

1966 Bizzarrini Strada 5300 GT Coupe

The Strada had dramatic looks, a competition pedigree, and abundant power, and it was not finicky to run

by Donald Osborne



Photos: Russo and Steele

Chassis number: 1A30256

Giotto Bizzarrini was hired by Enzo Ferrari in 1957 for his test-driving and engineering skills. In the midst of developing the 250 GTO, however, Bizzarrini left the company in the infamous “palace revolt” of 1961.

Together, the defectors formed ATS to rival Ferrari in both sports car and single-seater racing, but Bizzarrini quickly left the new concern. He then worked as a consultant for Count Volpi, for whom he created the “Breadvan” Ferrari, and for Ferruccio Lamborghini, for whom he designed the V12 engine that would power Lamborghini sports cars for decades to come.

In 1962, Bizzarrini teamed up with Renzo Rivolta, and his first job was to help develop a chassis for the Iso Rivolta 2+2 coupe. He was then commissioned to turn the Iso Grifo two-seater into a race-winning machine. He conceived the exceptionally low A3/C that was an Iso Grifo in name only. Both cars shared a shortened Rivolta platform chassis, the double wishbone front suspension, and the DeDion axle. Comparing the finished products, it was hard to imagine both cars shared the same underpinnings.

In 1965, the relationship between the two men quickly deteriorated. While Rivolta wanted the Grifo put into series production, Bizzarrini thought the car required further development. Eventually all ties were severed. Bizzarrini was now fully independent and while Iso continued to deliver parts, he was not allowed to use the Grifo name. From then on the cars were marketed as the Bizzarrini 5300 GT. The racing cars received the “Corsa” moniker and the road cars were badged “Strada.” Not much later, the Strada was joined by the “America” model, which sported a fiberglass body and a double wishbone rear suspension.

Production of the 5300 GT lasted until 1968, and a combined total of 115 examples were produced. The company’s racing efforts were focused on the mid-engined

P538 from 1966 onwards. There was no replacement for the 5300 GT, and in 1972 Bizzarrini was forced to close his factory. He returned to his consulting and has since only produced a number of one-off prototypes.

The 1967 Bizzarrini Strada 5300 coupe offered here is a stunning restoration inside and out. Finished in silver with a black suede interior, this 5300 Strada represents the ultimate in period Italian automotive styling, with the bulletproof reliability and proven performance of the Chevrolet small-block. Inside the low-slung doors, the interior is finished in fine black suede, cloth, and carpet set off only by a few instruments and a beautiful wood steering wheel.

SCM Analysis *This car sold for \$572,000 at Russo and Steele’s auction in Monterey, California, on August 16, 2008.*

Giotto Bizzarrini is an automotive engineer and designer with a talent as great in his field as that of the renaissance painter from whom his first name was taken. From his years with Alfa Romeo, through Ferrari, ATS, Lamborghini, and Iso, he either was responsible for or collaborated on some of the most memorable cars, engines, and chassis built in Italy in the 1950s and ‘60s.

The Giulietta, Ferrari Testa Rossa, 250 GT SWB, GTO, and the Lamborghini V12, which launched the brand, all felt his creative genius. He still works today in his design consultancy business at 82 years old.

It’s also clear that he was not suited to work well with others, as shown by a resume which saw him leave jobs often and quickly. However, we can certainly be thankful for the personality trait that caused the problems, as it allowed him to spread his gift in many places.

From early on, Bizzarrini was most interested in creating cars for competition. Since Ferrari was a closed door, ATS stumbled and failed, and Ferruccio Lamborghini was famously opposed to racing, Bizzarrini

Details

Years produced: 1965–68
 Number produced: 120 approx.
 Original list price: \$10,500 (America GT)
 SCM Valuation: \$400,000–\$550,000
 Tune-up cost: \$375
 Distributor caps: \$12.99
 Chassis #: Stamped pad on right front inside shock tower
 Engine #: Pad forward of right side head
 Club: Iso Bizzarrini Club
 More: www.isobizzarriniownersclub.com
 Alternatives: 1965–74 Iso Grifo GL,
 1969 Corvette 427,
 1964–69 Ford GT40 Mk III
 SCM Investment Grade: B

