10 amazing Abarths that every car guy should know

Lead
Carlo Abarth's petite and delicate yet angry and boisterous cars were virtually unbeatable in the 1950s and '60s, scoring over 7,300 victories in a wide range of categories and classes. Now a new book beautifully highlights 45 of the most significant Scorpions, each with a mighty sting in the tail...

You might remember at the beginning of this year we visited arguably the finest collection of Abarths on the planet, lovingly amassed over the last four decades by the former factory racer Engelbert Möll. Now, the collection's most sought-after Scorpions take centre stage in a new book published by Delius Klasing, chronicling the fascinating Italian manufacturer and its ingenious founder Carlo Abarth.

Designed by our friend and the founder of Curves Magazine Stefan Bogner and featuring sensational imagery from Bogner, Rémi Dargegen and a raft of other fantastic photographers, *Abarth: Racing Cars* is a must for anyone looking to understand the nuanced history of the marque's 'small but wicked' cars, built in Turin from 1948 to 1974. It also features first-hand reflections from key figures in Abarth's history, ranging from legendary racers such as Derek Bell and Arturo Merzario to masterful engineers including Antonio Tomaini and Mauro Forghieri. We think the following 10 boisterous beasts from the book have the sharpest stings in their tails.

Fiat Abarth 500 Record Pininfarina

Proving that motorsport isn't the be all and end all for an automotive manufacturer, Carlo Abarth sought to increase the profile of his company in alternative ways during the 1950s, including several successful endeavours to break endurance speed records.

On 27 September 1958, this Fiat Abarth '500 Record', fitted with an ultra-streamlined body by Pininfarina, set off on a 10-day run at Monza, during which it would cover 28,000km at an average speed of 116.4kph, and break a staggering 23 international speed records. Sure enough, at the Turin Motor Show later in the year, the '500 Record' went down an absolute storm – mission complete.

Fiat Abarth 750 Coupe Zagato

First presented at Geneva in March of 1956, the Zagato-bodied Fiat Abarth 750 – with its characteristic 'double bubble' roof and rear intake – instantly proved formidably successful on the racetracks of Europe and, subsequently, the United States. In the 1956 season, for example, the likes of Mario Poltronieri, Ernesto Prinoth, and Vittorio Feroldi De Rosa wrestled the lightweight GTs to 31 class victories. More significantly, the 750 gave Carlo Abarth the taste of victory – one he'd relentlessly pursue for the following

decade.

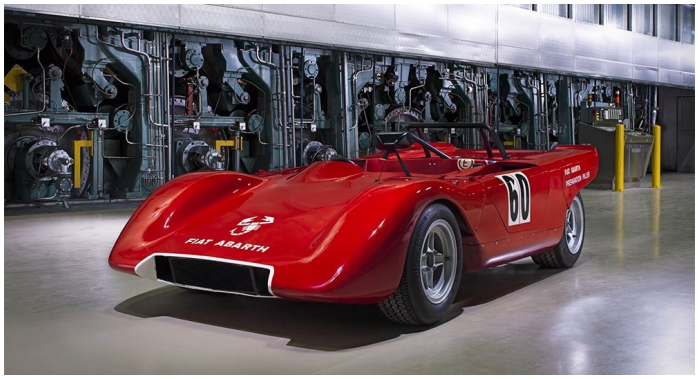
Fiat Abarth 1000 TCR Radiale

The ultimate iteration of what Abarth is perhaps most associated with – i.e. the loud, proud, and potent versions of the humble Fiat 600 D – the brutish ‘1000 TCR Radiale’ was a true giant killer, winning a series of European Touring Car Championships. Its secret weapon was the clever radial engine, which was fed by a twin-barreled Weber carburetor and developed more than 110HP. Not bad for a car weighing just 610kg!

