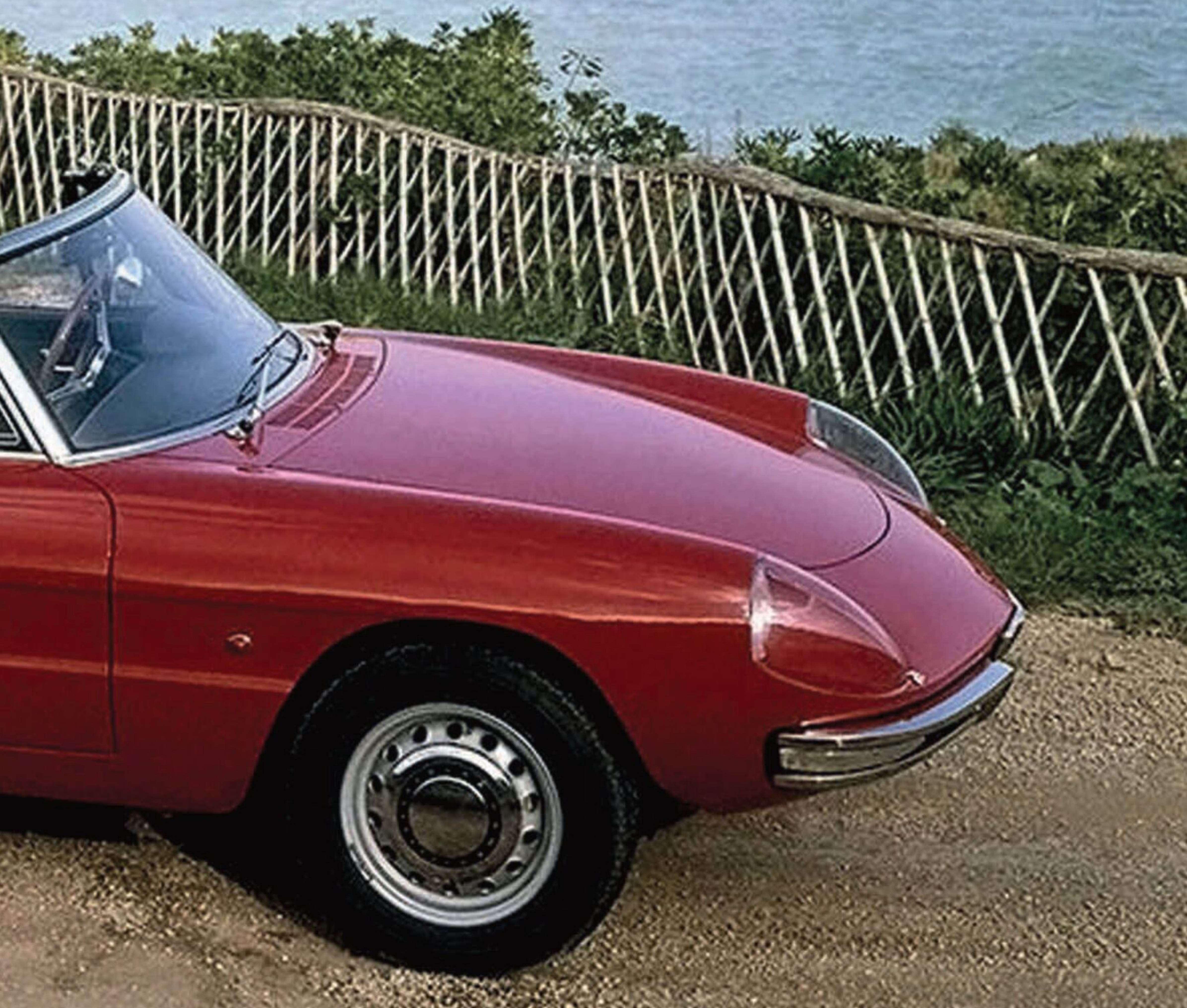
1600 Spider Junior model.

Two years later came two big changes. First was the introduction of the special-order Spider-Targa variant, utilising the same roof concept as Triumph's Surrey top and Porsche's 911 Targa in order to offer both the practicality of a fixed roof and the open air thrills of a removable unit. The

Spider Targa wasn't popular, though – with just 2000 finding homes, mostly in the States. Later that year, the Spider Junior gained a rear bench in one of the world's most optimistic moves to a 2+2 layout, while the following year saw the bench fitted to the Veloce too.

The 1300 Spider Junior was discontinued in 1977, while right hand

drive production and UK imports of the Spider Veloce were to cease the following year. UK cars never suffered the indignity of the unsightly black rubber bumpers fitted to America models, which made those of the MGB look positively stylish. But this meant that the UK also missed out on the 350 limited edition Niki Lauda Special



HISTORY ALFA ROMEO SPIDER



Series 2 Spider featured revised tail, doorhandles and windscreen rake. It was shorter, but offered more luggage space.

Edition cars, built to mark Lauda's agreement to race for the Brabham Alfa Romeo F1 team. Gaudy stickers and a duck tail rear spoiler weren't to everybody's taste, but their rarity gives them desirability today.

That duck tail rear spoiler – or a variant thereof – would return for 1982's Spider Series 3 – by now, using the 115-series code rather

than 105-series. By this time, no market could escape the big black bumpers front and rear, and the S3 incorporated them as best it could. The grille was a plastic moulding too, while at the rear a large wraparound spoiler encased the whole of the rear aspect of the car in plastic. The 1600 model dropped its Junior name, and the interior was revised with a single

binnacle replacing the hooded dials of old. Series 3 Spiders were never built in right hand drive at the factory, but a small army of Alfa enthusiasts imported their own examples from mainland Europe. Companies such as Bell and Colvill or Seaking were on hand to engineer right hand drive conversions for those who wanted them, meaning that once again it was





S3 Cloverleaf had big skirts and a choice of three colours. The rubber bumpers and duck tail spoiler were shared with all S3s.

possible to buy a right hand drive Spider in Britain if you were prepared to forego the dealership experience. If the choice of 1600 Spider or 2000 Spider Veloce wasn't ample enough, in 1986 Alfa Romeo introduced the Spider Quadrifoglio Verde – or Green Cloverleaf. This was pitched as a range-topper, with twin Weber 40DCOM4/5 carburettors, a high

“ By this time, no market could escape the big black bumpers front and rear, and the S3 incorporated them as best it could.

level rear brake light, 15" alloys and a removable hardtop. Cloverleafs came in just three colours – red, silver or black – and were fitted with grey

leather seats with red stitching and red carpets. The American market also received an entry level Graduate model, which eschewed the finery



HISTORY

ALFA ROMEO SPIDER



in favour of steel wheels, vinyl seats and hood, and manual windows – a budget alternative to a Veloce, despite the 2.0 engine. Production continued until 1990 – when Alfa launched its final facelift, the Spider which would carry the flag until a true replacement was ready.

The Series 4 Spider brought Bosch Motronic EFI to the Spider, on board diagnostics and an electric fan. But the main changes were to the exterior. Pininfarina had been brought back

in, and asked to improve the Series 3 into something which would last just a few more years until the replacement was ready to go. New colour coded plastic bumpers were fitted front and rear, with a return to the open grille of the Series 2. The rear end was reprofile to include an integral spoiler as part of the bootlid, which tapered off to the bootlid via some 164-style full width rear lights. New 15" alloy wheels were fitted, with a flat face design to give the impression of

greater size. The interior was largely to Series 3 specification, with minor improvements. Dainty metal badging was fitted, bearing the "Spider 2.0" branding – in the same style as that of the new 164 saloon. While it was still clear to see hints of Series 1 in the shape, to park the two together would show that not a single panel of the new one was identical to that of the car first launched in 1966. Alfa would produce this final iteration of the Spider until 1993, by which time



the new generation of Alfa Spider was ready for launch. After a full 37 years, production of the 105/115 family of Alfa Romeo Spiders ceased.

It would take a special Spider to replace the dynasty which had lasted 37 years. And while Alfa Romeo could conceivably have replaced the model with more of the same, its radical approach to the Spider's replacement drew upon the thinking inherent in the Lotus Elan M100 by packaging a squat front wheel drive open two seater

which offered excellent dynamics for its drive configuration. In the instance of the new Alfa, the 916-series Spider, this chassis would be derived from that used for its 155 saloon – which in turn was based on that in the Fiat Tipo and Lancia Delta models. This would be fitted with an all new multilink suspension system at the rear, and the lusty Twin-Spark four cylinder from the 155 at the front. Styling, previewed with the 1991 Proteo concept, was dramatic and wedgy, with a rising

waist ahead of a gently tapering rear. Better still, if open roofed motoring wasn't for you, Alfa created a coupe derivative, reviving the GTV name of old. Both GTV and Spider were also available with Alfa's sonorous V6 engine, though the weight penalty did affect the handling. Mainland Europe received the new cars in 1993, almost as soon as the final Series 4 Spider left the production line. It would take two further years for them to reach British shores in right hand drive. ■

NEW FOR OLD

Both of these cars were sold new in 1990 but one was fresh out of the box and one was already decades old. Does new retro beat classic style?

WORDS: PAUL WAGER PICS: MATT WOODS

Back in 1990 the aspiring roadster buyer was faced with a surprisingly small choice. Apart from specialised cars like TVR, Morgan and Caterham, the choice of small two-seaters was pretty much the Alfa Spider, the Mazda MX-5 and the new M100 Lotus Elan. Fiat was yet to launch its LHD-only Barchetta, while the Honda S2000, BMW Z3 and MGF were still some way off.

Ironically, although Mazda had taken inspiration for the MX-5 from the original Elan, Lotus's new front-drive Elan was positioned further upmarket, weighing in at £19,200 against the £14,000 Mazda

and the £15,000 Alfa. Yes, if you wanted a basic, fun to drive open two-seater then Italy and Japan were your only choices.

It wasn't quite that straightforward either, since the Spider hadn't been produced in factory right-hand drive since 1978 and was a special order for the UK. It did look good though and had a glorious heritage behind it whereas Mazda was better known for sensible family hatches.

Today of course the MX-5 can look back on 25 years of unbridled success which has long ago dispelled any prejudices against the idea of the

Japanese creating a traditional sports car in the MG mould. Given that the design was some 30 years newer than the Spider, how do the two stack up as classic propositions today?

Alfa Spider

First launched in 1966, the Spider's first incarnation was as the Duetto, the name famously being chosen through a public competition and was the last design with which Pininfarina's founder Battista 'Pinin' Farina was directly involved. Its pointed front end and delicately curved rear made it seem like a much smaller car than later



Spiders and it shook up the market like the MX-5 was to do decades later. Taking the lively 1570cc twin cam four-cylinder engine from Alfa's saloon cars, the Spider featured independent front suspension, a coil-sprung rear and a slick-shifting five-speed box which made it sound like a racer compared to something like the MGB with its leaf springs, lever arm dampers and pushrod motor.

This though was an era when Alfa was flying high and was an exotic proposition in export markets, selling its expensive cars in small numbers to buyers who considered themselves proper driving enthusiasts. All of which helped explain why Alfa felt it could price its 116 mph 1600 Spider at £1895 compared to the £2068 E-Type.

The Duetto name was destined to be short-lived though and evolved into the 1750 Spider in 1967. Suspension and brakes were improved too, while in 1968 a new entry-level model, the 1300 Spider Junior was added to the range.

Bigger changes arrived in 1970 when the rounded rear was replaced by a new 'Kamm tail' flat rear end, which improved luggage space and made the styling more modern. In 1971 the 1962cc twin cam was fitted to create the 2000 Spider, with the 1300 replaced by the 1600 Spider Junior the following year as the entry-level car.

This is perhaps the definitive Spider, being produced until 1982 when the Series 3 cars were announced. The '80s weren't kind to the Spider and the demands of US legislation required big chunky rubber bumpers, with Alfa seeing fit to match them with a prominent rear ducktail boot spoiler. The Quadrifoglio Verde range-topper went a step further, adding plastic side skirts and more spoilers, although the 2-litre did receive Bosch fuel injection in place of the twin carburettors.

The Spider you see here is the so-called Series 4 model, produced right at the end of the car's life from 1990 until the new

front-drive '916' GTV and Spider were ready. A visit to Pininfarina, responsible for the flowing lines of the original back in the '60s, cleaned up the styling for this final fling and removed the clumsy rubber spoiler and bumpers festooned on the series 3 cars.

It may look relatively modern with its deep plastic bumpers and sill covers but under the skin the panelwork is still very similar to the first of the flat-tailed cars which followed the Duetto from 1970. The bootlid gained a kick up at the trailing edge and the rear panel was modified to take Alfa 164-style lamp lenses, but clearly Alfa knew it was on to a good thing and kept the cigar-like profile largely intact.

Despite constantly being updated over the years – largely to keep pace with emissions requirements in the all-important US market – the mechanical layout was essentially the same as the '60s cars, although with a huge number of detail improvements.



TWIN TEST: ALFA SPIDER VS MX5



Aftermarket wood trim brightens the rather dark interior of this MX-5 Mk1. Neither the wheels nor adhesive plate are factory fit.

Chief among these was the addition of Bosch's Motronic full engine management system which allowed for a catalytic converter in European markets, while a variable cam timing device on the inlet camshaft was used. The result was that the 2-litre was now good for 125 bhp.

The Spider now ran on 15-inch wheels and inside the dash layout from the later Series 3 cars was carried over. In truth Alfa could have done with setting Pininfarina to work on that too, since its upright helicopter-style plastic instrument binnacle is hardly the most elegant design, but features like electric windows were also added. Rather amazingly, both a three-speed

automatic and air conditioning were offered as options on US-market cars which must have strangled every ounce of brio out of the Alfa twin cam.

Approaching the Spider for the first time, it seems like a much bigger car than the MX-5, which indeed it is, being some 30 cm longer thanks to that pointed prow. A tug of the chromed door handle – blatantly copied by Mazda for its own car – and the long door swings open allowing you to confront the typical Alfa driving position.

This is an Alfa of the old school which means the short-legged long-armed driving position familiar to countless Alfasud pilots but once you're

comfortable, there's a fair bit more room than the Mazda and much more stowage space. Alfa Romeo in fact offered small rear seats until the Series 3 cars and the space behind the front seats still remains. Lift up the carpeting and in fact you'll find the bracketry for the rear seats is still there but it means you can throw coats and bags behind the seat where you'd have to open the boot in the Mazda.

Fire up the twin cam and you're greeted with a sound that could only be Alfa Romeo in its crisp bark. The Series 4 cars were mostly fitted with a catalytic converter which kills the trademark exhaust note almost entirely. Removing it involves swapping the



The Alfa interior is bright and welcoming, though less ergonomically friendly for taller drivers. Momo steering wheel aftermarket.

exhaust and the manifolds for the earlier system and then welding a boss on to the downpipes for the Motronic system's oxygen sensor but it's a really worthwhile mod. Not only does it restore the right exhaust note but makes the car so much more driveable.

The gearshift sprouts from the centre console without a long remote linkage and as a result is both nicely positioned and nicely positive. The Alfa box is pretty tough but synchromesh was never their strong point and slamming it straight into first without touching second briefly will give your wrist a nasty jolt as the gears clash. Similarly, once you're under way, downshifting from third to second at any speed does

require a knowledge of the double-declutching technique to avoid a crunch. We're used to that with old cars of course but these tended to do it when they were still newish cars.

On the open road, the torque of the Spider's bigger engine over the Mazda makes itself felt and although it was a revvy little engine back in '66 by the standards of its day, it's a slogger compared to the Japanese 16-valver. It zips quite happily up to 5000 rpm but pushing it further towards the 6500 rpm redline just doesn't seem like a good idea, the engine feeling strained. Luckily, the gearing is such that at brisk motorway speeds it's hovering at around 3000 rpm.

Motorways aren't what either of these cars are about though, despite both of them being more than fast enough to keep up with modern traffic in the outside lane. The Mazda in particular feels low and vulnerable on a busy rush-hour M4, while the Spider, although less vulnerable-feeling does give the occupants a serious wind buffeting at anything over 60 mph.

Better then to stick to the A-roads and it's here that the Spider shines, certainly in moderate to brisk driving: there's satisfaction to be had from slicing up and down through the box and keeping the twin cam fizzing, even if the reality is that you're not going anything like as fast as you want to think. The handling

TWIN TEST: ALFA SPIDER VS MX5



is typical old-school Alfa, in that the car will squirm as it's pushed into a bend but will settle and power out neatly. In fact the Series 4 cars even came with a limited-slip differential, but driving the Spider like that isn't really what it's about. How then, does the more modern Mazda compare?

MAZDA MX-5

The development story of the MX-5 has been told more than a few times already here but it's worth a recap. The cars are old enough now for a degree of urban rumour to have built up around their development but the generally accepted story is that US journalist Bob Hall, then editor of *Autoweek*, suggested to

Mazda R&D chief Kenichi Yamamoto that a simple, fun two-seater sports car should be produced to fill the gap in the market left by the departure of the traditional British cars, at the time filled only by the X1/9 and ageing Alfa Spider.

