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A Lancia Stratos made to caress the curves of the Col de Turini

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Why take a supposedly 'driver-focused' modern sports car to a road as sensational as the Col de Turini, when the rally-bred Group 4 Lancia Stratos was effectively made for those scenic switchbacks and hairpins?





It's not hard to envisage yourself at the wheel of this sublime Lancia Stratos (recently sold by Classic Driver dealer [DPM Motors](#)) on the Col de Turini, accompanied only by the outrageously roty engine note of that 2.5-litre Dino V6. Fortunately, in your imagination, you can choose to eliminate the bone-jarring ride, insufferable heat of the cockpit, hyper-sensitive handling traits and non-existent rear visibility, and focus on nailing every apex while casting the occasional glance out over the spectacular mountain vistas.



With its voluptuous arches, giant spoilers and other rallying addenda, the competition-spec Group 4 Stratos is worlds away from the road-going Stradale version - the purest form of Gandini's radical design. But what this car lacks in unadulterated beauty it more than makes up for in downright exuberance. It's pure theatre (ironic, since it was designed for the special stage), from the foot-wide rear wheels and bulbous conical exhausts to the driving position that requires contortionist levels of flexibility and the near-unfathomable dash crammed with badges labelled in Italian.



Like certain other competition-derived sports cars of the same era, Stratoses are notoriously tricky little divas to drive, and will happily pirouette if they feel your touch isn't deft enough for their liking. Power-to-weight is akin to today's Porsche 911 Turbo, and the wheelbase is go-kart-esque with the engine residing only a mite ahead of the rear wheels. But if you fancy yourself as a bit of a Sandro Munari or a Björn Waldegård, we're sure you'd relish the challenge of jostling with the car on the Col de Turini. After all, the pass does lend itself as a stage for the Monte-Carlo Rally, and is often covered with a sprinkling of snow, even in the summer. The car's rally credentials are proven, but are yours?



The Stratos's appeal is timeless and, in this Group 4 guise, a true reflection of its rally pedigree and success. Everything from its innovative, oh-so-seventies wedge shape to its perfectly curved windscreen (designed to reduce distortion) was radical, and played a part in securing its three World Rally Championships in 1974, '75, and '76. Munari, who must also be attributed, deemed the car an understandable monster – and we think that's a perfect way of describing it. The facts that build quality was, well, non-existent and anyone over five-foot-eight will struggle to get in, let alone drive the thing, is part of the charm. We would love to own a Stratos, if only just to look at and dream of driving on the Col de Turini.

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2016

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