

ALFA GT & GTV

You too could drive one of Bertone's best-looking '60s classics every day, suggests **Malcolm McKay**

PHOTOGRAPHY TONY BAKER



A 22-year-old Giorgetto Giugiaro styled the Alfa Giulia Coupé for Bertone while on National Service. It's one of *the* great car designs, among the most satisfying '60s cars to drive and still utterly practical for daily use.

Its heart is a superb all-aluminium engine, with wet liners, dual overhead cams and sodium-filled exhaust valves. The Sprint GT was ahead of its time, with well-engineered suspension and disc brakes, plus reclining seats and modern styling with recessed door handles. Performance didn't vary much between the original 1600 and later 1750 and 2000 models, but the 1300 was slower and cheaper; 2000s, being more common (and rarely tax-exempt) are now the best value.

The Alfa was always pricey when new, especially in the UK. In 1964, not helped by import duties, the Sprint GT cost more than an E-type roadster. Even in 1973, the 2000 GTV was £555 more than an MGB GT V8, so original UK-market cars, particularly early ones, are rare.

There were many detail changes, but the only notable restyle was for the 1750 GTV. It lost the 'step-front' nose, but gained twin headlights, overriders, an alternator plus a rear anti-roll bar,

and dropped from 155x15 to 165x14 wheels and tyres. The redesigned cabin had real wood and dramatic (but fragile) 'batwing' bucket seats.

For today's buyer, the importance of inspecting for rust and poor past repairs cannot be overstated. "They rot anywhere below knee height," stresses Jamie Porter of Alfa Workshop, "and now we are repairing repairs, going a few inches higher into the doors, wings and so on." You need to get right underneath the car, ideally on a lift, to assess its condition properly.

All other buying considerations are secondary, because the running gear is strong, durable and easily repaired. Parts supply is good, too. If you are concerned about originality, be warned that there are many 'bitsas' around with incorrect engines, interiors and trim – and not just fake GTAs. If you want a real GTA, look for full history as well as extensive aluminium panelling (even the roof) and unique suspension.

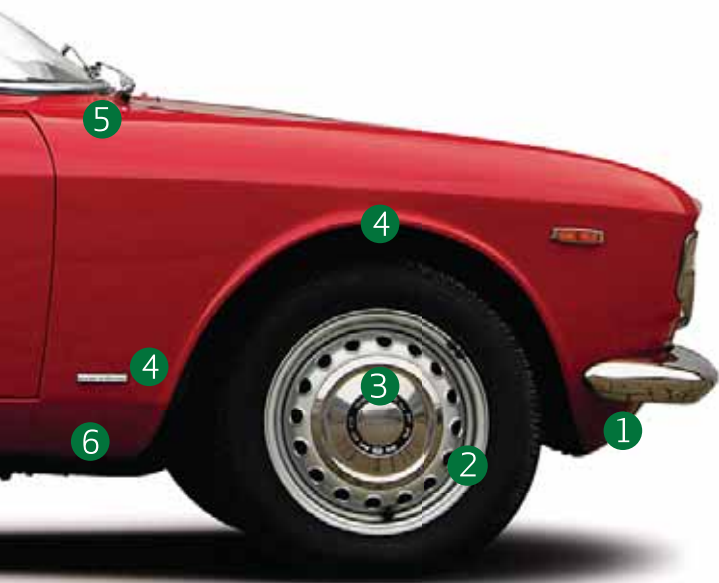
Check for signs of crash damage, because the structure ends above the back wheels. A rear impact will distort the shell, causing kinks in the wings above the wheelarches that are hard to put right. Be wary of cars with towbars, too. Also look for the correct convex curve along the sills: many have been repaired with straight panels.



Facelifted front of 1750, now the most desirable model



De Adamich and Zeccoli won '66 Snetterton 500km in GTA



Rot spots

- 1 Front valance
- 2 Crossmember, starting at anti-roll bar mounts
- 3 Chassis legs, beginning alongside bellhousing and top wishbone mounts
- 4 Wings & inner/outer arches
- 5 Bulkhead/screen surround
- 6 Outer, centre and inner sills
- 7 Doors
- 8 Floors, including outer ends of centre crossmember
- 9 Wings, inner/outer arches and around rear window
- 10 Valances, tank & boot floor



Though sturdy, the five-speed gearbox will eventually wear, showing up as weak synchromesh on second or third, or jumping out of reverse



Interior design changed with the many model variations and kits are only available for the basic seats, but a trimmer can refurbish others



The Alfa twin-cam is a brilliant design, with good water flow and sodium-filled exhaust valves, so it copes well with modern fuels. Head gaskets can fail if neglected – look for three oil leaks down block on manifold side. A worn-out engine costs around £2000 to rebuild with new pistons, liners, valve guides etc