By 1981 Hall had taken a job in the product planning department of Mazda's Californian R&D operation and the idea and pursued the idea further. To his apparent surprise the response was positive and the project was adopted for development. The official Mazda line is simply that the company wanted to create a niche product to set itself apart from other Japanese brands and a team of engineers pursued the idea of a

modern take on the traditional roadster.

Whatever the truth, the final car was as resolutely modern as the Spider was leaning on its heritage. The front-engine, rear-drive concept was key to the idea and in an interesting twist the first running prototypes were built and tested here in the UK by consultancy firm IAD. The idea was then developed for production using a Lotus-like pursuit of light weight through simplicity and again in Lotus style, a skeletal central backbone structure was employed to link engine, gearbox and rear axle inside the central tunnel. An aluminium bonnet and some clever body engineering allowed the engineers to add features such as independent wishbone suspension and





still keep the weight down to a svelte 940 kg against the 1070 kg of the Spider.

Power was provided by a lightly modified version of the engine from the 323 hatchback, a 16-valve, twin-cam 1.6-litre which proved more than enough to give the lightweight roadster lively performance.

The MX-5 went on sale in 1989, at first in the US under the name Miata and then in Japan badged as Eunos before the first European cars were delivered in 1990 as MX-5s. The car was a runaway success, selling numbers Alfa could only have dreamed of even in the Spider's heyday: in the first year 45,266 cars were produced at the Hiroshima plant and the best year for the first-generation MX-5 was 1990's total of 75,789 units, contributing to a grand total of 431,506 before the car was replaced by the

facelifted model in 1997 which lost the trademark pop-up lights. Meanwhile, the original 1600 engine had been joined in 1994 by an 1840cc version of the same engine good for 131 bhp and much more torque, while an explosion of special editions means there are wildly varied specs out there.

Such was the demand for the car here in the UK that many used MX-5s were grey-imported from Japan in the mid '90s and apart from being cheaper than UK examples often came with a higher specification. That explains why so many Eunos-badged cars are around on the market and indeed it's a Eunos we have here.

Driving an MX-5 after the Spider it feels much more compact, certainly in the cabin but despite the modern, predominantly black plastic dashboard it feels much more sporting than the

THE FACTS

Alfa Spider S4	Mazda MX-5/Eunos
Engine 1962cc	1598cc
Power 125 bhp	118 bhp
Max speed 122 mph	121 mph
0-60 mph 9.0 secs	8.7 secs
Economy 30mpg	35 mpg

late-model Spider's interior which is truth rather confused in design terms.

The Mazda's high-backed seats with their integral headrests and the neat instrument layout are simple and purposeful, while the stubby gearlever sprouts from the high centre tunnel in the style of the Elan. Indeed, it's common knowledge that Mazda acquired more than one Elan as well as traditional British cars like the Spitfire to examine during the development process.



Similar power and performance, despite the Alfa's 400cc size advantage. Sadly, the Mazda's engine is just too big for cheap tax.

TWIN TEST: ALFA SPIDER VS MX5



A standard MX-5 sounds pretty anonymous at idle, but thanks to the neat twin-exit exhaust system this one sounds great and pursuing owner Joe around the Black Country it had a rasp to equal the Alfa. Such is the popularity of the early MX-5 that an entire industry has built up around modifying and tinkering with them, meaning there can be very few cars still running a 100 per cent original spec right down to the exhaust.

Unlike the Alfa, the gearbox is from the modern era and the short-travel lever just needs flicking through the gate without any fancy footwork to avoid crunching, while the car feels generally more nimble than the Spider thanks to its independent rear: where Joe was able to flick the Mazda round urban roundabouts without unsettling it, the Spider's live rear end does an almost

imperceptible shimmy before settling down. Ultimately the MX-5 has the edge on handling at the limit, but that limit is easily reached and as many MX-5 owners will know, can be exceeded in an instant, whereupon things get rather frantic. As for the Spider, it's easier to approach its rather lower limit of grip and when it lets go it does so rather less suddenly.

Where the MX-5 shows its comparative youthfulness is when it's driven hard over poor road surfaces which have the doors rattling and the dash shuddering in the Alfa. The Mazda's more modern body structure is generally more rigid and serves as a reminder that although these are both 1990 cars, they're really from different eras.

At slower speeds, both cars offer a decent ride, the Mazda's a touch more

bouncy than the Alfa's, while parking can be an effort in a UK-spec MX-5 without power steering. The Spider had standard-fit PAS in series 4 form, as does Joe's Eunos-spec Mazda.

Living with the MX-5 is simple thanks to its modern-style design which means heating and ventilation is better than the Spider's competent but rather basic system, while the roof is easy to drop between traffic light changes... as long as you remember to unzip that plastic window first.

Every time I jump in a Mk1 MX-5 I'm reminded of just how right the designers got it when they set out to recreate all the good bits of the traditional sports car without the oil leaks and scuttle shake. Is that enough to square up to the mighty weight of Alfa Romeo's heritage baggage?

VERDICT

If it's a contest on pure driver appeal and cross-country ability, then the MX-5 wins on purely objective grounds. Despite being down on power compared to the Alfa, the 1.6-litre MX-5 can be hustled really rapidly across country by a merely competent driver where the Spider would need real skill to keep up. On the other hand, the Spider does have the style, is just as quick in a straight line and does have the practicality of a bigger boot and larger cabin. All of which explains why there's such a big MX-5 modifying scene: my vote would go to a nicely





modified MX-5 with all the right ingredients to equal the Alfa on power but with a completely stock look.

THANKS

To the MX-5 Owners' Club and Joe Cottrell who provided his Mazda for our photos. A 1990 model which means it's the same age as the Alfa Spider, the car is in fact a Japanese-market Eunos which means it comes with the benefit of power steering among other things. The car was in fact imported to the UK when it was pretty young but has survived the British climate remarkably well. Joe reports that life with an MX-5 can be really pretty affordable thanks to the network of specialists catering for the car and chatting with him about the car it's obvious that the MX-5/Eunos/Miata in all its forms is one of the most practical classics out there.

BUYING ALFA SPIDER

Think classic Alfa, think rust and you'd be right usually but the series 4 cars were much better protected than traditional Alfas, with wax injection inside the body panels and plastic wheelarch liners to keep out the weather.

On the other hand, don't ignore the menace of corrosion, since they can and do still rust. The sills are critical to the car's strength and those plastic sill covers can hide all sorts of problems so check behind them as well as you can. The spare wheel wells can often rust too, thanks to the combination of being the lowest point for water to drain to, plus the effects of leaking battery acid if not sorted.

The convertible top is a nice watertight affair and a tatty one isn't the end of the world since it's a realistic proposition to fit one at home. Similarly, the alcantara and 'Alfatex' vinyl on the seats can get shabby

but cover sets are available from Alfa specialists and easy to fit.

Under the bonnet, the Alfa twin cam is pretty rugged as long as it's kept full of oil and water, although it pays to check that the electric cooling fans switch in and out properly.

The quality of right-hand drive conversions can vary, with the semi-official Alfa job being one of the better ones, although not all of them provide a glovebox.

BUYING MAZDA MX-5

Mazda did well designing a traditional sports car without the downsides of the '70s roadster... but they did forget the rust. It all depends on how well the car has been cared for but Mk1's do have a habit of rusting in the sills. MX-5 specialists like Sulston Hills are well versed in the repair techniques though and can sort it out for you at reasonable cost. Like the Spider, the roof should be watertight but if it's tatty then a replacement is straightforward DIY to fit.

The Mazda engine is typically Japanese in its reliability and shouldn't be an issue if maintained properly, while a snapped cam belt will stop the engine but won't cause damage. The gearshift does feel stiff as standard but the handbrakes are well known for seizing and no longer holding the car. The paintwork was an early waterborne system and years of loving polishing can wear it somewhat thin so do take a close look at panel edges and similar. ■





TWIN TEST: SPINNING WEBS

Both Alfa Romeo and Fiat produced long-lived sports cars bearing the Spider name. But which one was best?

The Alfa Romeo Spider is one of Italy's icons. From 1966 to 1993 it offered top down fun for all Italians, and a sense of that great nation for those from elsewhere in the way that it cornered and the sound of its exhaust. Alfa Romeo recognised the benefit that the model brought to the brand, offering successive Spiders following the cessation of production in order to keep the flame alive.

The world, however, was shocked to hear that Alfa Romeo's planned collaboration with Mazda would no longer be happening, and that the long anticipated new Spider developed in tandem with Mazda's MX-5 model would in fact bear Fiat 124 badging.

The original Fiat 124 Spider, after morphing into the Pininfarina Spider, was dropped from the Italian manufacturer's range in 1985. Previously committed to two seater roadsters displaying true Italian flair,

Fiat entered a long period of ambiguity. For a decade there was no rag top, then for a decade came the Punto-derived Barchetta, followed by yet another Spiderless decade until their latest launch.

As a classic purchase today, both offer a similar blend of two-seater fun.

Alfa Romeo's history of Spider production had been rather more consistent, and it came as a surprise to learn that Fiat would be the brand chosen for the group's return to the open two seater market given that that brand's sporting roadster aspirations had effectively lain dormant since the demise of the Barchetta.

Did Fiat make the right decision? One way to assess that is to take a

look at the historic models that either epithet might have evoked. The last Pininfarina Spider rolled off the line in Turin four years eight years before the end of Spider production, but both were launched in the same year and for every year of 124 production, it faced competition from the Alfa Romeo. As a classic purchase today, both offer a similar blend of two-seater fun.

Fiat 124 Spider

The original Fiat 124 Spider was introduced in 1966, and as the name suggests, much was borrowed or adapted from the Italian manufacturer's highly successful 124 saloon. Production ran almost twenty years, until the final cars left the factory in 1985, though from 1983 the Spider was badged and assembled by Pininfarina. In total over 200,000 cars were built, all left hand drive, and as a result, Fiat never officially offered it for sale in



the United Kingdom. The 124 Spider is consequently a bit of an enigma this side of the channel, highly prized by a small group of knowledgeable British enthusiasts but with little mass-market appreciation either when current or now, as a classic.

That's a great loss to the British classic car scene, as the Spider is an absolute peach of a sports car. With the

124's double overhead cam engine, coil sprung suspension all round with wishbones at the front and a well-located live axle at the rear, the Spider was mechanically sophisticated with a specification to make the rival MG B look antiquated by comparison. Add the beautifully flowing Pininfarina body penned by Tom Tjaarda, and the Spider was surely an irresistible package for

anyone who was considering a two-seater convertible.

Potential buyers of Fiat's classic 124 Spider need to be armed with a little knowledge of the car's extensive development history. Be warned, there are enough detailed specification changes to fill a small book; here we will briefly navigate the most significant developments. The twin cam engine was

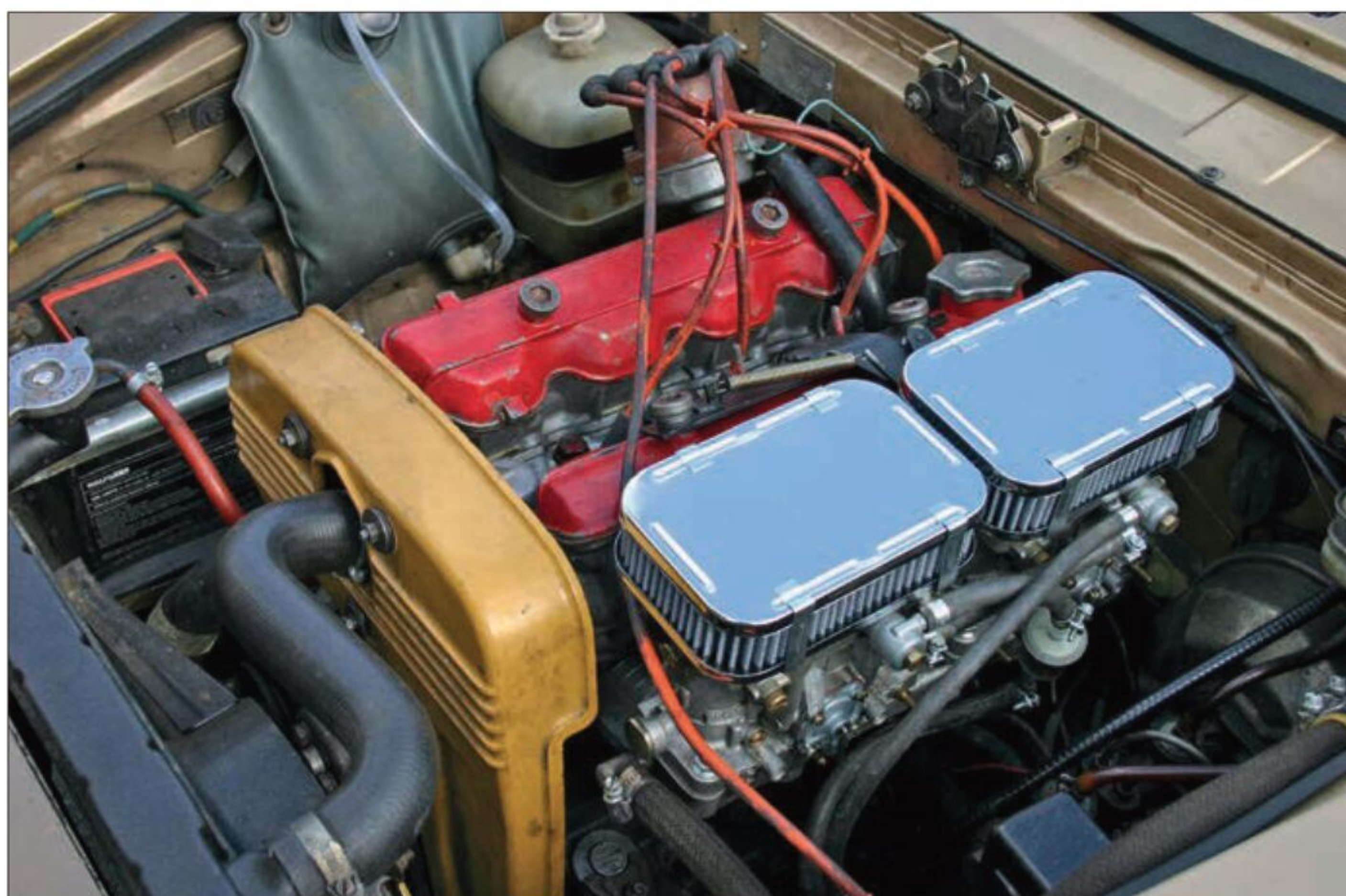


designed by Ferrari's Aurelio Lampredi and started life with a capacity of just 1438cc, growing to 1.6 and 1.8 litres in 1973 and finally 2 litres from 1979. Power outputs vary from 89 to 133bhp depending on capacity and exact specification, so buyers are well-advised to do some homework in order to be sure what they are getting. The other substantial change came in 1975, when Fiat ceased production of chrome bumper 'European' specification Spiders meaning all cars, regardless of where sold, were US-specification with emission control carburation and larger rubber bumpers.

In our photo shoot we feature John Yates' 1976 124 Spider, which is a CS1 model with 1.8 litre engine rated at 116bhp, so a typical example from the middle of the Spider's lifespan. Asked why he chose the little-known Fiat he explains: 'I used to have a Triumph TR6 and was looking for another convertible but TR prices have rocketed recently. A family member collects 124 Spiders and suggested I should try one'. He found his Fiat 2½ years ago, for sale in Italy. Meticulously restored, John committed to buy it, paying a deposit on the strength of photographs without viewing 'in the metal'. He has been delighted ever since collecting it and driving home.

'My car had been restored in Italy, which suited me fine' he says, 'I could use it and enjoy it immediately'.

“ The 124 Spider is consequently a bit of an enigma this side of the channel, highly prized by a small group of knowledgeable British enthusiasts...



Revy Fiat twin cam is one of the world's greatest engines. All 124 Spiders used it.

John covers about 4,000 miles each year including plenty of Continental touring and has been delighted with his Spider's reliability and everyday usability.

Getting into the driver's seat, left hand side of course, requires a little

contortion as the sills are quite high and the door openings less deep than some rivals. Once in place, the leather upholstery is comfortable and supportive. All the instruments, naturally labelled in Italian, are clearly visible through the two-spoke wood



rimmed steering wheel, with an array of warning lights in the centre of the wood-effect dash. The pleasant cabin manages to retain an airy feeling even with the hood raised and the tight back seat is just big enough to allow for occasional use. The Fiat's engine starts easily, immediately giving an impression of free-revving sporting intent

that's typically Italian. The longish-throw gear lever falls readily to hand and the pedals are well-weighted.

