

Ossò di Seppia



Richard Jones' 1966 Duetto.
(Photo: Jim Talbott.)

Jim Talbott revisits the 'Duetto' family of long-tail Spiders

2006 sees the 40th anniversary of the Giulia 105 Spider, launched at the Geneva Motor Show on the 10th March 1966, the last design of Battista 'Pinin' Farina. The same basic model remained in production for 28 years, the longest living Alfa to date. It evolved through 4 different engine sizes, 4 distinctive body variations, 12 basic models (not including US spec cars) and produced sales of over 120,000 units. This is something that the management at Alfa Romeo cannot possibly have anticipated all those years ago.

This article will be looking at the original long-tail cars, the 1600 Spider, 1750 Spider Veloce and 1300 Junior. Although these Spiders and sometimes-subsequent evolutions of this series are referred to as 'Duettos', the winning title from a company run competition attracting 140,000 entries, the name was never officially adopted by the manufacturers. The early cars are also often referred to as 'boat-tail', 'round-tail' or 'Osso di Seppia' (cuttlefish bone) because of the body profile. (Check out your

budgie's cage if you don't know what I mean!).

Background and Design Evolution

It is interesting to look at the evolution of the 'Duetto'. Alfa had been making a compact, not too cheap, two seat Spider since 1955, based on the Giulietta 'berlina'. These jewel like sports cars with their advanced mechanical specification and elegant Pininfarina bodywork made their contemporaries look positively arthritic. 17,096 Spiders and Veloces

were produced and were highly regarded everywhere, particularly in the US. They played an important part in establishing Alfa Romeo in this vital market.

By the early 1960s however, rivals were beginning to catch up and the replacement of the base Giulietta, in 1962, by the all new 1600 Giulia 105, meant this model's days were numbered. Production demands of the new saloons meant there would be a delay in producing replacement sports models. To cover the short term, Alfa fitted the 1600 engine in the existing coupe Sprint and Spider, known as Giulia 101s. The Sprint was replaced by the all-new Bertone Sprint GT in 1963 but the Spider had to soldier on for another 3 years. The Sprint GT was up rated as the Sprint GTV in 1966 and the 'new' Spider was launched simultaneously with this evolved model. It was based on a shortened version of the GTV's floor pan (Spider wheelbase 88in, Sprint GTV 93in).

Alfa had gone all out to produce a radical design,



The 1959 Spider Super Sport. (Photo: Pinin Farina.)



The 1961 Spider Speciale Aerodinamica (Photo: Pinin Farina)