Comps



1965 Bizzarrini Strada GT America
 Lot# 252, s/n BA40102
 Condition 2+
 Sold at \$512,944
 RM, London, UK, 10/31/2007
 SCM# 48039



1966 Bizzarrini Strada GT
 Lot# 262, s/n 1A30247
 Condition 1
 Sold at \$533,542
 RM, London, UK, 10/31/2007
 SCM# 48046



1968 Bizzarrini Strada GT
 Lot# 067, s/n 1A303
 Condition 2
 Sold at \$269,500
 Worldwide, Seabrook, TX, 5/6/2006
 SCM# 41544

must have been quite pleased that he would have the opportunity with Iso to create both the road-going GT and the racing version he had longed for.

The very capable chassis he designed for the Iso Rivolta GT and adapted for the Grifo sports car proved to be the perfect base for a racer. The story does get a bit complex at this point, with seemingly inevitable personality conflicts coming into play. The initial A3.C competition version of the Grifo was launched as an Iso and achieved its first GT class win, 14th overall, at Le Mans in 1964, so badged. When it returned to finish 9th overall and claim its second class win, the entry read as "Iso Prototipo Bizzarrini Iso Grifo A3/C-Chevrolet." Shortly thereafter, Bizzarrini was able to take his marbles and leave, building and selling his car as the Bizzarrini GT Strada 5300.

Bizzarrini far more aggressive than the Grifo

While it's easy to think the Strada 5300 is identical in appearance to the Grifo, in reality the overall shape is the same, but many details differ, with the Bizzarrini a bit rounder and much more aggressive in aspect. The Corvette 327, while sharing the same four-barrel Holley carb and 365-hp rating with the Grifo, is tuned to give additional torque, and the competition option brought four Webers and 400 hp to the party.

The Strada 5300 was aimed at a clientele who wanted dramatic looks, a car with a competition pedigree and abundant power that was not difficult or finicky to run. The 1960s were a golden era for American-powered European GT cars, and the Bizzarrini seemed to have it all. Unfortunately, very few were made, as Bizzarrini had a small factory in which to assemble them and an



owner who was not really interested in production cars. Production was meager and petered out after three years, with no real replacement for the model.

The car sold at the Russo and Steele auction appeared to be a very high-level restoration in attractive colors. The history was well known in club circles, with one very long-term owner in its provenance.

The Bizzarrini is a very usable car for rallies and track days, where the bulletproof Detroit engine will have you sailing past your fellow participants who are nursing yet another potentially expensive problem with their exotic multi-cam engines.

For the concours circuit, it's also a guaranteed entry, thanks to the rarity of the cars and the importance of the builder; events that might think twice about an Iso will almost certainly take a Bizzarrini. Of course, there's also a downside to owning a car like an Italian-American hybrid that has to be explained—and this is doubly so here, as many of the people who will believe they recognize it will think it's an Iso Grifo and then another explanation is required.

Regardless, the market has come to realize how good the best of these Italo-American hybrids can be, and for my money, this is arguably the best of them all to have. It's a Giugiaro design, has Le Mans success, rarity, and it bears the name of the man responsible for some of the most memorable cars ever conceived. The price paid seems just right, if not a bit low for all the Strada 5300 has to offer. ♦

(Introductory description courtesy of Russo and Steele.)

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and there. Cond: 2+. **NOT SOLD AT \$105,000.** Not all the details were correct here, but at least most could be easily put right. The seller was right to hang on at this price, as there should be more in it to the right buyer.

#F452-1975 JENSEN INTERCEPTOR convertible. S/N 23111723. Burgundy/tan vinyl/beige leather. Odo: 3,347 miles. 440-ci V8, 4-bbl, auto. Sympathetic restoration, original engine, documented original miles. Resprayed straight body, but paint not quite to show quality, with some dirt and shrinkage evident. Interior craftsmanship only fair. Dash



excellent. One of only 267 convertibles. Cond: 2+. **SOLD AT \$77,000.** A big brute that will humble many exotics of its day. This was a great driver, both in terms of its condition as well as its combination of English snob appeal and American muscle power. Another convertible in the same condition sold at Bonhams' Monte Carlo event in May of '07 at \$55,890 (SCM# 45706), which was then considered to be all the money. Very well sold.