On the road, the Spider pulls away easily and immediately feels commendably solid and shake-free for a convertible, its rigidity no doubt helped by the strength of the high sills. There's brisk acceleration through the

five speed 'box, though the overall gearing is low, with 60mph being a comfortable cruising pace at 3,000rpm in fifth gear. It's more of a B-road fun car than a motorway cruiser, with its rev-hungry twin cam motor going rapidly up and down through the gears.

Too long overlooked in the UK,



CLASSIC RIVALS SPIDER V FIAT 124



the Fiat 124 Spider really must be considered by any enthusiast looking for a classic sportster. It's a delightful recipe of a beautiful body and classy interior, powered by an absolute jewel of a twin cam motor that could only come from Italy.

Alfa Romeo Spider

First launched in 1966, the Spider was initially sold as the car dubbed Duetto – the name chosen via a public poll. While it looks longer than later Spiders, the tapering tail lends it a delicacy lacking from the later models. Taking its 1570cc engine from the Giulia saloon, it also shared that car's independent front suspension and five speed gearbox.

Alfa Romeo was seen as exotic in foreign markets, notably in Britain – where the 1600 Spider was priced within 10% of the price of the 4.2 litre



Jaguar E-type. Such cars appealed to driving enthusiasts who put what they saw as the car's pedigree above its value. The 1750 Spider of 1967 brought more power, but lost the Duetto name, while the 1300 Spider Junior

of 1968 brought the model to a wider audience. A new rear end for 1970 updated the styling, and likewise the boot. 1971 saw the launch of the larger engined 2000 Spider, and 1972 saw the former range-topping 1600cc





engine reintroduced as the Junior entry level model to supplement the 1300.

From 1982, the demands of American legislation meant bigger bumpers front and rear, and a large plastic spoiler to the rear. The Green Cloverleaf cars (Quadrifoglio Verde) brought more plastic add ons and fuel injection, while from 1990 the new Series 4 model brought a thorough revision. Pininfarina worked its magic anew on the shape it had originally created, with colour coded plastic bumpers, sill covers, and 164-aping

rear lights

The mechanical side of the Spider remained largely unchanged throughout its life; despite the addition of emissions equipment and fuel injection. Later cars used Bosch Motronic engine management, permitting the use of a catalytic converter, as well as variable cam timing. These S4s used bigger wheels, but inside the S3 interior remained largely unchanged.

Getting behind the wheel of the Alfa can be difficult if you have long legs



“ The Fiat’s engine starts easily, immediately giving an impression of free-revving sporting intent that’s typically Italian.





– the typical Italian driving position is needed, which requires short legs and long arms if you're to have any degree of comfort. Once in, there's plenty of room though, and lots of storage space. Spiders have space behind the seats where until the late 1980s, a vestigial rear seat could be specified – ideal for coats and overnight bags.

The twin cam can only be an Alfa engine. Unfortunately, Series 4 cars were all fitted with a catalytic converter, and this, as we have discussed elsewhere in this title, spoils the engine note. It's possible to replace the exhaust with an earlier specification system and weld on a boss for the Lambda sensor, and while labour intensive it's worthwhile. It increases driveability as well as restoring the

Technical Specification	Fiat 124 Spider	Alfa Romeo Spider S4
Engine	1756cc straight 4 DOHC	1962cc straight 4 DOHC
Transmission	5-speed manual	5-speed manual
Maximum Power	116bhp @ 6000rpm	120bhp @ 5800rpm
0-60mph Acceleration	11.9 sec	10.8 sec
Maximum Speed	104 mph	103 mph
Fuel Consumption	26 mpg	27 mpg
Length	4143mm	4260mm
Weight	1052Kg	1157Kg

correct engine note to the car.

The gear selector is located in the centre console – no remote linkage means it's nice and precise. You need to be careful selecting first, as the synchromesh on these cars was always

delicate – likewise, double declutching is a useful skill for coming back down the box. Torque is definitely this engine's strong suit – it will rev high, but beyond 5000rpm it feels like it would be happier if you changed up.





On a good A-road, the Spider feels perfect – running up and down the box, it doesn't matter that you're not going as quickly as you'd like – it feels more than fast enough, such is the sensation of speed. Push into a bend and the car feels unsettled, though by the time you come to accelerate out it's found itself and is perfectly tidy. A car like this needs to be driven with some verve, and the Spider certainly doesn't disappoint when you choose to.

“ You won't be the loser with either of these cars. But we think you'll feel better still with the Alfa.

Verdict

The Fiat is undoubtedly the prettier car, and with longevity almost as solid as that of the Spider it's evident that it had its fair share of fans. But the Alfa, as a package, retains that little but more

charm. It's also slightly easier to find in right hand drive, and that for many British motorists has the potential to be a deal-breaker for the Fiat. You won't be the loser with either of these cars. But we think you'll feel better still with the Alfa. ■



ALFA ROMEO SPIDER V MGB



Two sporting greats of their era – but which one’s best? Our team can’t decide; Paul Wager and Simon Goldsworthy go head to head in championing their choices.

In many ways Alfa Romeo, at least in the modern era, can be considered as an Italian parallel to MG: both built their appeal on sporting mid-range cars, later to struggle under government ownership and then taunting with suggestions of a return to form. In that sense, the Spider is very much an Italian MGB: a neatly-styled

sports car built using parts from the firm’s mainstream saloon range which was destined for a long life. Launched in 1966, the Spider arrived just four years after the MGB but its specification was exotic compared to the Abingdon car: its 1570cc twin cam engine drove through a standard-fit five-speed box, the car boasting disc brakes all round.

The Spider employed front wishbones and coils and at the rear ran a live rear axle like the MGB but there the similarities ended: instead of leaf springs and lever arm dampers, the Milanese employed coils and telescopics.

Pumping out 108bhp at a feisty 6000rpm, the Spider (with its slick-shifting direct-acting gearbox) was a



UNIT 2

MPH 300D

CLASSIC RIVALS
ALFA ROMEO SPIDER V MGB



TECH SPEC	ALFA ROMEO SPIDER
ENGINE:	1962cc
POWER:	125 bhp
TOP SPEED:	122 mph
0-60MPH:	9.0 secs
GEARBOX:	5-spd man
BUY ONE FOR:	£5000 - £7000

driver's delight compared to the grumbly B-Series in the MG and had a whiff of the exotic to it: as indeed it needed to, with a retail price of £1895, when Lotus was asking £1553 for the similarly specified Elan, and MG wanted just £919 for the MGB roadster. The 1600 motor was up-gunned to a 1750 (actually 1779cc) in 1967, good for 122bhp, giving the Spider a top speed of 115 mph. 1968 saw a 1300 option added to the range – with even this smallest motor still good for 103bhp. In 1970, the original 'Duetto' model with its delicately rounded tail was replaced by the so-called Series 2 cars. These featured an enlarged boot with the chopped-off Kamm-tail styling and are considered by many to be a better-balanced design.

It was this style which would carry the car through to the end of its production life in 1994 very little changed. There are more parallels with the MGB in the Spider's later years, too: when the





design was modified in 1982 to become the Series 3, it too gained ungainly rubber bumpers. Although not quite as prominent as the MG's Bayerflex nosecone, Alfa's crazed stylists saw fit to further soil Pininfarina's design with a prominent ducktail boot spoiler which even curved around over the wings and took in the rear lights. Truly this was a dreadful effort and shows up MG's attempts to integrate their rubber bumpers as really a pretty good job. Elsewhere though, the Spider remained streets ahead of the MGB, with a 1962cc Spider 2000 having arrived in 1971 boasting variable camshaft timing which predated Honda's VTEC by many years.

With twin Dellorto carburetors for the European market, it was good for 131bhp and 122mph. Meanwhile, over in the all-important US market, while BL

Alfa's twin cam was given fuel injection to keep it ahead of the game: first the diesel-like SPICA mechanical system and then Bosch L-Jetronic

was struggling to pull the skin off a rice pudding with its emissions-strangled engines, Alfa's twin cam was given fuel injection to keep it ahead of the game: first the diesel-like SPICA mechanical system and then Bosch L-Jetronic. When the MX-5 arrived, though, the series 3 cars suddenly looked awkward and with the new front-driven '916' Spider and Fiat's Barchetta both some time off fruition, Alfa went cap-in-hand back to Pininfarina, asking them to tidy up the dreadful mess they'd made of the design.

The result grabbed a superb victory from the jaws of defeat, adding stylised bumpers and plastic sill sections which modernised the car at the same time as recalling the style of the '70s models, while the rubber boot spoiler was replaced by a new pressing incorporating a neat upswept tail. New 164-style rear lights completed the job and the car was able to soldier on until 1994, now boasting niceties such as Bosch Motronic engine management and electric windows. Sadly though, factory right-hand drive production

CLASSIC RIVALS ALFA ROMEO SPIDER V MGB



Alfa's 2.0 twin-cam engine meant more power than the MG - but the Alfa was always the more expensive car to buy new.

stopped in 1978 with official imports not resuming until the Series 4 in 1990, with its various semi-official RHD conversions. Although there are plenty of later Spiders over here, 1978-1990 cars will mostly be US imports, the bulk of them Series 3 cars.

As a classic ownership proposition today, the Spider still has a lot going for it over the MGB: no, there's no getting away from any '70s or '80s Alfa's habit of rotting before your eyes but most of the US imports will have come from dry states and the Series 4

cars were at least properly rustproofed. Mechanically, despite their exotic-for-1966 specification, the cars are robust and as long as the engine is filled with oil and water it will generally keep on going. Yes, the electrics will give you the odd moment of worry but in truth no more than MG's Lucas kit and there will always be a bit of trim somewhere which isn't quite right... but the Spider's delicate lines and its rarity still set it apart from the B. These days they're level-pegging on price too, with Series 3 and Series 4 cars around from £5000

to £7000. Parts support of course is nowhere near what the MG enjoys but most of what you need you'll be able to acquire and every time you park it up you'll take that last look over your shoulder.

MGB SIMON GOLDSWORTHY

At first glance it might appear that this comparison is a battle between head and heart – the sensible option from Britain vs the Italian import promising a touch of the exotic – but first glances can





The MGB offers almost unrivalled support in the spares and modification sector, making it arguably an easier car to own today.

be deceiving.

Clearly the powers that be at CCB knew this and feared it would be too easy for me to argue the case in favour of the MGB, so they tried to tie one hand behind my back by limiting the discussion to the later versions with their unpopular rubber bumpers. No

problem; I'm not going to argue that replacing the MGB's slim chrome bumpers with iron girders covered in Bayflex 90 polyurethane (not actually rubber, please note!) was universally popular, but the new appendages did what they were designed to do and breezed through the US crash

TECH SPEC	MGB
ENGINE:	1798cc
POWER:	84bhp
TOP SPEED:	99mph
0-60MPH:	14secs
GEARBOX:	4-spd manual
BUY ONE FOR:	£2000 - £10,000



test requirements. They also brought the styling of the B up to date, and complemented the garish hues such as Inca Yellow and Vermillion, favoured by the era. And yes, the handling of the MGB suffered with the arrival of the rubber bumpers, allied as it was to a raised ride height and the removal of

anti-roll bars. But don't forget, that was over 40 years ago. When was the last time you saw a totally original MGB? Chances are, if a car is truly as per factory, it is a concours trailer queen and the driving experience is irrelevant anyway so long as the paintwork polishes up nicely. The thing is that

the MGB has always been plentiful and cheap – well over half a million cars were built from 1962-1980, which knocks Alfa's 105 and 115 Spiders from 1966-1993 into a cocked hat. As a result, people have never had many qualms about modifying MGs in all manner of ways. So never mind what the



“ Try as I might, though, I can't deny that the Alfa is the sexier car. I wonder if the situation is reversed in Italy?”



factory produced, these days you can find MGBs with power steering, all-round independent suspension, bulging arches and outrageous amounts of power. Don't like the rubber bumpers? Then take them off and fit a set of chrome ones instead. Or how about going semi-naked with the Sebring look? The thing is you

should never assume that what MG built in 1975 is what you will be buying today, and it is not a crime to mix things up a bit anyway. However, I realise that some of you will feel it is cheating to focus on the modifying options on the MGB to show how it can out-perform and out-handle a Spider. Well for you

guys, I have an ace up my sleeve in the form of the BGT V8. This straddled the dividing line between chrome and rubber so is a perfectly valid weapon to unleash. And make no mistake it is a serious WMD – even in the original mild factory tune, the BGT V8's 137bhp trumps the 1962cc Spider's 126 horses,



CLASSIC RIVALS ALFA ROMEO SPIDER V MGB



while the difference in the arguably more-important torque is a whopping 193lb.ft for the MG against 131lb.ft for the Alfa. And don't give me that guff about the Alfa being technically advanced for its day with a five speed gearbox, because overdrive on a B is more entertaining to use, and on the

four-cylinder cars actually gives you six forward ratios to choose from instead of five. Talking of choice, did you notice how I slipped in mention of the GT option when talking about the V8? Of course, that was also available on the regular MGB, offering the kind of choice and versatility that is so conspicuously

lacking from the Spider's web. I will admit a sneaking admiration for the Alfa's twin cam engine, though. What petrol head could do otherwise? But I also love MG's OHV B-series. Sure it has a weight problem, it is scarcely the last word in refinement and its power output is well below that of the Alfa if

“ If you like your cars fragile, expensive and difficult to repair then I won't even try to tempt you out of an Alfa and into an MGB.



you won't let me include modifications, but it also has real British grit. Try as I might, though, I can't deny that the Alfa is the sexier car. I wonder if the situation is reversed in Italy?... After all, I drove a late model MGB GT to a car show in the Czech Republic a few years back and couldn't keep the local petrol heads

away from it – they loved the lines, marvelled at the engine and all wanted to sit behind the wheel. The MGB may look like the safe and boring option compared to the Alfa, like the car you choose with your head rather than your heart, simply because we know it so well. But we know it so well because it

is such a superb all-rounder. If you like your cars fragile, expensive and difficult to repair then I won't even try to tempt you out of an Alfa and into an MGB. If on the other hand you want a car with timeless elegance, a rewarding drive and incredibly low running costs then the MGB is really your only option. ■

GRADUATION PRESENT

The Alfa Romeo Spider is one of the most desirable roadsters of the 1970s. We guide you through what you need to know in order to get hold of a good one.

WORDS: SAM SKELTON

Launched in 1966 as a replacement for the Giulia Spider, the 105-series Spider was never intended as a near four decade representation of everything it was to be a sports car. But while the saloons upon which it was based were replaced multiple times in this time frame, the popularity of the Spider meant that production continued unabated until 1993. Pretty, sharp to drive and quick, the Spider managed to

worm its way into the world's affections so thoroughly that even by the end of Series 4 production it was still a desirable new car.

The Spider was a monocoque, with independent front suspension and a solid rear axle, and crumplezones to the front and rear to protect the occupants in case of an accident. Its styling was forecasted with the Alfa Romeo Giulia SS Spider Aerodinamica concept car of

1961 – the Spider was ready by that year, but the enduring popularity of its predecessor meant a five year wait for the new model.

Initially launched at the 1966 Geneva Motor Show with just one model – the 1600 Spider, nicknamed the Duetto – Alfa Romeo both increased the engine size to create the 1750 Spider and expanded the range downwards to include a tax-beating



1300 Junior derivative. The shell was revised for 1970, with a taller but shorter Kamm tail replacing the original for the Series 2 model. The range varied again – the 1750 became the 2000 Veloce courtesy of a 1962cc engine, while the Junior was updated to the same 1592cc unit as that in the original launch cars of 1966.

Right hand drive production ceased in 1978, though the range continued as before until the launch of the Series 3 model in 1982. This brought a new dashboard with an integral instrument cluster replacing the separate dials, and a somewhat 1980s approach toward modernisation outside. This meant big plastic bumpers front and rear, side skirts, and a crude duck tail rear spoiler enveloping the tail lights, rear wings and bootlid so that everything visible from behind was made of plastic. There are a number of Series 3 Spiders in the

“ Pretty, sharp to drive and quick, the Spider managed to worm its way into the world’s affections so thoroughly that even by the end of Series 4 production it was still a desirable new car.

UK – all imported either from Europe or the States. Right hand drive conversions by Seaking or Bell and Colvill are not as rare as you might expect, and attract more interest on the secondhand market.

The last Spider, the S4, was a return to form. With a few years until the new 916 Spider would be ready, Alfa approached Pininfarina and asked that the Spider be tidied up. New body coloured bumpers and 164-style

tail lights restored some of the beauty lost eight years earlier, and it was in this form that imports to the UK recommenced in 1990. The S4 was only ever left hand drive, but as with the S3 independent specialists would convert cars to customer requests. The model finally bowed out in 1993, just in time for the launch of the new front wheel drive Spider and GTV Twin Spark. A total of 124,104 Spiders were produced across a 37 year life span.