Expect Weber, Solex or Dell'Orto carbs. If they're worn Solexes, swap them for Dell'Ortos. Incorrect – even mismatched – parts are often found



It's Italian, so expect some electrical foibles; the fusebox moved inside the car from the 1750 GTV in a (largely unsuccessful) attempt to reduce them



The braking set-up is complex on UK cars, notably later dual circuits with two servos and linkages under the driver's floor that are prone to seizing



Look for worn bushes, steering box, idler and swivels, plus rusty spring pans, but a rotten bodyshell around the mountings is more of a problem

Distinctive 'step-front' on early cars. Look for a crisp swage line all along body



On the road

The recurrent theme in every road-test report of any Bertone coupé is that these cars handle so well and are so beautifully balanced that they feel at one with the driver, helped by a willing engine and ideal gear ratios. If the one you try feels wayward or imprecise, then something's clearly not right. Bigger wheels and tyres spoil that nimbleness. Worn bottom balljoints aren't always picked up at the MoT test, camber may need adjusting, bushes front or rear may be worn, or suspension mounting-point rot repairs may have been done incorrectly or are coming loose.

All engines should pull strongly above 2000rpm, with more urge the bigger they are. Check that the engine fitted is correct (or that you are happy with the substitution). You can expect some flatness at low revs, especially with smaller engines, but if it's excessive it may be a sign of wear in the carbs or incorrect settings. It's easily sorted with Webers or Dell'Ortos, but not with Solexes because parts are hard to find.

Though uprating kits are available, the standard brakes – in all their forms – are very good. Indeed, if they are properly rebuilt and set up, there really is no need to change them. The handbrake is often criticised, particularly on early cars, but again it just needs to be adjusted correctly. Long pedal travel may be down to recon calipers – if so, budget to fit new ones.

Differential noise is becoming an issue on higher-mileage or neglected cars; final drives can be rebuilt, though swapping for a second-hand unit is cheaper. Axle hop on take-off is usually just a seized propshaft universal joint.



Sublime steering and slick 'box are key to driving appeal

OWNER'S VIEW Bill Earlam



Earlam purchased the featured Sprint GT four years ago: "It was a mid-life-crisis present to myself, bought with inheritance money from my mother, so it has an emotional attachment and I will probably keep it for a long time. This is my first old car since I was a teenager and it appealed because it's two months older than me. I bought the first one I saw – an original UK car that's needed engine, gearbox and diff rebuilds, but there's no rust. It's very satisfying to drive when you find a clear road and get a sequence of bends right. It rewards picking the right line and driving it, not being lazy. We've enjoyed a couple of track days at Goodwood. It's well received wherever you go – and goes well enough to surprise a few youngsters!"

The knowledge

WHAT TO PAY

Show/rebuilt 1750 GTV	£20,000+
Average 2000 GTV	£6500
Restoration 1300	£1750

PARTS PRICES (EXAMPLES)

Early front panel	£676
Outer sill	£112
Rebuilt engine	£2350
Water pump	£76
Dual-circuit brake master cylinder	£288
Brake pads (1300/1600 axle set)	£16
Crownwheel and pinion	£934

ON THE WEB

www.alfaowner.com; www.alfabb.com; www.forum105.de

CLUB

Alfa Romeo Owners' Club
01787 249285; www.aroc-uk.com

BOOKS

Alfa Romeo Giulia Spiders & Coupés MRP
Alfa Romeo Giulia Coupés Brooklands Books
Alfa Romeo Giulia GT Coupé
The Essential Buyers Guide Veloce

SPECIALISTS

Alfa Workshop 01763 245481 **Alfaholics**
01275 349449 **Classic Alfa** 020 8679 0707
EB Spares 01373 823856 **Ian Ellis** 01273
857077 **Highwood** 01792 234314

TIMELINE

1963 Giulia Sprint GT launched at Frankfurt Show: 106bhp, 112mph, 10.6 secs 0-60mph
1965 Touring-bodied GT Cabriolet and competition-orientated GTA introduced
1966 GTV (Veloce) added: 109bhp, bucket seats, wood-effect dash, horizontal-bar grille; Cabriolet deleted, 1000 made (99 with RHD); Sprint GT deleted; GT 1300 Junior added
1967 132bhp 1750 GTV replaces 1600
1968 GTA 1300 Junior launched: 96-165bhp
1969 GT Junior gets GTV suspension; Zagato Junior Z 1300 introduced; US cars get Spica injection; GTA manufacture ends (c500 built)
1970 1985cc, 220bhp, 143mph GTAM
1971 2000 GTV replaces 1750 (44,276 built); Junior gets 1750 body mods; 110bhp GT 1600 Junior launched, also Zagato Junior Z 1600
1974 GT 1300 Junior deleted (91,964 built)
1976 Production ends

