

CLASSIC DRIVER

Compact Supercar: Alfa 4C is here at last



Alfa Romeo was once a name to stir the blood of any serious sportscar enthusiast, but then it abandoned rear-wheel drive, withdrew from the U.S market, and left its fans to weep and wail. But wait... in less than three weeks' time, a new mid-engined, RWD 'compact supercar' of an Alfa Romeo will arrive in Geneva.

This – the Alfa Romeo 4C – is the car that will re-launch the marque into the United States. Baby brother to the mind-bogglingly beautiful 8C Competizione, which (was it really 10 years ago that we first saw the 8C concept?) raised hopes that Alfa was returning to rear-wheel drive and its sporting heritage, the 4C is stunning to look at and, according to rumour, will carry a price tag of less than £50,000 in the UK.

First seen as a concept at Geneva two years ago, the small (less than 4m long, 200cm wide and 118cm high) lightweight (carbonfibre chassis) 4C will be produced in the Maserati plant in Modena.

Alfa is making some rash claims regarding the performance promised by the 4-cylinder 1750cc all-aluminium turbocharged engine. Aside from a weight-to-power ratio of less than 4kg to every HP, the engine features a “revolutionary scavenging control system that gets rid of any turbo lag” – apparently. We can't quite see it getting rid of ALL turbo lag; such a thing sounds improbable, but we're more than willing to have our minds changed when test cars become available.



Strictly a two-seater, there are bucket seats for the driver and passenger, while the transmission is Alfa's TCT twin-clutch automatic, with gears that the driver can choose to change in sequential mode using steering-wheel-mounted shift paddles. Meanwhile, there's the familiar Alfa DNA selector – but now with added 'Race' mode.

If the pre-launch chatter is to be believed, the Alfa 4C could indeed see the Italian marque returning to the high-volume sporting success of its illustrious past, when it goes on sale later this year.



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