

CLASSIC DRIVER

Timeless Classics: Bizzarrini 5300 GT

Lead

The phrase 'a racing car for the road' is an overused cliché, but rarely is the cliché more appropriate than when applied to the car pictured here. The whole history of the car, in fact, is tied up with Giotto Bizzarrini's desire to build race cars – and Renzo Rivolta's desire to build road cars...

The history of the Iso Grifo / A3C / Bizzarrini is complicated indeed, especially when it comes to what, exactly, each individual car should be called. The condensed version is this: hugely talented engineer Giotto Bizzarrini was one of the workers who walked out on Ferrari in the 'palace revolt' of 1961 and who, together, formed ATS. However, Bizzarrini soon left ATS to work on his own. Among the commissions he accepted was one from Renzo Rivolta, a wealthy Milanese industrialist who wanted to build a GT car under his own Iso brand. With Bizzarrini's input, Rivolta built first the Iso Rivolta and then – on a shortened chassis – the fabulous [Iso Grifo](#).

As Bizzarrini famously put it, "I started with the idea of the 250 GTO and set about trying to improve on it."

Road or race?



It wasn't long, however, before Bizzarrini's and Rivolta's ambitions were to diverge. The former wanted to focus on the car's terrific potential as a racing car (it won the GT class at Le Mans in both 1964 and '65), while the latter was more interested in the road-going versions. The situation was further complicated by the fact that Bizzarrini arguably owned the Grifo name... but it was finally agreed that Iso would use the Grifo name and Bizzarrini would build 'A3s', as Strada (road-going) cars and 'A3Cs' as Corsa (racing) cars. Phew. Oh – and then the street version was re-named the Bizzarrini 5300 GT. Well, we said it was complicated.

Italian styling, American power



But forget the name. What Bizzarrini's road car offered was a stunning combination of powerfully sensuous looks (styled by [Bertone](#)) and, under the skin, a semi-monocoque body riveted to the chassis. The front/mid-mounted 5.3-litre Chevrolet V8 engine promised 355 to 400HP, allowing nigh-on 180mph. It is, indeed, the supreme example of that frequently misused cliché, a racing car for the road. And what makes the street version even more desirable today is that Bizzarrini's primary interest in racing meant that very few examples of the 5300 GT Strada were ever built.



The pictured [Bizzarrini 5300 GT](#), one of the aluminium-bodied examples and claimed to be in concours condition, will be offered for sale by [RM Auctions in Monaco, on 10 May](#).

Gallery

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