“ All models were cosmetically different, from the boat-tailed S1 through the Kamm tail of the S2, plastic addenda of the S3 and the final restyle into the S4 of 1990.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

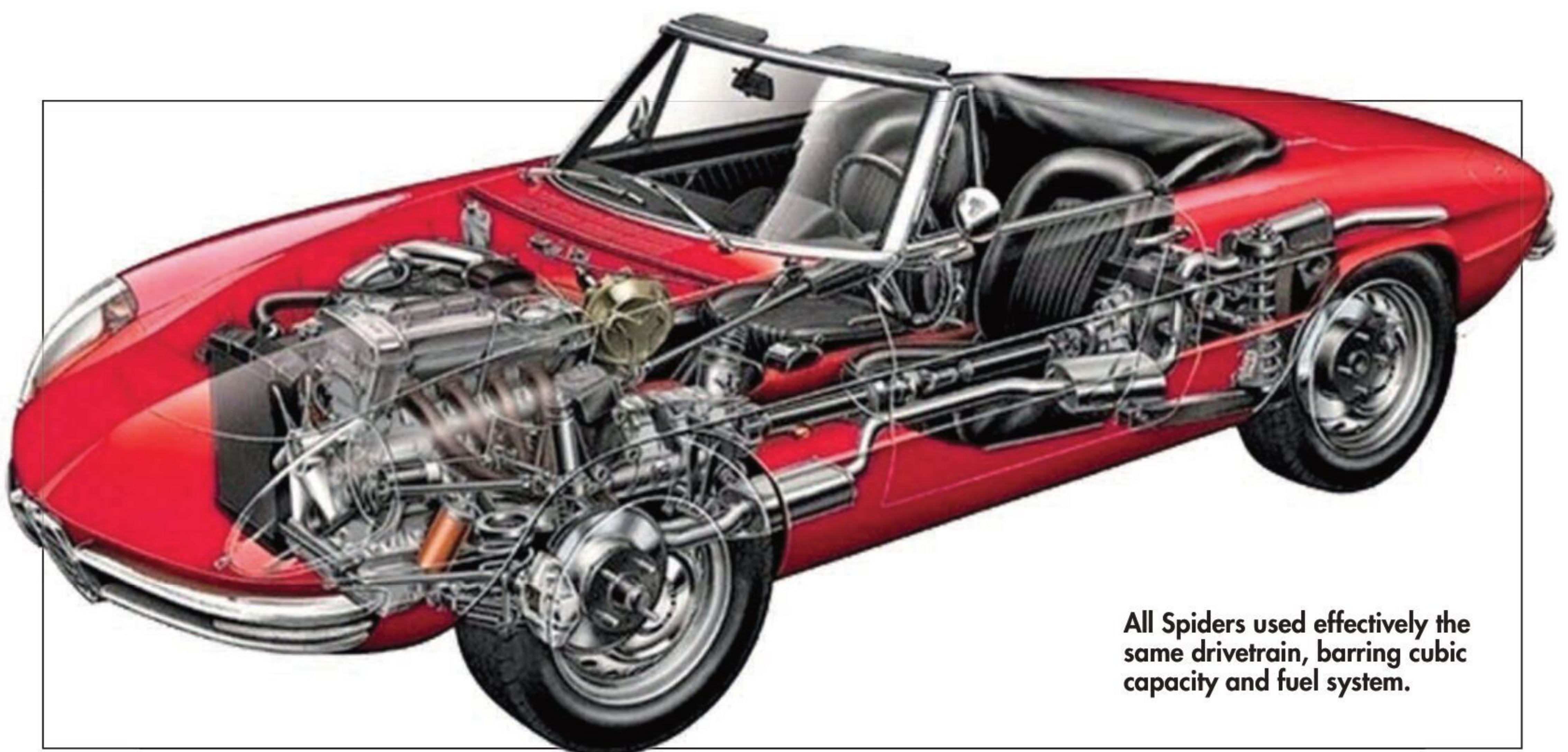
PROVENANCE

It's worth checking exactly what Spider you're looking at, given that many have been imported to the UK over the years and no Series 3 will be a UK specification car. Under the bonnet on the front bulkhead you'll find the chassis plate, and to the right of that will be a type. They all start with 105 or 115, which will tell you exactly what the car is.

BODYWORK

All models were cosmetically different, from the boat-tailed S1 through the Kamm tail of the S2, plastic addenda of the S3 and the final restyle into the S4 of 1990. They can be prone to corrosion, so check everywhere. Key rust spots are the wheelarches, the sills, and under both the front and rear valances. If there are signs of any repairs on the sills, check carefully for quality. There is a drain which terminates through the sill – if this hasn't

been correctly routed water can gather inside the sills and rot them from the inside. There should be a seam in line with the leading edge of the front door, and if this is missing, ask why. If there have been repairs, also check that the doors were braced properly and haven't sagged. While you're under the car it's also worth checking the condition of the floorpans. Check the footwells from inside the car too – the drains for the scuttle can drain into the footwells as they age and crack, as they're made of plastic. If the car has



All Spiders used effectively the same drivetrain, barring cubic capacity and fuel system.



Alfa twin cam is rev-happy, relatively torquey, and sounds delicious. Has any small sports car ever had a better engine?

rubber tubing, it's been upgraded to Series 4 drain tubes which should cure the issue for good. .

Check the quality of the paint job, if it's suspiciously shiny the car may have had a recent blowover, and you need to ask what might be lurking underneath.

ENGINE

All Spiders use derivatives of the Alfa Romeo twin cam engine, from the 1300 Junior right through to the 2.0 Series 4. All engines are interchangeable, so it's entirely possible you could find a Junior masquerading as a 2000 Veloce. That shouldn't affect anything mechanical, but beware that such cars are worth less than originals unless the conversion has been well executed. If you want to check the engine is original, look at the front of the block and you'll see a stamp. A circle with a vertical line is a 1300cc unit, a circle with a square inside represents a 1600cc unit, a circle with a triangle represents a 1750, and if there's a dot in the centre it's a late 1750. A circle with a square inside and

“ All engines are interchangeable, so it's entirely possible you could find a Junior masquerading as a 2000 Veloce.



Barring the air intake little separates this from the image above.



a diagonal line means a 2.0 block. All should idle around 800-1000rpm when cold. Water temperature should sit below or at halfway on the gauge, while oil pressure shouldn't drop below halfway on the gauge.

Early models had Dellorto and Weber carburettors, before switching to Solex, then SPICA mechanical injection and finally Bosch L-Jetronic EFI. Many have been converted to ram induction using GTA parts, but originality fiends will want the correct original air box instead. Modifications and upgrades are common, owing in no small part to the number of UK based specialists, but this also means that it's easy to return your car to standard if you don't like what a

“ All engines are interchangeable, so it's entirely possible you could find a Junior masquerading as a 2000 Veloce.

previous owner has done. Spiders are DIY propositions – and it's possible to do everything including a head gasket change in situ.

When the engine is running it shouldn't be overly tappetty, though you can get cam chain slap which is easily adjusted. Anything to do with the tappets is ideally a specialist job, as they'll have the equipment to calibrate perfectly. When the engine is running, try tilting the carbs toward the engine. Any

increase in revs will indicate cracked carb mounts – they can be replaced with aluminium examples but it's a negotiation point. Check the head isn't leaking – condensation in the oil cap is a giveaway, as are oil leaks down the side of the block, especially under the carbs. Heads can warp if they get hot.

Check the engine mounts for sagging, and check that the servos are in good order. Diaphragms can fail, letting brake fluid into the servo.





TRANSMISSION

It's a long throw gate but you should be able to engage gears nicely and easily. Synchroneshes can wear, but you can drive around that by taking your time engaging gears. You don't have to double declutch, just don't try to ram it into gear quickly. Second and reverse are by far the worst. If it pops out of either, the main thing to check first is the rubber boot under the gaiter. It can bunch up and knock you out of gear if it's in the wrong position, and it's cheaper to check this first than carry out an unnecessary box rebuild.

SUSPENSION

Spiders should feel taut on the road, so any wobbles or floating indicates that there are problems underneath. Typically, this will be a bushing issue – we'd advise you to replace any rubber bush with polyurethane, but ideally to a standard road grade. It's a fit and forget solution, and shouldn't affect the car if you choose an equivalent grade to rubber. There's nothing here that can't be done at home, but if you're replacing every single bush on the car be aware that it could get expensive.

Steering is by box, and there should be no excess play there. Be wary, though, of overtightened steering boxes. If it feels heavy, that's a sign that it's been nipped up too tight and you could be damaging the box through use. Spider steering should be fairly light and smooth, there's a small amount



of play at the centre but no more than you'd typically associate with a good steering box. Steering boxes can leak, so check if there's any lubricant left in it. You can fill them yourself if they're leaking, and they can be rebuilt. Thumping under the car in motion could be the rubber doughnut on the driveshaft mounting breaking up – get it checked out to ensure it's intact if there are noises.

BRAKES

Spiders have disc brakes all round, with servo assistance – by the standard of

1966 they were impressive and by the standard of 1993 they were still more than adequate. Some models were single servo, while many were a twin servo system. You shouldn't experience any issues with them, though it's worth checking the condition of the pads, checking that the discs aren't warped, and ensuring that the handbrake is still operational.

INTERIOR

Consider that the oldest Spiders are well into their fifth decade now, and even the newest are pushing thirty

BUYING GUIDE ALFA SPIDER



years old. It wouldn't be reasonable to expect the average example to have a perfect interior, though as many parts are available it's entirely possible that your prospective purchase could have enjoyed a retrim. Most European Spiders have a wood-rimmed steering wheel, though some other markets may have leather. If wood, check that the lacquer isn't cracking and splitting, while leather wheels should be inspected for wear and damaged stitching. Either can be repaired or replaced, but at a cost.

Interior trim in general isn't as sturdy as enthusiasts might have hoped, with fixings failing and trim wearing at a faster rate than other rivals of its era. Things such as stalks are vulnerable to being knocked or damaged, and this is where you'll find things hardest to replace. Seat covers and the like can be replicated by any competent trimmer, but stalks and other interior plastics are getting difficult to find in the UK. Your best bet will be to find an owner with a large spares haul, who might be willing to sell you used trim if any of yours is broken. With this in mind we'd say buy as complete and original an example as you can find with as few interior issues as possible; mechanical and bodywork issues may seem more daunting but in this instance they can prove far easier to fix.

TECH SPECS	Duetto	1750	1300 Junior	2000
Engine:	1570cc I4	1779cc I4	1290cc I4	1962cc I4
Power:	125bhp	132bhp	103bhp	133bhp
Max speed:	113mph	115mph	104mph	119mph
0-60 mph:	11.3secs	9.9secs	13.2 secs	9.8 secs
Economy:	28mpg	27mpg	32mpg	27mpg
	Quadrifoglio Verde	S4		
Engine:	1962cc I4	1962cc I4		
Power:	115bhp	120bhp		
Max speed:	110mph	103mph		
0-60 mph:	10.4secs	10.8secs		
Economy:	33mpg	29mpg		

HOOD

Hoods are replaceable, but it's not the easiest possible job. Budget around £500 for a new hood – the one on the car should be tight, there should be no flapping, and there's a clip at the leading edge by the back of the door to ensure it remains snug. Check how it aligned with the windows, they should seal well against it. If there are any leaks, there's something amiss – as a rule, Spiders don't let water into the cabin through the roof.

WHAT TO PAY

Each iteration of Spider has its own set of values. Broadly speaking, the earlier the Spider the more valuable it becomes, though the S4 is worth more than an equivalent S3. Larger engines

also attract premiums.

The very best boat tailed 1600s and 1750s can command almost £50,000 today, though for that you'll really be looking at the best of the best with perfect history files, and ideally unrestored cars. For a Duetto you can use, expect to pay around £30,000 today. Against this backdrop, the Kamm tailed Series 2s look like something of a bargain. You'll pay about £25,000 for the best 2.0s, though 1750s can be had for slightly less. A usable S2 should set you back no more than £15,000, though be aware that you'll need to spend at least £10,000 to avoid any real issues. Series 4s sell typically for between £5,000 and £15,000, though it's dependent upon condition and those converted to right hand drive command



a premium of around 10% if the conversion is by a reputable specialist. Best bargains are the Series 3s with their plastic bumpers and ducktail spoilers – you’ll pay £13,000 for the best, but there’s plenty of choice for between £3500 and £8000 at the time of writing.

We’d suggest that the best value cars are the Series 2s and the Series 4s, both pretty in their own way and amusing to drive without the collectability and subsequent price inflation of the Series 1. It’s important to note that as boat tail values continue to rise, the values of the S2 in particular will rise to fill the gap in the marketplace.

VERDICT

The Alfa Romeo Spider is one of the most romantic open two seaters that money can buy, with excellent heritage supported by its long production run and myriad specialists. And the attributes which made it such an excellent car when it was new have only intensified when it comes to the Spider’s classic status. It might not be the ideal car for the family man, despite the vestigial rear seats some Spiders were fitted with, and the driving position may not be ideal for those long in the leg, but the experience of driving a Spider means you soon forget such trivialities and find yourself

looking forward to the next clear B road. Mechanically, Spiders are simple beasts and easy to maintain as a result, with the added bonus of entertaining dynamics once out on the road.

Better still, as an investment they make sound sense, the Spider is still a desirable car and as they become harder to source values will continue to climb. The Spider fraternity is welcoming and helpful, and you’ll have little trouble finding the spares you need to keep it on the road even if trim can be difficult at times. We wouldn’t have to try hard to recommend the Spider, and if you take the plunge, you’ll be very glad you did. ■



LIVING WITH A SPIDER

A test drive doesn't tell the whole story. Paul Wager lived with an Alfa Spider for 23 years. This is what it's like to own...

WORDS: PAUL WAGER



You could at least have washed it," admonished a complete stranger at the first Alfa event I attended with my newly purchased Spider back in the late '90s. And sure enough, the car's nose was plastered in dead flies, twin arcs cleared across the grimy screen and the wheels coated in brake dust but

unlike (as I later discovered) pretty much any other owner at the same event, I had used my car rather than simply polished and admired it.

To that end, the Spider had covered some 1000 miles in the preceding fortnight, carrying me between photo shoots and magazine features in my

work as Editor of a Ford magazine. And naturally when I pointed this out, the chap seemed dumbstruck at the idea that a Spider was good for anything more than gentle pottering and admiring.

It's a perennial problem with older Alfa Spiders and something I suspect persists even today that the 'scene'



around the cars is very much centred around the tartan blanket and picnic hamper brigade, their enthusiasm for the marque all caught up in a kind of wistful Dolce Vita world.

Which is a shame, since should you want to, the Series 4 Spider is actually a very capable car for everyday use and

longer trips alike, something I feel I'm qualified to comment on after 23 years' ownership.

My Alfa Spider story began with the Mazda MX-5, which at the time was the latest hot thing, but ironically enough back then it was the more expensive car and having grown up with German

marques I'll admit I wasn't quite ready for Japanese car ownership.

I'd always loved classic cars but having bought my first house I wasn't in a position to run a classic and an everyday driver, yet trying to commute through winter in something like an MGB simply didn't appeal.

LIVING WITH A SPIDER



1997 saw Paul collect his then-seven year old Spider. It was to stay with him until 2020, until an S2000 turned his head.



I've also always loved Alfas ever since my father arrived home one day in an Alfetta GTV when all our neighbours ran Cortinas and Dolomites, the result being that the Series 4 Spider with its injection and electric windows seemed like an ideal combination of classic style and modern capability.

The problem was that they were still costly cars, with vendors asking upwards of £15,000 for what were after all still relatively new cars. So when a private ad popped up in the local paper for a 1990 car at a sensible price, I felt bound to take a look.

The lady had owned the car since it was nearly new and clearly loved it, the couple having taken it on a tour of Italy for their own honeymoon. But with circumstances requiring more motorway driving and children to transport, she wanted something more modern – which

“ Giving it a good clean, I was chuffed to discover that the mud packed into the underside had acted as a kind of organic rustproofing treatment... ”

was why she'd bought a BMW Z3, with its airbags and generally more modern crash safety.

The Spider itself turned out to be a very honest car, loved but not excessively so and showed a few scratches and blemishes from everyday life but also came with a full dealer history... and much of the underside crammed with hardened mud courtesy of the track up to the house.

After poking and prodding with the assistance of a friend, we struck a deal, money changed hands (a bank draft

back in those days) and I took the car home. Giving it a good clean, I was chuffed to discover that the mud packed into the underside had acted as a kind of organic rustproofing treatment, sealing the hollow areas from road salt and the car was really very sound.

At this point my plan rather fell apart, since I realised the car was probably too good to subject to year-round commuting so I bought a second car after all, a BMW E28 5-Series which started me off on another tack entirely and eventually saw me editing a BMW magazine.



Back to the Spider though and the first job after digging out the mud was to swap out the Nardi Classic wood-rimmed wheel which was simply too large for the car and trapped my right knee between wheel and door. It was a lovely item and I kept it until last year, but its replacement was a smaller Momo Corse which fitted the bill perfectly,

although removal did involve the purchase of a sliding puller to get the boss off without distorting it.