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1963-'76/210,495
Construction steel monocoque
Engine alloy dohc 1290/1570/1779/1962cc 'four', with twin Solex/Weber/Dell'Orto carbs
Max power 89bhp @ 6000rpm-132bhp @ 5500rpm **Max torque** 101lb ft @ 3200rpm-134lb ft @ 3000rpm **Transmission** five-speed manual, driving rear wheels
Suspension: front wishbones, coil springs, anti-roll bar **rear** live axle, coil springs, trailing arms, T-bar Panhard rod; telescopic dampers, f/r. Rear anti-roll bar from 1750 on (and GTA)
Steering recirculating ball or cam and peg
Brakes 11½in (286mm) discs front, 9¾in (248mm) rear, with servo; dual circuit from '69
Length 13ft 4½in (3962mm) **Width** 5ft 2in (1575mm) **Height** 4ft 3in (1295mm)
Wheelbase 7ft 8½in (2350mm)
Weight 2046-2288lb (930-1040kg)
0-60mph 12.7-8.9 secs **Top speed** 104-116mph
Mpg 20-28 **Price new** £2431 (1750, 1970)

INSURANCE

£112 for a 30-year-old London driver with full no-claims and a clean licence on a garaged 1970 1750 as a second car, agreed value £10,000, 5000 limited miles. Lancaster: 01480 484848

THE ALTERNATIVES



BMW 1600-2002
 German build quality didn't extend to rust-proofing, so an '02 can rot as badly as

an Alfa. It has more space inside, while great performance and superb parts availability enhance this refined, compact saloon's appeal. **Sold/no built** 1966-'77/736,112 **Mpg** 22-30 **0-60mph** 9.9 secs **Top speed** 107mph **Price new** £1776 (2002, '70) **Price now** £5000



FIAT 124 COUPÉ
 Like the Alfa, the twin-cam 124 handles and goes well, but rorts like hell. Parts can be

hard to find and they're now rare: lower values meant many were scrapped. Five-speed from '69 and 1608cc engine give best performance. **Sold/no built** 1966-'72/380,000 **Mpg** 23-28 **0-60mph** 11.6 secs **Top speed** 106mph **Price new** £1745 (1600, '70) **Price now** £5000

One to buy £5750

Year of manufacture 1974 **Recorded mileage** 90,109 **Vendor** Titus Rowlandson, near Eye, Suffolk; tel: 07779 799476 **For** fair price, great drive **Against** minor rot, sunroof, not tax-free

Sub-£6000 has become dangerous territory for 105 coupés, but this Blu Olandese 2000 GTV is surprisingly sound. Not being tax-exempt keeps the price down – as does the sunroof for some – yet this is arguably the most usable 105 model.

The current owner has had the car for 10 years and is only selling it because he's emigrating after working abroad. As a result the car has had little use in recent years, but it comes with MoTs back to 1988 when it had covered 66,508 miles. It's clearly been resprayed at some point and looks excellent, with perfect panel gaps and no sign of crash damage. The vendor replaced the jacking points and repaired the rot-prone sill-to-A-post areas for the last MoT. This work was done well, but the new owner will need to sort some rot behind the anti-roll-bar mounts in a year or two. Surface rust under the doors and in the boot also needs to be dealt with before it takes hold.

The interior is smart, with immaculate cloth upholstery and an uncracked dash. The tricky cable-driven window winders work perfectly, as do all the controls. On the road, the GTV drives superbly. The engine is torquy, with no sign of smoke. The gearchange is smooth and crunch-free – even when cold – but the clutch takes up quite high and may need adjustment. The brakes are excellent, too, plus the suspension is quiet and supple. The GTV has been on SORN since June '07 and has MoT until January next year.



Dutch Blue looks good; plenty of life in 185/60x14 tyres



Cloth trim is immaculate and the car has recent new carpets



Engine pulls well, showing 80psi oil pressure at 3000rpm



Grip excellent; pert rump is arguably even prettier than the nose

Our verdict

Find a car on which someone else has already paid a fortune to eradicate all of the rust properly, keep treating it to preserve the body and you'll have a really enjoyable and surprisingly practical car that easily keeps up with modern traffic and attracts many admiring glances.

Buy a rusty Alfa, though, and you'll have to sell your soul to restore it.

FOR

- Great handling, outstanding for its time
- Beautiful Bertone styling
- Lively performance
- Civilised and fun to drive

AGAINST

- Structure prone to severe rot throughout
- Even previous repairs may need re-doing!
- Many are up-engined; fake GTAs abound, too