

CLASSIC DRIVER

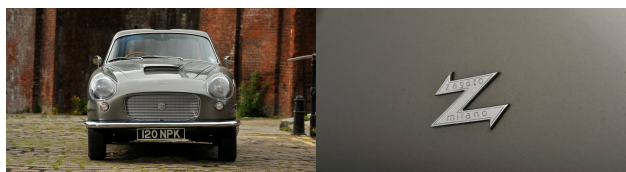
[Bristol 406 Zagato: Charismatic classic or confused catastrophe?](#)

Lead

Zagato's quirky and often radical styling has always split opinion, and the hallowed Italian design house's take on the Bristol 406 certainly didn't buck the trend. But was this particular interpretation tainted by the vision of Bristol's eccentric director? We'll let you decide...

It's the subject of intense debate in the Classic Driver office today: is this 1960, Zagato-bodied Bristol a classic, unconventional and charming design typical of the famed design house whose name it bears, or just a slightly awkward, Anglo-Italian collaboration boasting some warped dimensions and a confused character?

Sit down, stand out



Bristol's then-concessionaire and soon-to-be director [Anthony Crook](#) was as fanatical about his cars' ability to stand out as he was notoriously choosy about who could buy one. The firm's customer base was always extremely select – clients included [Peter Sellers](#), Bono and Sir Richard Branson, to name but a few – and each and every car was distinct and incredibly luxurious. You knew a [Bristol](#) when you saw one and there was certainly no need for advertisements or lavish motor show stands.

Zagato's 406 had to carry the same torch, regardless of the designer behind it, and Crook's brief for the two-door body was simple yet precise. It was to be designed for those who desired an even faster car than the standard 406, while still retaining reliability, flexibility and, perhaps to the detriment of the styling, sufficient rear accommodation – a trait Crook said was 'normally lacking in Grand Touring saloons'.

Crook's curves



The result was arguably successful in that Crook's requirements were met; performance-wise, especially, considering the drastic 260kg weight saving over the standard car. But were [Zagato's design principles](#) lost in translation? In our eyes, at least, the signature double-bubble roof does little to compensate for the vast, hearse-like rear windscreen and abrupt rear arches. It is quite clearly still recognisable as a Bristol, though, and there are some attractive Latin design cues well integrated into the design, albeit rather too subtly to make themselves properly known.

[This particular car](#) is one of just four five-seater 406 Zagatos, and was displayed at the 1959 Earls Court Motor Show before being sold by Anthony Crook Motors to a well-known member of the Bristol Owners' Club. Benefitting from a major restoration and continuous history from new, 'NPK 120' will be [auctioned by Bonhams at its Goodwood Festival of Speed sale on 27 June](#). We're sure its owner-to-be will revel in the car's flexibility and interior space, but will the same be said of the styling? To join the exclusive roll call of Bristol owners might just swing it!

Photos: Bonhams

Gallery

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