With that done I could enjoy driving the car and it lived up to expectations in most areas, except for a lack of urge which those familiar with the Motronic set-up advised me was simply due to the car being an Austrian-market example

produced with a catalytic converter.

It also muffled the trademark Alfa Twin Cam rasp and I resolved to sort the issue by removing the catalyst since a 1990 car doesn't need one for the UK MoT test. Naturally my first call was to EB Spares where Kevin sorted me out the correct exhaust, and also sourced a pair of suitable used manifolds from Benalfa.





While this may look drastic, it has improved strength. Paul reported that the doors closed far more positively with new sills.

When the massive parcel arrived (it's a one-piece system) at the office, I had to wait for a dry day to take it home with the roof down, but fitting proved relatively straightforward despite awkward access to downpipe bolts in RHD-converted cars with the brake servo cross linkage.

Before fitting the exhaust though, provision needed to be made for the oxygen sensor, since the non-catalyst cars didn't use one. A threaded boss was obtained from a local performance

“ The local MoT testers did start commenting on the need to look at the corrosion in one sill though and unusually it was the offside sill which was the culprit.

specialist and I drilled and welded a suitable hole myself which wasn't the neatest job you've ever seen but did the job for the next two decades.

At around the same time, I was

beginning to lose patience with the squeal from the clutch release bearing, which had been present when I bought the car but which had been getting louder, even though the mechanism





Rather than patch this sill, Paul engaged a mobile welder to replace the whole thing.



While it could have been patched, corrosion like this meant that a full replacement was likely to be cheaper long term.

seemed to work just fine.

This time I was busy with house renovations so elected to pay someone to do the job and was glad I did when I realised just how long it would have taken me. If memory serves, it was about £400 well spent.

Life with the Spider was pretty uneventful from that point onwards, costs amounting to little more than oil and tyres. From May to October I used the car daily for a commute of 11 miles each way and during winter made sure

to get it out of the garage, warm it up and drive it round the block at least once a month.

In daily use the car proved exceptionally reliable, with even a failed clutch slave cylinder not quite stranding me. Feeling it failing in heavy traffic one morning within shouting distance of the office, I furiously pumped the pedal, avoided shifting as much as possible and coughed into the car park in third gear to the amusement of colleagues – remember, this was a car magazine

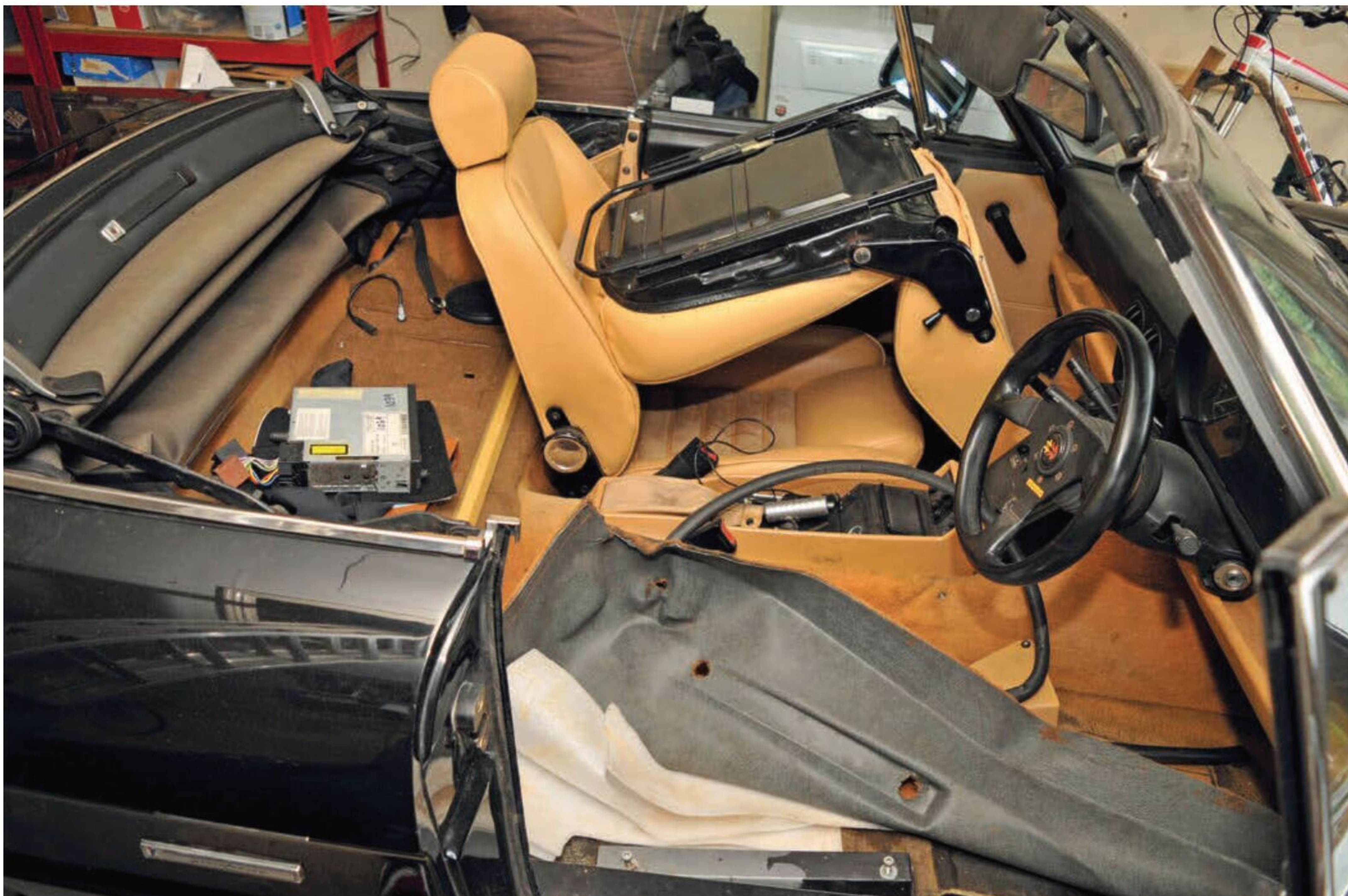
publishing company...

Topping the reservoir up with fluid that evening, I waited for the rush hour traffic to clear and drove the car home in similar fashion, just running out of fluid as I arrived outside my house. Pushing the car up on to the kerb provided just enough ground clearance to crawl underneath and swap the cylinder the following day, a replacement having been sent overnight by EB Spares.

After a couple of years though, the unsightly roof was starting to grate – or



OWNING LIVING WITH A SPIDER



To repair the sill, a surprising amount of interior trim had to be stripped and moved out of the way.

rather, the unsightly back window. It's a plastic screen on these cars and in my enthusiasm on the first day of ownership I'd lowered the roof on a freezing day... which I now know was a schoolboy error. The plastic kinked and cracked, something repaired 'temporarily' with clear tape.

The remainder of the roof was in good nick, so my first thought was to have a trimmer replace just the window. Accordingly I visited Ted Coburn, famed for his work on Alfa hoods, who pointed out that the cost of removing and replacing the roof to replace the window would probably add up to around the cost of a brand new roof. Sensing my enthusiasm for working on my own cars, he assured me I'd be more than up to the task and I duly ordered a roof.

A few weeks later, armed with a can of Dunlop Thixofix adhesive and the Alfa factory roof fitting instructions, I borrowed my parents' double garage and set to. As Ted had predicted, it was really not that hard to do, with the various holes and fitting points clearly marked on the new roof.

I was pretty pleased with my efforts



and when I asked Ted to give the job a once-over, he pointed out only a couple of tweaks to make. What's more, it was watertight where the old one wasn't and it stayed that way for the next 20 years.

The new roof smartened the car up nicely although luckily it wasn't needed when we used it for our wedding a

couple of years later, the rain holding off and guests delighting in flinging confetti into the Spider, some of which I was still hoovering out years later.

Of course children followed but somehow the Spider stayed around and luckily my son loved the car, which could just about accommodate a baby



Paul replaced the exhaust to make the most of the twin cam noise. Below, note the smaller Momo steering wheel for comfort.



seat. Amusingly, at 6'7" and having just passed his own driving test, he probably wouldn't fit in the Spider at all now.

For many years the Spider just sat in the garage during winter and came out for the summer, at one point being used for a regular 50-mile commute to work in Bath and needed little more than tyres

and brakes for the MoT every year.

The local MoT testers did start commenting on the need to look at the corrosion in one sill though and unusually it was the offside sill which was the culprit. This was most likely due to previous damage, the previous owner having mentioned that her aged

father had once backed into the car and dented the driver's door. Clearly the repair hadn't been too clever and to avoid a rust-related fail appearing in the car's MoT history, I took it off the road for a year or two while I considered my options and we moved house.

By then we'd gained the luxury of



a big double garage and to avoid the spectre of being held to ransom by a body shop, I found a local mobile welder who was happy to come and do the work at home.

Going by the name of Miggy's Mobile Welding, he did a first-class job. Rather than patch up the sill, he suggested replacing the entire panel and an outer sill was duly bought from Classic Alfa.

With the outer sill cut away, the inner proved to be a simple structure which could be replicated using square stock he had to hand and with the job done, the repair was neatly hidden by the Series 4's plastic sill covers, meaning I avoided the cost of paintwork. Rattle cans and elbow grease did the job

“ ...The Spider proved to be the most reliable car I've ever owned. In 23 years it left me stranded only once...

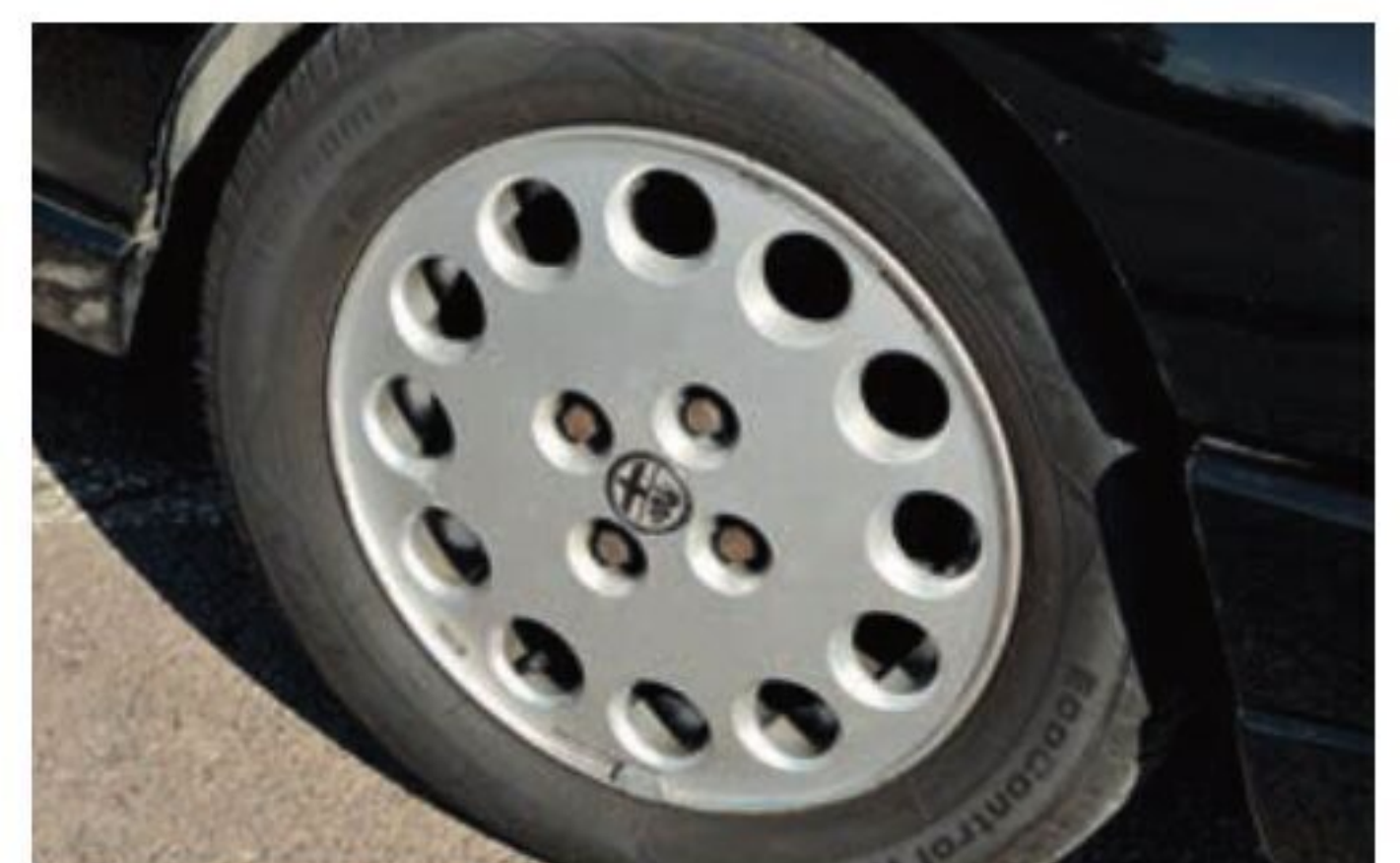
nicely and the car did feel much more rigid, with the door closing cleanly for the first time in many years.

Having done this, I enjoyed the car for a couple more years before something of a mid-life crisis hit.

I blame my wife really, who one morning unexpectedly started showing me photos of Honda S2000s on Autotrader. Knowing 'd always fancied Honda's 9000rpm engineering masterpiece, she suggested it would

make a good present to myself for my upcoming 50th birthday.

Few husbands turn down a free pass like that and so days later the Spider was sold to a contact in the trade and after 23 years of ownership I found myself without an Alfa on the premises. And two Japanese cars on the driveway in the shape of a 2003 S2000 and a company Toyota – something which would have horrified my 25-year old self.



OWNING LIVING WITH A SPIDER



Ironically, in general terms the S2000 and Spider are on paper broadly similar – both two-seat roadsters of similar size and both running 2-litre twin cams with variable cam timing (the S4 uses it on the inlet) but you don't need me to tell you that the driving experience is very

different. My 14-year old daughter summed up the Honda by describing it as being much like Mario Kart.

As for the ownership experience, I haven't owned the S2000 for long enough to comment but the Spider proved to be the most reliable car

I've ever owned. In 23 years it left me stranded only once and that was down to a failed battery for which the blame lies firmly with Halfords and not Alfa Romeo.

And when the flies were washed off it was also exceptionally stylish. I never did get the picnic hamper though. ■

ROAD TEST ALFA ROMEO SPIDER 2000

We take a look at one of Italy's best loved open classics.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: SAM SKELTON



Fifty five years after its launch in 1966, the Alfa Romeo Spider still enjoys a well-earned reputation as one of the best classic roadsters of all time. Conceived as a direct replacement for the outgoing Giulia Spider which used variants of the same engine and drivetrain, the 105-series Spider was a world apart from contemporary models made in Britain, Germany and France.

Powerful and charming, it offered comfort and grip to levels its rivals could only dream of meeting.

The Giulietta Spider had been a very capable open tourer, and one conceived to expand the brand's fortunes in America. When the saloon upon which it was based was replaced, the Spider was updated with a new bonnet to clear the Giulia's larger

engine, which it adopted along with other 105-series upgrades. But it was only a stopgap; Alfa Romeo was experimenting with the development of a new Spider. In 1963 the Giulia GT Spider was unveiled, but just two examples of this Bertone styled roadster were produced before Alfa Romeo chose to focus its efforts back toward Pininfarina.





That car was launched in 1966 as the Spider 1600 at the Geneva Motor Show, but Alfa wasn't entirely happy with the name and made it plain that this was a stopgap. There was, the Italian company announced, to be a competition over the course of the next eight weeks to determine the name of the new car, and the lucky winner of the competition would receive a brand new Spider as a reward for his or her efforts. Over 100000 ballots were entered from

“ Its design had actually been ready for almost five years, having been seen with retractable headlamps as the 1961 Giulietta SS Spider Aerodinamica concept car.

around the world, many from the car's native Italy, and some 8000 different names were proposed. It was won by an Italian; Guidobaldo Trionfi from Brescia, who proposed the Duetto name

as the Italian for “duet” – two seats, two camshafts. However, the Duetto name had already been registered as a trademark by snack company Pavesi, which threatened a lawsuit if Alfa dared



to use its brand name anywhere near the cigar shaped car. Alfa backed down, calling the car the Spider 1600 in all publicity as it had at the Geneva Motor Show in a move which had ultimately seen the competition prove fruitless. But much like Britain's Daimler SP250 "Dart", the name has become inextricably linked with that which never officially bore it.