Fiat Abarth 1000 Spider Sport

Among the rarest and most significant cars in the Möll collection is this, the 1963 Fiat Abarth ‘1000 Spider Sport’. One of a handful built and tipping the scales at just 405kg, the car was driven by the famous Swiss racer Tommy Spychiger to 13 class victories and one overall win during the 1963 season. In that year alone, the Scorpion brand claimed 535 victories – in the smaller categories, Abarth was simply unbeatable.

Fiat Abarth 1000 Biposto Corsa



Affectionately baptized the ‘Millino’ thanks to its diminutive dimensions, the Fiat Abarth ‘1000 Biposto Corsa’ was conceived as a bridge for young drivers looking to graduate from touring car to sports car racing. Most notable from a technological point of view was that its high-revving, 110HP Bialbero engine was mounted over the rear axle, rather than amidships as in its predecessors.

Abarth Simca 1300 GT Coupé Corsa

Responsible for launching the career of a wave of young drivers across Europe, the Abarth Simca ‘1300 GT Corsa’ was the first of Carlo’s cars with an engine developed entirely in-house. The car, which was based on the Simca 1000, weighed just 630kg despite being somewhat larger than the ‘Berlina’ saloons and scored victory after victory on weekend after weekend. Engelbert Möll, himself, understand the virtues of the 1300 GT Corsa only too well – as a Works racer, he scored eight successive victories driving one during the 1963 season.

Fiat Abarth OT 2000 Periscopio

Yes, the one with the snorkel. In 1965, Abarth’s business partnership with Simca expired and, as a result, its engineers turned to Fiat once again for componentry to build an all-new racing coupé: the ‘1300 OT’. Perhaps inevitably, it was extremely successful, claiming Abarth the division one manufacturer’s world championship in 1966. Around 12 examples were fitted with the larger 2-litre engine, developing 215HP, and raced by such legends as Jochen Rindt and ‘Gigi’ Taramazzo. As such, the soul-stirring ‘OT 2000 Periscopios’ are among the most desirable cars Abarth ever built.

Fiat Abarth OT 2000 Coupé America

Il Mostro – that’s what Abarth’s engineers christened the 185HP ‘OT 2000 Coupé America’, a potent saloon based on the staid Fiat 850 Coupé. Equipped with a powerful 2.0-litre racing engine, the car was originally conceived to climb into the large-capacity touring car ring with the likes of the Alfa Romeo GTA and Lotus Cortina. Now that we’d have *loved* to have seen – alas, their great production cost resulted in just three being built, one of which was sold to a certain Niki Lauda.

Fiat Abarth 2000 Monoposto Record

Towards the end of 1965, Carlo Abarth climbed behind the wheel of this tiny monoposto and, together with Johannes Ortner and Mario Poltronieri, set about breaking eight international and two world speed records at Monza. Suffice to say, the months of strict dieting, during which he'd feasted predominantly on apples and lost over 30kg, were more than worth it. He could slip into the narrow cockpit, for starters. The Autodrome at Monza was Abarth's happy place and the records were a fitting way to end what was an extraordinary year for the Turin company – 900 victories, 23 of which were outright.

Fiat Abarth 2000 Sport Spider 4-Fari

If you asked us for our favourite Abarth, we'd have to say the '4-Fari'. The small and sultry '2000 Sport Spider' is without doubt one of the prettiest sports-racing cars ever designed. Just look at the thing, resplendent in ravishing red. What's more, it was driven by an extraordinary roll call of racing legends, including Peter Schetty, Arturo Merzario, and Toine Hezemans, all of whom helped cement its place in the history books.

Photos courtesy of Delius Klasing Verlag (Stefan Bogner, Rémi Dargegen, Bildermeister/Gerrit Glöckner, Steve McCurry, Studio Orel, Frank Schönau, Peter Singhoff, WK Photo/Johann Wimmer, Michel Zumbrun) © 2018

Gallery

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

Source URL: https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/cars/10-amazing-abarths-every-car-guy-should-know
© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.