

# CLASSIC DRIVER



## 1956 Maserati A6G/54GT Zagato Coupé

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**I felt slightly underdressed behind the wheel of this car. If any 1950s GT requires a jacket and tie, it's this Zagato-bodied, lightweight road-racing coupé from Maserati.**

And I mean a jacket and tie would feel necessary for **competing** in the grey, **Mille Miglia**-eligible car – as many rich Italian amateurs did in the late-50s, enthusiastically hillclimbing and racing while maintaining certain sartorial standards.

Over a cup of tea, **Will I'Anson** (of **Martin Chisholm Collectors Cars**, the company marketing the **Maserati**) and I had been discussing the thorny question of the 'sexiest car ever'. Yes, we agreed, a **Ferrari 250 GT SWB 'Comp'** is right up there "...but," said Will "wait until you see the Maserati."



After he'd carefully driven the alloy-bodied coupé out of the Cotswold stone barn, I could understand why. The designs from the great Milanese house are always striking. Some, it has to be said, are 'less successful', while others – such as the **Alfa Romeo TZs** and **Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato** – are quite brilliant. The car pictured here is one of **Zagato's** greats and looks superb from any angle.

No 'double-bubble' roofline (just two **A6G/54GTs** were so-bodied), but an elegant car with the controlled aggression which **Zagato** – when it gets it right – is so good at.



The Modenese manufacturer, under **Orsi**-family ownership, had introduced the **A6GCS** as a two-litre, twin-cam, open sports-racing car in 1953. The accompanying road car, the **A6G/54 GT**, was designed to make money for the company, amortising the colossal costs of **Formula 1** racing and providing a viable platform for the future.

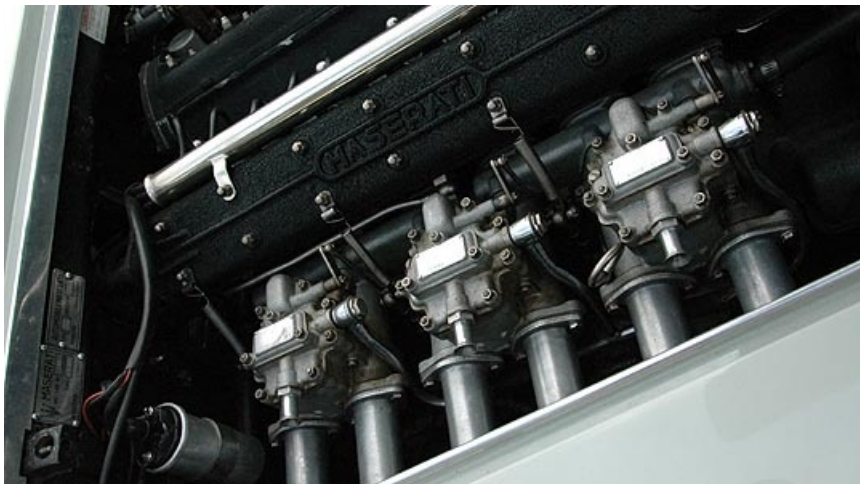
In just over three years, 60 **A6G/54 GTs** were produced with coupé and spyder bodywork by **Frua**, **Allemano** and **Zagato** – the latter making just 20 of the lightest, most competition-focused cars.

As an example, **Stirling Moss** and **Denis Jenkinson** used a test mule **Zagato** coupé when practising for the **1956 Mille Miglia**. With the benefit of a twin-plug head, the **Colombo**-developed straight-six produced around 160bhp – enough to propel the featherlight, tall-g geared Zagatos to a top speed of over 130mph.



It was the perfect car for the rich amateur who needed an impressive road car that could double-up as a weekend racing car. Drivers such as **Giuseppe Musso** (brother of works **Ferrari** and **Maserati** driver **Luigi**), who took delivery of this car, chassis 2118, from **Guglielmo 'Mimo' Dei**, **Maserati's** concessionaire in **Rome**.

It was raced in period – by **Musso** and others – but it is nevertheless, in essence, a highly desirable road car with a racing engine and other high-performance equipment.



And what an engine. You can tell by the immediate whump! when the six cylinders catch that this is something very special. Although **Weber DCOE**-equipped, there's no 'chuffing' or uneven idle and, under power, the short-stroke (76.5mm x 72mm) is silky smooth and powerful throughout the rev-band. I put that down to the twin plugs and a high compression ratio. Hit 4000rpm in fourth (top) and the motor will pull the light car along with ease, and the long ratios mean that gear changing (via the GTO-like, big aluminium 'ball') is kept to a minimum. The suspended pedals are wide-spaced and easy to use, by the way.



Inside, the car is beautifully trimmed in pale blue leather, with ribbed headlining (also in leather) that complements the pale grey exterior. **Zagato** is well-known for its lightweight construction, so you will see wind-up Perspex windows in fabricated, natural aluminium surrounds. Even the winders are alloy, with tiny hinged ends that fold out of harm's way.

A large **Jaeger** tachometer sits behind the broad alloy and wood steering wheel. For the period, there's a degree of play in the steering but no more and (unsurprisingly) not a lot of lock. It's a road-going racing car, after all.

Visibility is good, so you would be able to see around corners when tackling a hillclimb, and there's enough room inside for two people to enjoy any of today's long-distance rallies. Inside and out, the condition is superb; it was restored by **Dino Cognolato** a few years ago, and the Italian expert painstakingly brought it back from its then-red livery to the subtle pale grey you see today.

To sum up, it's desperately desirable, very valuable and just so, so stylish. Maybe it's the colour or perhaps the big **Maserati Tridente** - let's not forget that this was a period when **Maserati** was the equal of **Ferrari** away from the track as well as on it.

Whatever the reason - and you can add **1950s Rome** to the mix, too - this is a car for a man of taste, who wants style and substance, buying his suits at **Brioni** in the **Via Barberini** and his cars from '**Mimo**' **Dei**. The ultimate, discerning 'Gentleman Driver'.



For further information please see **Maserati A6G/54GT Zagato Coupé** or [www.martinchisholm.com](http://www.martinchisholm.com). Click **HERE** to see all the **Martin Chisholm Collectors Cars Ltd** cars for sale in the **Classic Driver** car database.



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