Its design had actually been ready for almost five years, having been

seen with retractable headlamps as the 1961 Giulietta SS Spider Aerodinamica concept car. The continued popularity of the older models meant Alfa Romeo was reluctant to replace them, especially in light of the prevailing economic situation in Italy at the time – meaning that buyers would have to wait half a decade before the desirable concept car became a production reality. This might have felt like a long wait, but for a model which was to span four separate decades, it

was felt by many to have been worth it.

Following the original 1600, a 1750cc model was launched – this followed by a revised body in 1970 with a cut-off Kamm tail and even larger variations of the Alfa twin cam. There was also a Junior model, with a smaller 1300cc (later 1600cc) engine, targeted at those who wanted the experience without Italy's punitive capacity based purchase tax levies. The S3 of 1982 added plastic bodykits and spoilers,

ROAD TEST ALFA ROMEO SPIDER 2000



while Pininfarina smoothed everything off for 1990 and the final iteration, the S4. Many feel that the early cars are purest – both the early cars with the longer tail and the Series 2 which followed, while driving enthusiasts prefer the extra power and torque of the larger capacity engines to those of the Junior. Theoretically then, the most enjoyable Spider experience should

be something like a Series 2 with the 2000cc engine.

And that's exactly what we're driving here. Neal Courtney's car is a Series 2 Spider 2000 Veloce – imported and registered in late 1977, a matter of months before the model was discontinued in right hand drive form. It would have been priced above contemporaries such as the MGB and

Triumph TR7; a move thoroughly justified by its 135bhp engine and standard five speed gearbox. The Farina Red paintwork of this car is a far warmer colour than that you might have in your head as the typical Alfa shade, orangier than you remember and far less brash – but the truth is that this IS the Alfa colour. More vivid post-box type reds, in which the Spider is often seen, come from the



Fiat paint chart – their hue is sharper perhaps, but it doesn't suit the Spider's delicate lines as well as Farina Red, with its ability to capture the warmth inherent in Mediterranean sun no matter what the climate. It contrasts well with the black interior – no carpets here either, for the Spider's floors are trimmed practically with black rubber matting in order to avoid the worst consequences of an

unintended downpour while at speed. Barring the original "Duetto" boat-tail, the S2 is perhaps the archetypal Spider, melding the Kamm tail of the later models with the dainty chrome grille and headlamp covers of the earlier models. As an example of the breed, we couldn't have chosen a nicer Spider to sample.

The Alfa Romeo Spider is not an especially comfortable car for taller

drivers at first – the stereotypically Italian long arm/short legs position exacerbated in Neal's car by the static seat belts, forcing you into a far more reclined pose than you'd otherwise be tempted to adopt. Inertia reel belts for taller drivers feel like a necessity in here. But once in, it's not as bad as you fear – yes, your knees are a little higher than you'd like, but the seat is well shaped and you can



still reach everything you need to reach. The dials are angled toward you, and under hoods they're easy to see.

The pedals are hinged from the floor, with the brake and clutch angled oddly toward the driver and all three pedals offset to the right. You almost feel like your foot will slip off the clutch before you reach the biting point, but once underway it doesn't pose any issues. 105-series Alfa Romeos have a reputation for weak synchromesh on the gearboxes – and while Neal's car has been fitted with a rebuilt box it still warrants care in order to get the smoothest changes from it. Easing back toward second before engaging first is the best way to avoid a crunch when so doing, and is not hard to remember once in the flow. Just take your time rather than rushing your changes and there's nothing to concern the budding enthusiast here.

“ Many feel that the earlier 1750 is a sweeter engine, but the 1962cc unit in this late MK2 is a torquier engine

Many feel that the earlier 1750 is a sweeter engine, but the 1962cc unit in this late MK2 is a torquier engine. It's not delivered in one large dollop either, but progressively – there's a strong sense of gaining momentum rather than of instant grunt. The area where the 2000 gains considerably is in its tractability; from surprisingly slow speeds it's comfortable simply to be left in fifth should you prefer to cruise than to drive it hard enough to let that four cylinder “bialbero” Nord engine sing.

Our car sounds rortier than most, courtesy of ram pipes into the twin Solex carburettors, and an Alfaholics stainless

steel exhaust. It suits the car – not overly aggressive, it nonetheless imbues a sporting sense to the driving experience. Blip down into third for a bend, push the throttle and hear the mix of induction and exhaust road as you gain pace, blipping slightly on the upchange into fourth before enjoying the second verse of aural heaven.

Throw the Alfa into a corner and it reminds you why it was so much more expensive than the MGB all those years ago. It offers a degree of roll, though less than its British counterpart, but the grip and the roadholding are impressive. And that gets better the faster you go – what



little understeer there may be initially is completely missing when you begin to push the Spider harder. While we didn't drive Neal's car especially hard, we never felt that this change from mild understeer to neutrality was apt to go the other way – we don't doubt that you CAN lose the rear end on a Spider, but you'd have to be driving like an idiot to provoke it.

The turn-in perhaps isn't the sharpest – a legacy of its Giulia-derived steering box – but it certainly doesn't feel any lazier than rack-equipped alternatives such as the Triumph TR6 or MGB. There's a degree of play around the centre position, but it doesn't detract from the driver enjoyment that the car has to offer - more the sort of dead spot you encounter in the centre with a period power steering setup. Not that the Spider needs power steering – it's



ROAD TEST ALFA ROMEO SPIDER 2000

FACT FILE

1977 ALFA ROMEO SPIDER 2000

ENGINE: 1962cc 8-valve four-cylinder

GEARBOX: 5sp man

POWER: 133 bhp at 5500 rpm

TORQUE: 132 lb-ft at 3500rpm

PERFORMANCE:

0-60MPH: 9.8 secs

TOP SPEED: 119 mph

CONSUMPTION: 28 mpg

LENGTH: 4120 mm

WIDTH: 1631 mm

WEIGHT: 1019 kg



incredibly nicely weighted at any speed, and lightens up on the move more progressively than many unassisted setups do. It does make it less of a frenetic companion on longer journeys, too – something which the gearing helps enormously. At only around 3500rpm at an indicated 70, the Spider is positively relaxed on long high speed runs.

Even when it's time to stop having fun the Alfa impresses, with brakes that make those on contemporary British sportscars appear to be wooden and ineffective. While the MGB comparisons are perhaps becoming tiresome, both are 1960s designs which have endured into the late 1970s and beyond – and while the MG feels like it, if anything the

Alfa Romeo feels like an 80s product wearing a deliciously retro 1960s skin.

We could talk about the numbers all day long, but to do so misses the point of this fantastic little roadster. Who cares that it does sixty in about ten seconds, or that the top end is just shy of 120? That sort of information's for straight line heroes, people who don't



Spider cabin better for the short-legged, though there's space for six footers.



“ Even when it's time to stop having fun the Alfa impresses, with brakes that make those on contemporary British sportscars appear to be wooden and ineffective.

understand the magic of the sports car. The magic of the Spider is that when the black ribbon of the road wends its way toward the horizon, the little Alfa will be the best friend you ever had.

END OF THE LINE

1978 saw the end of right hand drive Spider production at the

factory, effectively ending interest in the Spider in the official UK market. However, enthusiasts continued to import the subsequent Series 3 model, and a number of companies offered conversions to right hand drive either on new cars or cars supplied by clients. The two most prominent conversions were carried out by Bell and Colvill and by

Seaking, the latter of which is regarded by many enthusiasts as the better conversion. From 1990 and the launch of the Series 4, Alfa Romeo began to import cars to the UK once more to be sold via official dealer channels, though in left hand drive. Conversions continued until the end of Spider production in 1993. ■

UNIVERSAL EXPORT

The 105-series Spider may have become a legend – but it wasn't Alfa's first attempt at an open tourer. WORDS: PAUL WAGER PHOTOGRAPHY: MATT WOODS



Speaking as the former owner of an Alfa Romeo Spider S4, Alfa Romeo is a brand which has always appealed to me. I owned it for 23 years, and only sold it because my wife encouraged me to buy a Honda S2000 in its place. It's been more reliable than any BMW or Volkswagen I've owned as daily drivers, and it's cost me less than the equivalent MGB would have cost me. Given the opportunity to evaluate Alfa's first mid-sized open car, the car which preceded the 105-series Spider, I couldn't resist the opportunity.

Styled by Bertone designer Franco

Scaglione and featuring a 1290cc version of the Alfa Romeo twin-cam engine which had debuted in the Alfa 1900 four years earlier, the 750-Series Giulietta range was launched at the 1954 Turin show. Initially the car was offered as a coupe only, with the saloon – marketed as Berlina – joining the range at the following year's Turin show.

The convertible two-seater Spider is something of an aberration in the 101-series Alfa range, since it was styled by Pininfarina and assembled not at Alfa's own Milano facility but at Pininfarina's Grugliasco facility, established especially for the purpose.



ROAD TEST GIULIETTA SPIDER



Painted dash and two spoke wheel give away this car's 1950s origin. The driving experience is more modern than it should be.

There's no better illustration of the value of the US market to the European exporters than the story behind the Spider. At the time, imports to the USA were handled by legendary New York-based European car distributor Max Hoffman, who among other things was responsible for introducing the Volkswagen and Jaguar brands successfully to the USA.

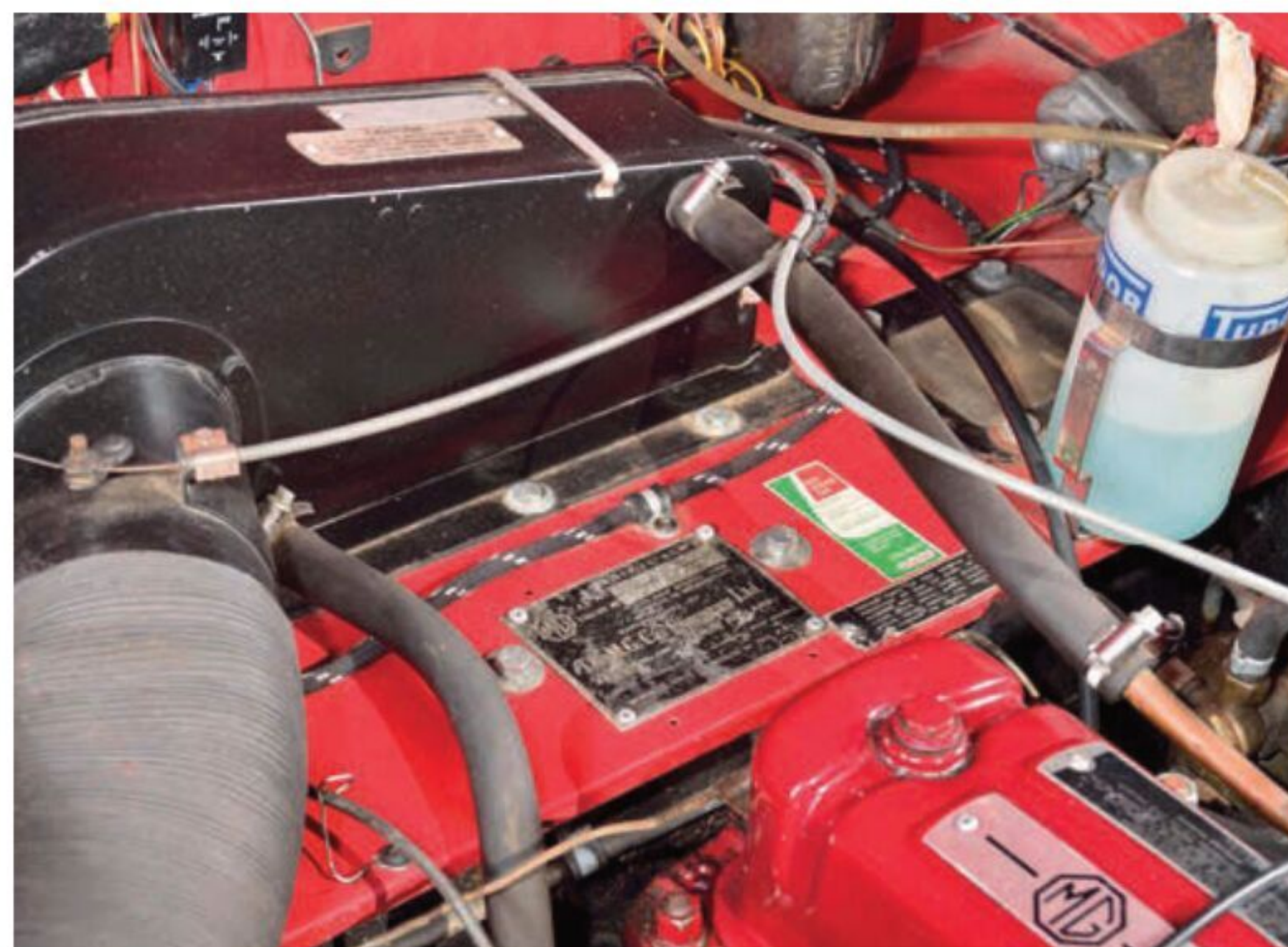
He may have been only an importer but when the Austrian entrepreneur and former racing driver picked up the phone

to Stuttgart or Milan, even iron-willed auto executives took notice. The Mercedes 300SL Gullwing and Porsche 356 Speedster were both developed as road cars following Hoffman's insistence that there was a ready market in the USA for the cars, while he was also instrumental in the development of the BMW 507 and imported BMWs to the Eastern USA until selling out to BMW in 1975.

Clearly, Hoffman knew his stuff – although he admitted that giving up on

the VW brand in 1953 was a mistake – and when he suggested that a convertible version of the Giulietta would be attractive to US buyers, Alfa was prepared to create it.

The design of the car was put out to tender back in Italy and it was Pininfarina's work which was selected for production. At the time the firm was on the cusp of taking the leap from small-scale coachbuilder to volume manufacturer and a contract with Alfa Romeo to assemble



1290cc engine feels sporting, but it's more for cruising on a bright and sunny holiday than out and out speed.

the car was the push it needed to develop a new factory outside the city.

Hoffman had insisted that the car would need to be a step up from the Triumphs and MGs of the time, with a proper convertible top and windup glass windows. For buyers used to cruise control and air conditioning in their full-size Chevys, slot-in side screens and no door locks simply wouldn't do.

Hoffman assured Alfa Romeo that he could sell all the cars they could produce,

backing this up with a firm order for 600 cars. With this in mind the Pininfarina works were geared up to produce the Spider at the rate of 20 per day, with the first cars all heading to America to fulfil Hoffman's order.

The Giulietta Spider was introduced to European buyers at the 1955 Salon de l'Automobile in Paris and was an immediate hit, combining the well regarded drivetrain of the Giulietta saloon with the elegant convertible style.

It drove as well as it looked, too. With a kerb weight of just 820kg, the 79bhp produced by the free-revving twin-cam 1300 motor went a long way and testing the Giulietta saloon in 1964, Autocar was forced to admit "British manufacturers do not produce a model comparable with the Giulietta."

Approaching the Giulietta Spider today, you need to set aside all the modern-day clichés about the Alfa Romeos of the '70s and '80s: the dodgy



electrics, shoddy trim, failing plastic and wonky panel gaps were all still in the future for the proud Alfa Romeo of the mid '50s, a firm which was confident enough to price its saloon cars up against Mercedes.

