

CLASSIC DRIVER

Iso Grifo A3/C

The following is an extract from Roberto Giordanelli's feature in Auto Italia magazine, Issue 109 2005. For access to the full feature, plus articles on driving the Ferrari Superamerica, the Alfa Romeo Tipo 33, the Moretti 750 Gran Sport, and much more, see www.auto-italia.co.uk



The Bizzarrini has presence. It also has that nostalgic schoolboy comic-book look of a real road-racer - those front-end stripes are copies of its original Sebring 12 Hour livery.

The A3/C prototype made its first public appearance at the 1963 Turin Show and no two A3/Cs are identical. Louvers, vents, trim and grilles evolved from the 1963 prototype (chassis B 0201). Giotto Bizzarrini worked with Giorgetto Giugiaro to arrive at this stunning sculpture of alloy and rivets. Some time in 1965, the flat rear screen became curved as it extended down its flanks. The Corsa (race car) had lighter bodywork, additional ducts for cabin ventilation, an external fuel-filler and Plexiglas windows.

The steel tube chassis of the Iso A3/C is derived from that of the Iso Grifo A3L, while power was supplied by a Chevrolet 327cu in (5354cc) V8 giving 405bhp in Corsa form and 363bhp for the Strada - which managed the 0-60mph yardstick in six seconds, with a Ferrari-frightening top speed of 160mph. Original Corsa versions of the A3/C tipped the scales at 1220kg, with the Strada not much heavier at 1270kg. 'Our' car is down even further to 1000kg, and its rebuilders found an extra 40bhp from the exhaust system and an extra 30bhp from its *Acu-Sump* lubrication, finishing up at 500bhp.



A3/C production began in early 1964 and one of the first (chassis B 0202, ie our car) contested the Sebring 12 Hours, marking the A3/C's competitive debut. During the next two years, Corsas recorded several class wins in the 1964 and 1965 Le Mans. By August 1965, Bizzarrini and Rivolta's partnership broke down after 30 A3/Cs were built. Bizzarrini acquired enough parts to go on to build another 50 or so A3/Cs, all still with

Bizzarrini Livorno badges. In period, homologation problems meant that the A3/C had to run in the very fast Prototype Class. This put them up against pure racers like the Ford GT40 and Ferrari P3. Chassis B 0202, although being plagued with a troublesome gearbox, went on to win a regional SCCA title in 1964. It also finished in the 1964 Sebring 12 Hour race.

The Test Drive

"So with 500bhp per tonne sitting on primeval Dunlops, I climb into this wonderful historic racer. The V8 is mounted so far back in the chassis that it intrudes into the cabin space. Add a gearbox and you have one of the largest transmission tunnels in the business. The seats are copies of low-back originals and there's a rollcage pad for helmet support. Instruments are strewn across the dash with a 10k tachometer and 320km/h (200mph) speedo in the centre.

"The race clutch is a twin-plate unit that requires the usual technique for gentle starts; ie big muscles and fine control, and transmission is by an alloy-cased T100/10 four-speed gearbox and HS4 Jaguar limited-slip diff. Brutal acceleration arrives at 4,000rpm which overwhelms the Dunlops. With its quicker (2.6 turns now vs. 4.5 of the original) steering ratio, yaw angles are easily rectified. These cars need to understeer in steady-state cornering or on corner entry, as oversteer and power-slides are instantly available from the right pedal.



"What this car has in abundance is feel, communication and right-now power. The steering loads up nicely before slip lightens the feel to keep the driver informed - a bit like the old 250 series Ferraris. Overall it is definitely my kind of car. A well-sorted Bizza is now further up the grid than in period. With power over handling it needs a dominant driver. What a great car. My time behind the wheel was short. The open exhausts annoyed one of the neighbours so we were duly ejected from the test track. "





□ Words by [Roberto Giordanelli](#) and pictures courtesy of Michael Ward, and Auto Italia magazine.

The car arrived at the test track courtesy of [Legends Racing](#).

See www.auto-italia.co.uk or call +44(0)1858 438817 for back issues and subscriptions.

ClassicInside - The Classic Driver Newsletter
[Free Subscription!](#)
Gallery

Source URL: <https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/iso-grifo-a3c>
© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.