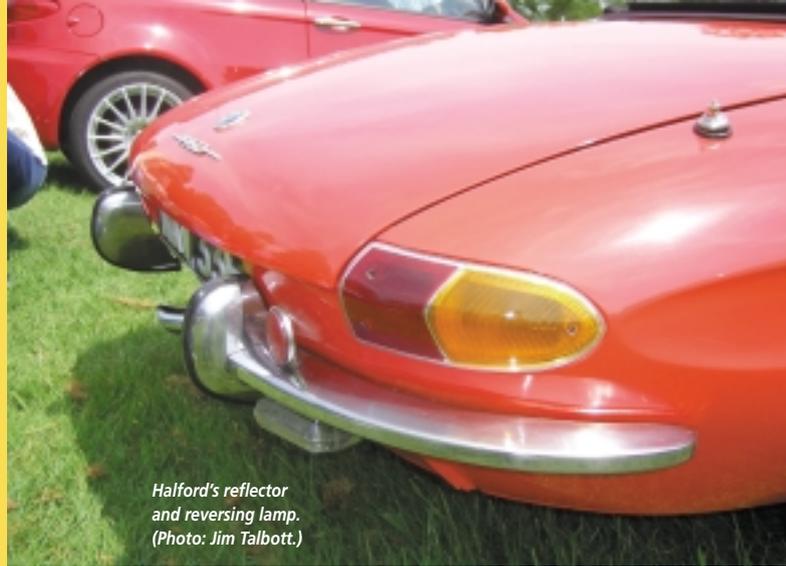




*Unattractive seams below the bumper.
(Photo: Jim Talbott.)*



*Halford's reflector
and reversing lamp.
(Photo: Jim Talbott.)*

rather than going for a safe option. The origin of its aerodynamic tapered, 'cuttlefish' shaped body shell with scalloped sides and recessed cowl headlamps can be seen to have evolved over a 10 year period of successive Pininfarina design exercises. The Superflow 1 & 11 coupes of 1956, based on the competition 6c 3000 platforms, introduced the concept of scallops and extended smooth aerodynamic nose and tail. At the 1959 Geneva Motor Show Pininfarina exhibited the open two seat Spider Super Sport with flush lights following the curve of the rear wing and the Super Sport Special coupe of 1960 continued the theme. The design of the new car began to crystallise in 1961 with the unveiling of the Giulietta based two seat Spider Speciale Aerodinamica, with Targa style roof and fixed head versions. These can be seen to be very close to the production model in appearance although it took another 5 years for this to appear!

In to Production

Taking a design from concept to manufacture, enabling compliance with legal requirements usually means compromises and the 'Duetto' was no exception. Whereas the Aerodinamica prototypes had pop up headlamps (some years before the Lotus Elan) and a smoothly fared in nose with protruding centre grille and single chrome bumper faced side grilles, the production car featured the now celebrated head lamp cowls, a low mounted 'shield'

central grille and upper and lower chrome side grilles enclosing side/ indicator lamps. To my mind the production car looks better at the front but the rear is more of a compromise. Instead of the smooth wing/lower rear panel joint of the prototypes, the production Spider has very visible seams. An improvement however, over the prominent rear riders, was the elegant, but fragile wrap around two-piece bumpers fitted with rubber edged chrome over-riders. Whilst the curved rear lights were incorporated in the production models, a very stylish feature, these did not include reflectors and a reversing lamp. To solve the problem of the former, small round items, resembling something from the cycle department at Halfords, were fixed to the top of the bumpers, and the latter, an oblong unit to the underside of the offside bumper, like an aftermarket accessory from the same store. Stylish teardrop shaped repeaters mounted behind the front wheel arches and a flush fitting petrol flap completed the aerodynamic look. A widely praised and easy to use folding hood completed the exterior. Erected, however, the rear three-quarter view was not great. An airy three window hardtop was an expensive option at £230, half the price of a contemporary Fiat 500D!

Now considered a design icon, it is difficult to understand how the appearance of the new Spider disappointed some of the contemporary motoring press. Road and Track, the influential American

magazine, in their early 1967 road test, stated "We found almost no disagreement among members of staff about the appearance of the new model - no one liked it as well as the Giulietta or the Giulia." One condemned it as a contrived design with meaningless styling gimmicks. Another said, "I think Pininfarina missed the ball this time" Somebody else commented "They did this shape five years ago on a show car and it isn't any better now". Motor Sport reported, "This Alfa Romeo 1600 Spider can be called functional but its Pininfarina body is scarcely pretty". It is interesting however, whilst reviewing the Series 4 Spider in 1991, Road and Track commented "this is the best-looking Alfa Spider since the boat-tail Duetto of 1966". How times and fashions change!

Whilst Alfa had opted for a radical exterior design externally, the interior had a functional, slightly utilitarian look, not comparing favourably, in the showroom, with its cheaper rivals. At £1895 the Spider was only £173 less than the E Type Jaguar, nearly £800 more than the Austin Healey 3000 and £900 more than the MGB. Whilst the former were adopting a more luxurious approach to two seat open air motoring with matt black finish, carpet, leather and wood, the Spider sported a body coloured, painted dashboard, rubber flooring and shiny vinyl seats. The detailing was good however with the attractive plastic and aluminium steering wheel from the Sprint GTV and a rev counter and



*Duetto interior met with press approval.
(Photo: Jim Talbott.)*



*Storage rather than seating.
(Photo: Jim Talbott.)*