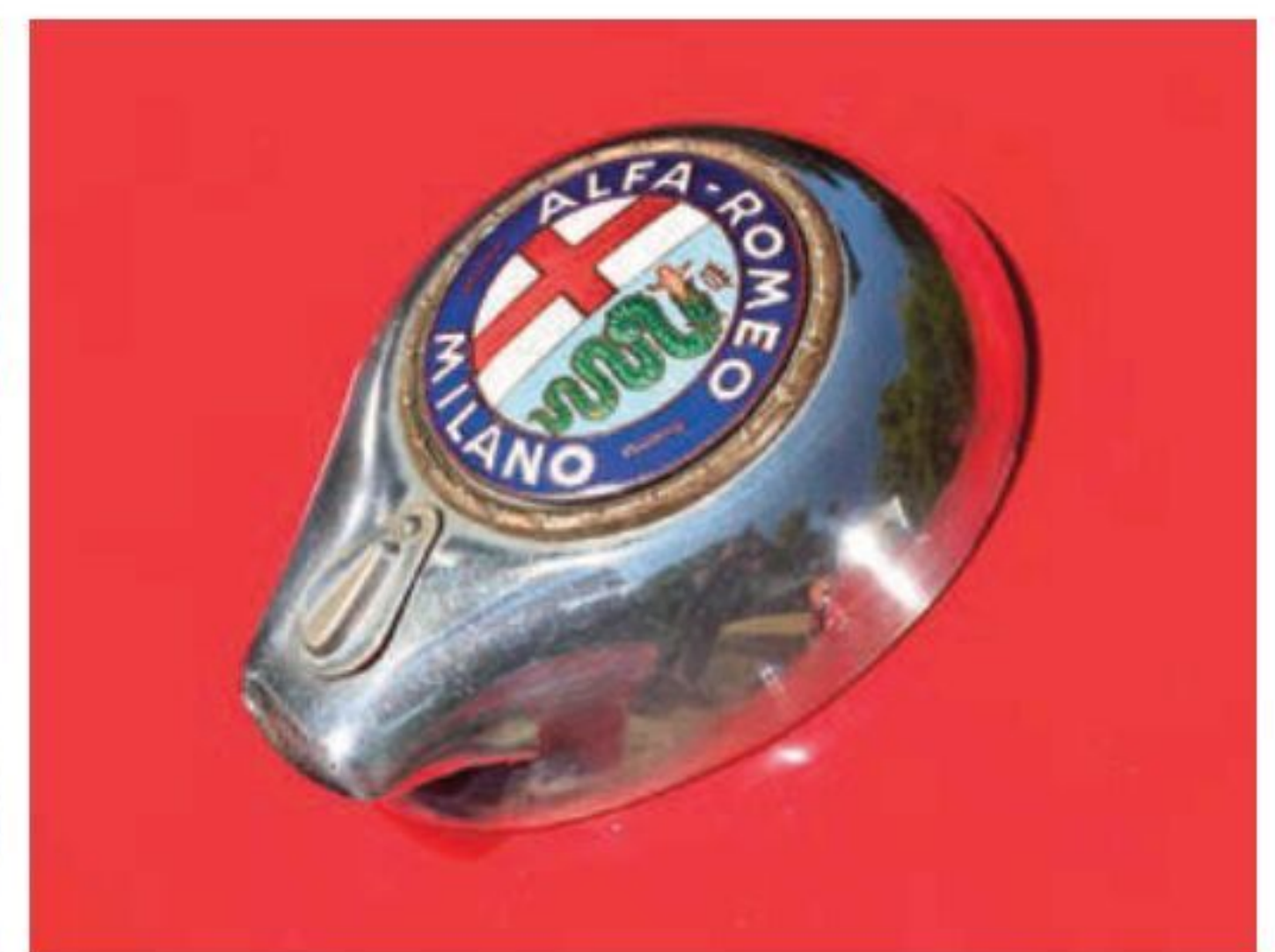
The Spider feels very much a product of the 1950s, with its delicate detailing and intricate decoration but all the same it's a world away from the British competitors of the day. The door is opened with a neat pushbutton external

“ Twist the key and the Alfa engine may not sound exotic, but give it some revs and the difference is immediately obvious.

handle rather than requiring you to reach inside, while the door itself is fully trimmed. Once inside, the seating position is similar to the MG with a low-set seat, high scuttle and a big slender-spoked steering wheel.

Twist the key and the Alfa engine may not sound exotic, but give it some revs and the difference is immediately obvious. Not only is the Alfa motor an overhead cam design but boasts a pair of them, producing more power from a





smaller capacity than rivals such as the MGA.

The plain figures don't tell the full story though; it's in the driving experience that the more expensive engineering of the Alfa shines through. Drive it hard and it doesn't feel like you're abusing a 60-year old car, with the engine happy to rev and the rest of the car designed to keep up. The car still only has four gears on offer but the ratios are better spaced to avoid the often awkward second-third gap on British products of the day, while there's synchro on all forward gears to make life easy.

On the move, the Alfa feels more modern thanks in large part to its unitary construction, but similarly to British rivals it employs front wishbones and coil springs with a live rear axle, although the Alfa uses coils while alternatives remained leaf-sprung.

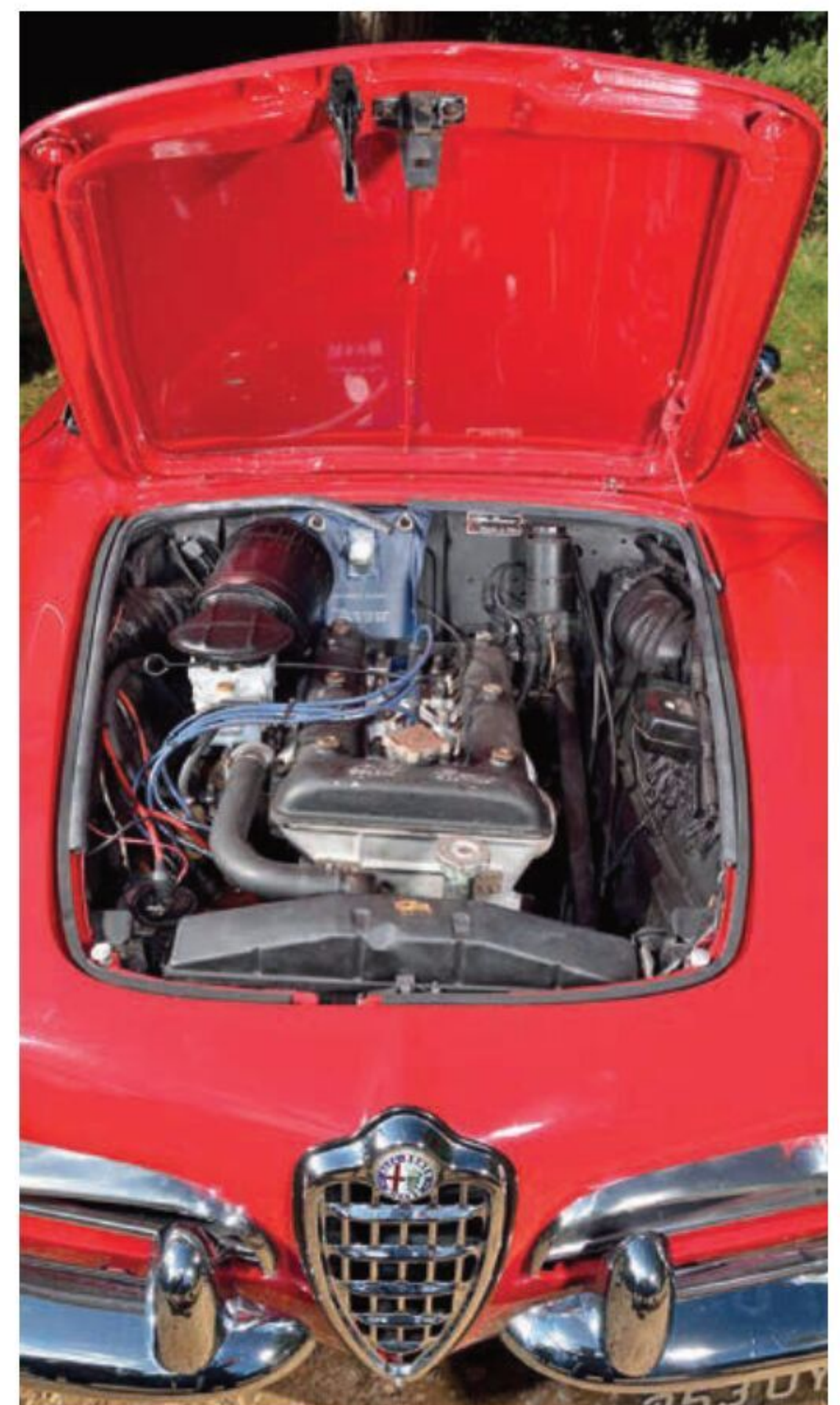
There's more wheel travel than many sports cars and as a consequence a softer ride than you might have expected on paper. It will cling on when asked,

but the Alfa will exhibit more body roll than you expect from a truly sporting car, feeling more like the saloon based design it is. On a longer trip, it's the more comfortable companion for it and nobody is going to drive anything of this era on the ragged edge today, meaning that the joy is to be had from setting the car up for faster, sweeping curves rather than opposite-locking round hairpins.

In short, it's easy to forget the age of the Alfa from behind the wheel and it's nice to be reminded that once upon a time – even if that time was increasingly far away – there was some substance to the hype behind Alfa's modern marketing.

VERDICT

As a confirmed Alfa fan, the Giulietta had captured my heart before I typed the first sentence. There's no denying the appeal of the Alfa which brought a touch of the exotic to the 1950s mid market. If the budget doesn't stretch to a 1950s Ferrari then today, as it was back then, the Alfa is a worthy alternative. ■



CLASSIC RIVALS

ALFA ROMEO SPIDER 105 V

Which one's best? The Alfa Romeo Spider, or the Alfa Romeo Spider?

Who doesn't like the idea of an Italian sports car? The mystery and romance associated with Ferrari has rubbed off on the rest of its ilk, and the Alfa Romeo Spider series has arguably inherited that legacy to the greatest degree. Helped by its role in *The Graduate*, the cigar shaped classic is a no brainer if you're looking for a classic whose charm cannot be beaten. While it certainly wasn't the first of its dynasty it was the model

which directly inspired its successor, the 916-series Spider, and its hardtop GTV sister. These cars retained the same initial formula, 2.0 engine, open roof in the Spider's case, and sharp styling – though boosted subsequently by the arrival of the V6 variant.

But is the newer car as good as the original? Can the 916 live up to the reputation earned by its older sibling? There's only one way to find out.



ALFA ROMEO SPIDER 916





ALFA ROMEO SPIDER 2000 VELOCE

Alfa Romeo had a lot in common with MG in Britain – sports saloons and sportscars built their reputations, both struggled when nationalised and both have long been touted by the papers as returning, one day, to form. The Spider 105's run from 1966 to 1993 only highlighted how advanced it was when new; by the end fuel injection might have been added but the basic recipe of coil springs, telescopic dampers, a lusty twin cam four pot and a five speed direct acting gearbox dated all the way back to an era when The Beatles were

“ The Spider 105's run from 1966 to 1993 highlighted how advanced it was when new...

still in the charts. The Alfa was never cheap – when new, an MGB was half the money – but Alfa also offered a dinky-engined Junior variant at a more reasonable price.

The original 1600 became a 1750, then was restyled into the Kamm-tailed Series 2, which was further upgraded to 2.0. The latter featured variable cam timing, something the mass market wouldn't see until Honda introduced VTEC. SPICA fuel injection and

subsequently Bosch L-Jetronic were used to keep performance and emissions ahead of the game, but UK imports ceased in 1978 and wouldn't resume until the launch of the S4. Later in life, the Series 3 of 1982 brought rubber bumpers and a duck tail rear spoiler, while the S4 brought a more 1990s look to a design which was now over thirty years old. New plastic bumpers, new 164 style lights and a new upswept bootlid meant it looked fresh,





albeit narrow by 1990s standards. A number of conversions meant these late cars could once again be had with right hand drive, though not from the factory.

The majority of Series 3s in the UK will be American imports, though some will have come over from Europe. If US cars, the odds are they've come from dry states, so while there's no escaping the rot inherent in almost all Alfas of this era, you'll have a better chance than with a car that's spent its whole life in the UK. Series 4s were properly rustproofed, making them a safer bet for all year round use, but the prettiness of earlier models makes those which

came to the UK in right hand drive the best overall bet as classics today.

Spiders are fantastic to drive, provided the Italian driving position suits your body. Synchromeshes can be difficult, but the box is pleasant to use, the steering nicely weighted, and the sweet sounding twin cam has more than enough power for the B roads a car of this class relishes. You'll even see 30mpg if you drive your Spider gently – but to us, that's rather missing the point.

Mechanically nothing really goes wrong – they may have been advanced by 1960s standard but they're simple

by the standards of today, and as long as the fluids are kept topped up and the cars regularly serviced you shouldn't see any major issues. Electrics aren't always perfect but the oldest Spiders are now well over fifty years old, and you'd not trust your house if it was last wired half a century ago either. Trim isn't always in perfect order too, so there's always something to do, but you don't buy a 1960s or 1970s Italian car and expect it to be fault free. Parts are generally easy to source, and while values are rising the Spider is still an affordable entry into classic sportscar ownership.





The Spider's coupe sibling, the GTV, offered the same experience with a snug tin top rather than convertible hood.

**ALFA ROMEO
SPIDER TWIN SPARK**

Alfa knew that the Spider 105 was getting a bit old by the 1980s – and in 1988 had begun development of its successor. While the old model was restyled into the S4, in order to eke out a few more years in the showroom, behind the scenes the new car was taking shape. It would use the Twin Spark engine developed for the 164, and share the front driven layout of that car – albeit on a smaller chassis, the one which also underpinned Fiat's Tipo and the Alfa 145 series. Once again, Pininfarina was responsible for

“ The GTV took the Spider's impressive profile and extended its generally triangular shape upwards, with a roof which looked like it should always have been there.

the styling – and the dramatic wedge, previewed with the Proteo concept car of 1991, was unlike anything Alfa had previously offered. Clear shades of 164 around the back, perhaps, but the quad headlamps were new, as was the sharply rising waist.

And as with the 105-series, a GTV was offered alongside the Spider –

though this time, they shared the majority of their shell rather than being two distinct model families. The GTV took the Spider's impressive profile and extended its generally triangular shape upwards, with a roof which looked like it should always have been there. The hard top brought greater torsional rigidity too, only improving the driving experience.





The open car was the looker though - a sharp wedge which thoroughly hid its saloon car roots. Alfa offered Twin Spark and V6.



And that was far better than it had any right to be. Despite the humble underpinnings, the GTV and Spider handled impeccably owing to a new multilink rear suspension setup and pleasant weight balance. The driving position remained a tad Italian, especially for taller people, but it was both quick and pleasantly fluid to drive. Many cheered when Alfa Romeo slotted its Busso V6 into the front to create the GTV V6 and the Spider V6, but while both cars were blessed with even greater exhaust notes they lost the lovely weight distribution which had made the original Twin Sparks such a delight to drive.



CLASSIC RIVALS

ALFA ROMEO SPIDER 105 V ALFA ROMEO SPIDER 916



Launched in 1993, the first examples of the Spider and GTV came to Britain in 1995. We got the Twin Spark at first, followed by the GTV V6, then the Spider V6. Both Spider and GTV were facelifted for 1998, with minor changes to the interior, colour coded skirts, and chrome trim to the grille surround. Finally, there was one more facelift for 2003. This brought a new front end, with a deeper 147-style grille which also made its way onto the second

generation 156. The GTV and Spider continued in this form until the end of 2004, though many were left unsold until 2006. The GTV and Spider were replaced by the Brera and new Spider of 2005 and 2006 respectively.

There's not really a lot you need to consider when buying one – especially at the prices these cars now are. Check for signs of accident damage, especially to that large clamshell bonnet as they're not cheap to replace and they do

damage easily. They don't really rust much, unless they're the victims of poor accident repairs – though post 2001 models are susceptible around the sills, jacking points and rear arches. Check the hood for damage, especially electric hoods as these can be expensive to replace. If it's not pin sharp to drive, odds are that the suspension bushes will have worn and will need replacing. Do it once, fit polyurethane bushes and they shouldn't fail again.