GERMAN

#F471-1964 PORSCHE 356C coupe. S/N 129468. Black/black leather. Odo: 72,291 km. Nicely restored. Excellent paint and interior, clean engine bay. Claimed matching numbers, includes certificate of authenticity from Porsche. Equipped with four-wheel disc



brakes, rear compensator spring, and chrome rims. Well-fitted interior with new carpet and weatherstripping. Cond: 2+. **SOLD AT \$53,350.** The "C" has much better braking than the earlier 356s, and this example would have made an excellent driver for the money. Market price for condition.

#S659-1973 PORSCHE CARRERA RS coupe. S/N 9113600858. Viper Green/black leather. Odo: 95,307 km. Matching numbers confirmed by Porsche. Ownership documentation from new, Frankfurt license plate still fitted. One of 1,580 made, and one of only 71 in Viper Green. Imported to the U.S. in 1982. Shiny paint with only a few light scratches, perfect interior.



Cibic driving lights, aged rubber gaskets around rear windows. Cond: 1-. **SOLD AT \$302,500.** A trailer queen that doesn't look to have been driven in a while. What happens when you wake her up? Collectors have rediscovered the RS, as prices continue to be strong. Strong price, but Porsche buyers love perfect and will always pay up for it.

ITALIAN

#F413-1957 ALFA ROMEO GIULIETTA Spider Veloce convertible. S/N AR149501878. Red/black cloth/black vinyl. Odo: 81,135 miles. Previous racer put back to street spec. Non-original color, no heater installed. Race parts include extra wheels, rear axle, roll bar, and heater. Four-wheel disc brakes, Veloce-spec



1750 engine, Marelliplex ignition. Rust-free California car from new. Cond: 2-. **SOLD AT \$34,100.** Eligible for vintage events. Something like this is never going to be concours, but in my opinion, a Giulietta is one of the prettiest cars ever made. This was a good solid example to use and enjoy, and the price was right with that in mind.

#S648-1966 BIZZARRINI STRADA 5300 coupe. S/N 1A30256. Silver/black suede. Odo: 46,939 km. 327-ci V8, 4x2-bbl, 4-sp. Very good panel fit, excellent paint and interior. Comprehensive restoration shows well throughout, with nice interior and clean engine compartment. Cond: 1. **SOLD AT \$572,000.** An Italian supercar that's not a Ferrari or Lamborghini, with a reliable Chevrolet Corvette



V8. We've seen an increase in Iso Rivolta and Grifo prices of late, so it's no surprise to see the same sorts of increases for Bizzarrinis like this car. Well bought and sold. See the profile, p. 48.

BEST BUY

#S666-1969 FERRARI 365 GT 2+2 coupe. S/N 12689. Black/black leather. Odo: 67,005 miles. Three owners from new, previously of the DuPont collection. New two-year restoration recently completed, with excellent body, paint, and interior fittings. Very



well done. Cond: 1. **SOLD AT \$162,250.** One of the so-called "lesser" Ferrari models. The twin-cam V12 is much easier to live with than its more finicky brothers, and driving one is still a glorious experience. Flawless black paint gives a most elegant impression. Well bought considering the price of its restoration.

#S655-1970 LAMBORGHINI MIURA S coupe. S/N LAM451570. Yellow/blue leather. Odo: 66,326 km. Excellent exterior and interior. 200 miles since mechanical restoration with \$90,000 in receipts. "S" model with upgraded



brakes and 370-hp engine. Nice throughout. Cond: 1-. **SOLD AT \$423,500.** Take that, Ferrari! The Miura caused a sensation when introduced in 1966, and this one is sure to be a sensation at any local show. Well bought at under market for the condition.

#S638-1971 BIZZARRINI 128 SPORT Barchetta racer. S/N 128P01. Red/black vinyl. Fiat 128 drivetrain mounted in the rear. Tube space frame, fiberglass open body. Turin show launch in 1971, 1973 Targa Florio entrant, but did not finish. Found behind Bizzarrini's

