

SHOPPING WITH COLIN

1961 Alfa Romeo Giulietta Spider

ALONG CAME A BARGAIN. BY COLIN COMER

Think short money can no longer get you an iconic Fifties Italian sports car? Alfa Romeo Giulietta Spiders from 1955 to 1962 are some of the best-kept secrets in vintage sports cars. Our subject is a 1961 101-chassis Spider.

It has the hotter engine from a 1600-cc Veloce, which makes it a real performer. The previous owner added a fifth cog to the original four-speed and a taller, Veloce-sourced final drive but kept all the original bits, including the numbers-matching engine and copious spares. The car needs freshening, but the tweaks add driving fun that would be lost in a concours-correct restoration.



CHECK >> The number one go/no-go factor on these is rust. I'd buy a rust-free Spider that smoked, had a bad transmission, and had no brakes. That stuff is easy to fix. Rust is not.

BODY >> Water gets everywhere and rarely gets out. Rockers—the main structure—wheel arches, and floorpans are subject to rot. Jack points should be level and solid. Check the trunk floor around the battery tray. This one has original metal with zero rust and hasn't been pranged—a claim very few vintage Alfas can make.

ENGINE >> They're incredibly robust. If it runs well, with good oil pressure, budget \$1000 to \$2000 for preventive fixes. This car suffers from disuse. A carb rebuild and a good service should make it healthy.

TRANSMISSION >> Weak second-gear synchros are the norm. This car requires a "count to two" pause going from first to second to avoid the crunch. A rebuild is about \$1000; modern synchros are a drop-in upgrade.



INTERIOR >> There are incorrect carpet and seat covers here and an ancient, if beautifully fitted, vinyl top. I say, so what? The aftermarket has almost anything you'd need, and Alfa interior parts are surprisingly affordable.

VALUE >> Decade ago: \$20,000. Today: \$50,000. Perfect can bring twice that; even imperfect can get \$100,000 at auction, Veloces exceeding that. While some British cars of this genre bring big money, Giuliettas have remained under the radar.

VERDICT >> The driving experience is Ferrari rather than oxcart, the engine willingly rips to 7000 rpm without shedding parts, and it has movie-star looks. Parts are everywhere, and the club support is fantastic. The supply of great Giuliettas is short, and demand is clearly on the rise. Translation: New-SUV money gets you one of the best Italian sports cars of all time. For now.



BUY



PASS

Contributing Editor Colin Comer is R&T's resident vintage-car expert. He checks in from the road when not trading away the family truckster.

Craigslist Search Terms

CRAIGSLIST MAY BE THE BEST PRODUCTIVITY DESTROYER known to man, but you have to sift through a lot of dross to find the good stuff. These are terms we use when hunting for wheels. You might not find what you're looking for, but the cars this list kicks up won't be boring.

CLASSIC > ALMOST DEFINITELY, STAKE-YOUR-LIFE-ON-IT, 99 PERCENT NOT THIS.

DONK > THE TAGLINE FROM WAYNE'S WORLD: YOU'LL LAUGH. YOU'LL CRY.

YOU'LL HURL.

KIT CAR > STUFF YOU'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE. STUFF YOU WISH YOU'D NEVER SEEN.

RACE CAR > IT MIGHT

HAVE BEEN ONE, ONCE. MAYBE. IF YOU SQUINT.

INTO IT > AS IN, "I'VE GOT \$10,000 INTO IT, BUT I'M ONLY ASKING \$800." DEFINITELY UGLY.

FAST > FAST CARS, FAST CARS PEOPLE MUST SELL QUICKLY, FAST-TALKERS SELLING SLOW CARS. PROBABLY UGLY.

PROJECT > STUFF TO MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER

ABOUT YOUR OWN PROJECT, BECAUSE IT'S ALMOST CERTAINLY BETTER THAN THIS.

STREET LEGAL > LIKELY AWESOME. ALSO LIKE A DOCTOR WHO ADVERTISES THAT HE'S TOTALLY NOT GOING TO KILL YOU: IF YOU HAVE TO COME OUT AND SAY IT...

RAT ROD > JUNKERS WITH LEOPARD-PRINT INTERIORS. OR, AS THE AD PUTS IT,

"STREET CRED."

RARE > A GLORIOUS MIXED BAG: EVERYTHING FROM FORD GALAXIE SKYLINERS TO VW RABBIT PICKUPS TO THREE-YEAR-OLD SPECIAL-EDITION MUSTANGS WITH LEOPARD-PRINT INTERIORS.

SBC [SMALL-BLOCK CHEVY] > THESE GO IN ANYTHING. TIP: STEER CLEAR OF LAWN MOWERS.