CONCLUSION

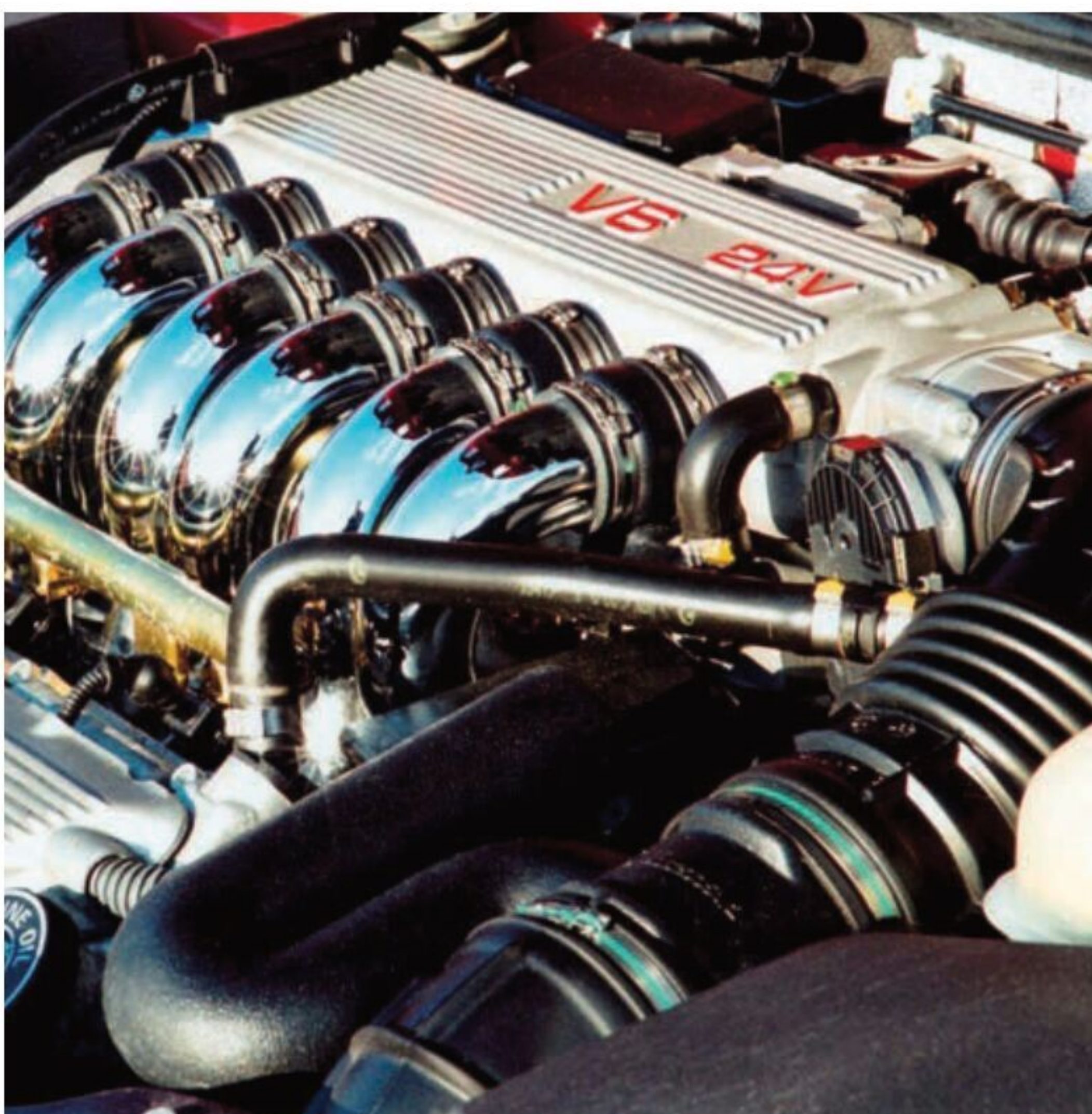
The 916 is an excellent car – a beautiful, wedge shaped cruiser with plenty of charm, based around an excellent chassis. It's a good rival to the MGF and the BMW Z3 – even, arguably, to the Lotus Elan M100. But of its competitors, only the Lotus shares its front wheel drive layout; something which caused raised eyebrows among sports car cognoscenti. The 916 Spider and GTV are cheap cars today –

With that in mind, the 916 is the car we'd advise you to buy if you were on a tight budget.

something we illustrated back in 2019 when we bought a GTV for just £500. This makes them excellent value, and even the nicest Spider Twin Spark will cost less than an average S2 Spider Veloce might fetch.

With that in mind, the 916 is the car we'd advise you to buy if you were on

a tight budget. But ultimately it still isn't as fun as the 105-series, regardless of whether that means an imported Series 3 or an early right hand drive Duetto. The magic of the 105-series Spider captivates you from the moment you get in, and makes it a very convincing winner here. ■



Alfa's V6 is a work of art, even before you turn the ignition key. Spider interior features retro hooded dials and lots of leather.

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MG v TRIUMPH
THREE DECADES OF SPORTS CAR RIVALRY



CLASSICS BUCK THE TREND

Despite gloomy prospects for UK car making, the classic industry is booming

In contrast to the negative news surrounding reduced investment in UK car manufacturing as falling Asian demand and Brexit uncertainty take hold, a booming classic industry is desperate for new talent.

More on page 5

BUYER BEWARE

If you're tempted by a too-good-to-be-true classic car, tread carefully: fraudsters are still developing new ways to trick unwary buyers.

More on page 4

BUYING THE ROVER MINI
Your guide to the last-of-the-line 'Mk7'



RENAULT TURBO ERA AT RETROMOBILE

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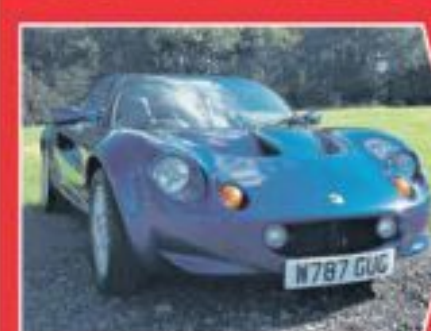
THE MARKET: '90s Q CARS



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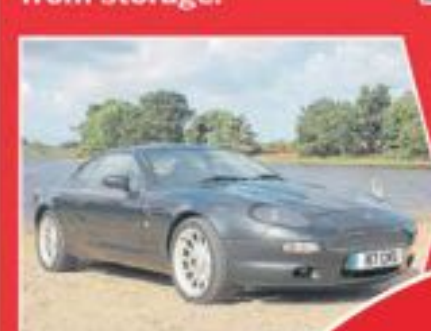


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The Irishman tackles the posers from the Motorsport News readers p20

Mexican holds his nerve on the streets of Baku to pick up the pieces as title chasers face disaster
PEREZ SURVIVES THE CHAOS TO OPEN HIS RED BULL VICTORY ACCOUNT

By Matt James
Azerbaijan Grand Prix winner Sergio Perez feared that his Red Bull-Honda would fall on the final lap of the restarted race as a hydraulic problem struck his Honda-powered car. The Mexican inherited the lead when team-mate Max Verstappen, who had led the event from lap 18 and was steering a course to victory, suffered a tyre failure, which pitched him into the wall. Perez fended off Lewis Hamilton during a two-lap restart dash to the flag as the Mercedes man slithered off the circuit at Turn 1. Hamilton recovered to 15th. Perez said he was fearful that his machine would have ground to a halt before the end. "We were close to retiring the car, but luckily we managed to finish the race. And really, it was quite difficult all the way until the end," said the relieved winner. Red Bull boss Christian Horner added: "We were really concerned that the car wouldn't get to the end of the race, which is why he stopped after the chequered flag. "You thought that we could only lose when they got the restart, but thankfully it all worked out tremendously well, and Sergio did a great, great job."

Hamilton locks up and loses potential podium
Perez took second F1 win

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OGIER CONSOLIDATES WRC LEAD WITH WIN
Champion stretches his WRC lead in Sardinia p28

FEATURE
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John Christie's new Lotus position p14

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FAMILY TREE

While the Spider may have been the best-known 105-series Alfa Romeo, its brethren enjoyed illustrious lives too.

WORDS: SAM SKELTON



The Alfa Romeo Spider may have been one of the most iconic classics of its generation, but it remains a sole part of a wider extended automotive family. All models from the 105-series cadre have rightly earned considerable respect for their abilities in their chosen field. If open air

motoring isn't vital to your enjoyment, one or more of the Spider's showroom contemporaries could offer a more suitable experience – whether through more dynamic on road manners or greater practicality. From early Giulia saloon to GTV coupe, we've examined the Spider's siblings in detail.





GIULIA AND 1750/2000 BERLINA

Produced from 1962 to 1978, the Alfa Romeo Giulia Berlina may be the least well known of the 105-family cars in Britain, but it will forever be marked in British film history as the car of the Carabinieri in fun-filled Mini caper *The Italian Job*. And depending upon the engines in those Giulias, they could well have kept pace with the Minis. Noted for its acceleration and handling, early models came with a 1570cc engine, a derivative of which would subsequently be offered in coupe and Spider form too. Fitted at first with all round drum brakes, even the entry level Giulia Ti had been fitted with all round discs by 1963. Launched with a column shift, a floor

“ Noted for its acceleration and handling, early models came with a 1570cc engine

shifter became optional on left hand drive cars around the launch of right hand drive models in 1964. All right hand drive models had the floor change. The Ti Super of 1963-1964 offered slightly more power with improved specification, while the Giulia 1300 of 1964 expanded the model downwards into the 1300cc class, differentiated from outside by its single headlamps. The Super – from 1965 – used a similar mechanical spec to the Ti Super, though with improved specification – this would become the most successful

Giulia saloon. Variations on the theme continued until the mid 1970s – a new Giulia Super range for 1974 saw a new black plastic grille and flatter bootlid, while for 1976 a diesel option became available.

There was a second saloon range from 1968 – like Fiat's 124 and 125 models, the new Alfa Romeo 1750 Berlina was barely distinguishable from the Giulia, but was in fact a larger car sitting on a longer wheelbase with many shared panels. Meant as a range topper, Bertone carried out the alterations to



the design to separate the new model from the standard Giulia model. Fitted with the same engine as the GTV, 1750 Berlina production lasted just three years, from 1968 to 1971. That year, the car was replaced with the 2000 Berlina – effectively the same model but with a larger variant of the Alfa Romeo twin cam engine. From 1972 the range was effectively split – the Giulia remained in production, as did the 2000, but with the new 1.8 litre Giulietta occupying the gap in between and making the 2000 look somewhat outdated. Produced until 1977, the 2000 Berlina was eventually replaced with a 2.0 variant of the newer Giulietta model.



Later Giulia saloon shows a revised nose. Most British readers will know the saloon as the police car featured in *The Italian Job*.



Late models were even offered with diesel engines, to boost fuel efficiency and range.

GIULIA SPRINT GT/GTV/GT JUNIOR

Styled by Giugietto Giugiaro and drawing heavily upon his earlier 2600 Sprint design, the Alfa Romeo 105-series Coupe is one of Alfa's best loved classic models. Broadly speaking, there are two ranges of Alfa Romeo coupe to fall under the 105 designation and to use the same bodies. The first range began in 1963 with the Giulia Sprint GT, followed three years later by the Giulia Sprint Veloce. Intended as the most sporting models Alfa Romeo produced, their engines increased in size almost in tandem with those of their Spider sister. Initially they used 1570cc engines, followed by the 1967 1750GTV, and the 2000GTV from 1972-1976. For

🚗 Launched in 1966 with a 1290cc engine, the 1300 GT Junior was produced until 1976.

two years, Touring of Milan produced a convertible based on the Sprint GT – but from 1966, production was discontinued in favour of the Spider we know and love.

Alongside these sporting heroes, Alfa Romeo offered a secondary coupe range, for those who either didn't need the power or didn't want the hefty taxation levied in the car's home nation of Italy. This range was the GT Junior range. Launched in 1966 with a 1290cc engine, the 1300 GT Junior was produced until 1976. A

sister model was also produced from 1972 with the 1570cc engine from the original Giulia Sprint GT – now called the 1600 Junior GT in the same manner as the 1600 had become a Junior spec engine for the Spider.

Alongside both models were lightened GTA models offered with both engine series in a bid to target the car at the amateur racer. These models were lightened, stripped out variants of the GTV and GT Junior, offered from 1965 at a higher price than that of the standard models. Virtually



GTV coupe was known in period as an excellent drivers car, and remains popular in historic motorsport races today.

all GTAs were used in motorsport. Produced by Autodelta, the GTA had aluminium outer panels, bonded or riveted to inner panels made of thinner steel. Magnesium alloy wheels, plastic windows, and a twin spark cylinder head were fitted to the Giulia Sprint GT to create the first GTA, a series which would culminate in the forms of the highly race prepped GTAm and the

supercharged GTA-SA of 1967. GTA production was over by 1971, but the GTA Junior was produced until 1975.

Worth noting in this section is the fact that Alfa Romeo's 1970s flagship, the Montreal, used a strengthened and slightly adapted variant of the 105-series chassis in Coupe form. We won't cover the car in depth here, as it's not strictly a member of the 105 family.

GRAN SPORT QUATTORUOTE

If you thought retro design was a new thing, this may come as a surprise. Back in the 1960s, when cars often replicated today were in their first flush of youth, Alfa Romeo retailed a retro take on one of its design classics, sitting on modern mechanicals. Unsurprisingly, the Alfa Romeo Gran Sport Quattoruote didn't appeal to everyone, and just 92 were



FAMILY TREE 105-SERIES



GT Junior offered single headlamps and a 1290cc engine.

sold. But unlike similar rarities such as the Excalibur, the Alfa's light remains hidden under a bushel.

Inspired by a feature in Italian old car mag *Quattroruote*, Alfa Romeo commissioned Zagato to rebody a 105-series Giulia with bodywork which replicated the 1750 Sport of the 1930s. Barring smaller wheels, the car closely resembled its forebear, while the more modern drivetrain gave it similar performance without the need for a

supercharger. Unsurprisingly, the driving experience is akin to a Giulia, though firmer – not that this is a bad thing, as the Giulia was one of the most capable sports saloons of its generation. Launched in 1966, one year after the prototype was first shown, production continued until 1968. Wind buffeting is reportedly a problem – though most sourced recommend a good set of goggles and a thick coat over any attempt to erect the hood should the weather turn inclement.





Small maybe, but the 1290cc twin cam was perfectly formed.



Lots of black vinyl inside, but it felt upmarket and distinctive.



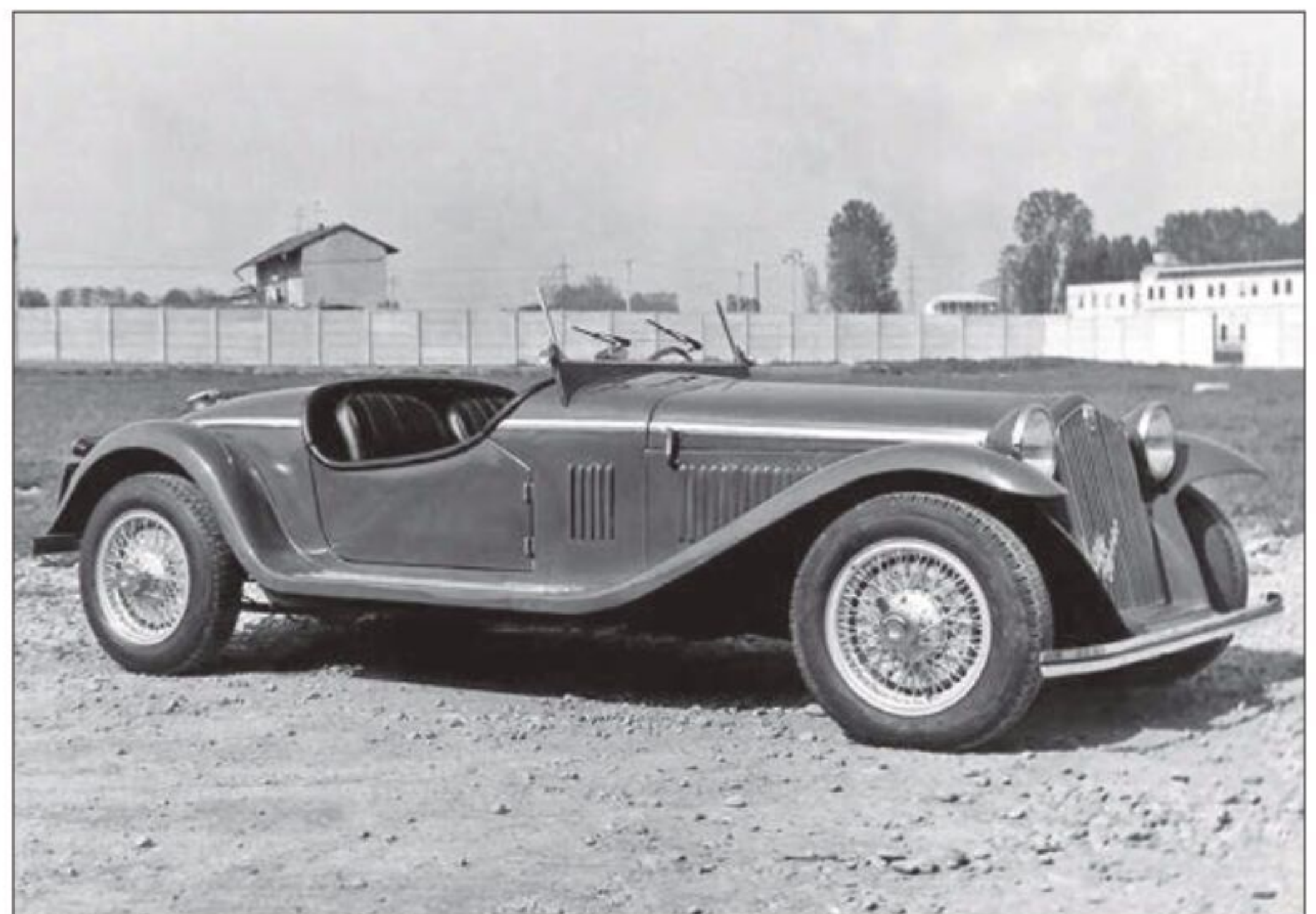
Gran Sport Quattroruote offered 1930s charms with the same chassis and drivetrain as the 105-series saloons and coupes.

CONCLUSION

The range spans 700cc, four body styles, and several thousand pounds in value. And if we're honest, there is no one "ultimate" iteration of the 105-series concept; it's dependent upon your

needs and your desires. We wouldn't argue with anyone who argued that the Spider is the most famous model, but the Gran Sport Quattroruote offers similar open air thrills with added rarity, the Berlina offers far greater practicality,

and the coupe models offer power and handling prowess aplenty. If none bar the Spider will do for you, though, that's fine – you'll be joining scores of owners bewitched by its combination of style and fluidity. ■



If a cigar shaped Spider isn't for you, the Gran Sport Quattroruote presented an older look while sharing the same great chassis.

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