

# Corso Veloce

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NEW ZEALAND FIAT OWNERS CLUB

August/September 2019







## MARK'S MUSINGS

Sunny Spring greetings from Wellington, where the season seems to have arrived based on the weather of the last few weeks. Those who joined us at the VCC classic car show on 25 August were blessed with superb weather (see overleaf).

In this magazine I've reproduced an article from an online motoring

journal speculating about Fiats future models. It seems they have no plans to replace the current 124 Spider, in fact no plans for a sports model at all. I don't know where that leaves the recently-revised Abarth nameplate, but that seems a shame given Fiats long history of sports cars. Wisely, they are replacing the new (should that be New Nuova?) 500, which has proven to be very successful. But this time it will be electric, which means it will be more expensive, so it will be interesting to see how that pans out. But that makes the absence of a true sports model all the more of a missed opportunity, since EVs can be very sporty to drive with their rapid acceleration and low centre of gravity. The article is just one journalists view after all, so it remains to be seen what Fiat will do. One thing we do know is that currently the brand does not have much of an offering in NZ – just the Spider and Ducato van.

Speaking of EVs, some will have heard of the Government's plans to introduce a feebate scheme (basically meaning fee/rebate) to increase the uptake of EVs. How it works is that new or used imports that emit above the target CO2 emissions (phased in to be 105g CO2 per km by 2025) will pay a fee, which will be used to subsidise the cost of fuel-efficient cars that emit below the target. EVs of course get the biggest subsidy (up to \$8000), but hybrids are eligible too. None of this applies to vehicles already in NZ. These schemes apply in many countries, and the whole climate change issue is one reason why Fiat is looking at large-scale EV production, along with most other brands. If they don't, the penalties imposed in other countries will be prohibitive.

Public commentary so far has focussed on the feebate scheme, but in fact the proposal is more complicated than that, as it also will introduce fuel efficiency standards with a separate penalty to apply to (new and used) imports that exceed the standard. But unlike a feebate, this will be averaged across all vehicles sold by an importer. This

is known as a 'supply side' intervention (with importers paying the penalty to Government, or receiving 'credits' if the average emissions of all vehicles sold in a year is under the target) whereas the feebate is a 'demand side' intervention, with no money going to Government, but instead buyers either incurring the fee or receiving a rebate. So, there's actually the potential for both financial penalties to apply. Confused? I told you it was complicated!

What's interesting is the vehicle industry is saying the proposal could actually lead to the demise of some small, relatively fuel-efficient cars in NZ. This is because the standard is weight-adjusted, recognising that large cars (e.g. SUVs) are heavier and so use more fuel. So small cars have to meet a tougher target. But in each class, some models are more fuel-efficient than others. But as proposed, many small cars will end up paying a penalty – maybe a couple of thousand dollars (note, I'm not referring to the feebate, which is the same regardless of vehicle weight or size). And because small cars cost less, this penalty might price them out of the market. Whereas a similar penalty on a new and bigger \$40,000 car will be easier for the buyer to swallow.

That's what's interesting about the car industry – small cars have never been very profitable, it's the big, more luxurious models that have a decent margin. Globally, major manufacturers are said to be moving away from making small, cheap models, because the cost of fuel-efficient technology means they can't sell them at a price the public are willing to pay. Here in NZ the industry says margins on small cars are "wafer thin" – perhaps just a few hundred dollars for a new car that might cost \$20,000. I know this to be the case, as I have a relative who works for a major distributor. He told me they bought in one model where every unit was sold at a loss of over \$5000. It sounds nuts, but this is quite common. Unless you're buying a new Mercedes, Lexus or Ferrari, the chances are the dealer made very little on the sale. Where they make the money of course is on servicing and expensive parts...and of course in order to make money on servicing, you first need to sell a car. That's how the industry has evolved. So, the future may mean we can no longer buy new small, cheap petrol cars – something that Fiat in particular was renowned for. Interesting times!

**Mark Stockdale**  
**FOCNZ President**

### Committee:

President/Editor:

Mark Stockdale

[markstockdale@xtra.co.nz](mailto:markstockdale@xtra.co.nz)

Ph. 021434097

Secretary/Membership:

Paul Morgan

[pandcmorgan@xtra.co.nz](mailto:pandcmorgan@xtra.co.nz)

Ph. 0272486881

Treasurer:

Mike Lynskey

[mike.lynskey@aspeq.com](mailto:mike.lynskey@aspeq.com)

Ph. 0274359309

### Members:

Stuart Becker

[stuart.becker@notrocketscience.co.nz](mailto:stuart.becker@notrocketscience.co.nz)

Ph. 021434746

Phil Ward

[phil.p.ward@gmail.com](mailto:phil.p.ward@gmail.com)

Ph. 02102476669

Bruce McCaw

[cbmccaw@gmail.com](mailto:cbmccaw@gmail.com)

021545844

### Club email:

[focnz.contact@gmail.com](mailto:focnz.contact@gmail.com)

### Club Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/focnz](http://www.facebook.com/focnz)

Website: [www.fiatnz.co.nz](http://www.fiatnz.co.nz)

## CLUB EVENTS

### Vintage Car Club Daffodil Rally for Cancer, 25 August

A total of 7 cars turned out for this popular event, which has grown from last year and featured a large number of classic cars of all makes and models. We were blessed by superb early Spring weather and joined by new committee member's Bruce McCaw's 124 Spider which was driven instead by son Hamish, along with recently re-joined member John Lewis in his latest purchase – a 20V Coupe. Also attending were Sam Mills in his rare Yugo, and Stuart Becker in his 124 coupe.



*The club's display at Queen Elizabeth park*



*(above) New member John Lewis' 20V Coupe in foreground*

Spotted elsewhere on display was a Fiat Topolino, and a nicely -restored Bambina.

## NEW MEMBERS

*A warm welcome to new members who have joined us in the last few months:*

Melanie Morgan, Wellington – 1974 Fiat 132 1600

John Lewis, Waikanae – 1999 Fiat Coupe 20V Turbo

Ashton McCaughan, Auckland

James Lee, Auckland – 1974 Fiat 124 CC coupe



*James Lee with his new pride and joy*



*(above) 1937 Fiat Topolino*





# FIAT 500 FAMILY GROWS ELECTRIC AS POWER SURGES FORWARD

by Jason King, [www.enzari.com](http://www.enzari.com)

Fiat struck gold when it relaunched the Fiat 500 in 2007, not a housing estate or street in the UK doesn't seem to have one parked up and with over 2 million sold the 500 is going from strength to strength. Now it seems the chic city car will spearhead Fiat's switch to electric power.

According to a recent high-level meeting at FCA at the Turin design centre, led by Fiat chief executive, Oliver François, the Italian car manufacturer continued its commitment to its flourishing city car business as well as a selection of larger vehicles. François was quoted as saying: "Fiat has a double mission. Urban mobility is core today, but at the same time, it means family transportation. In southern Europe, this is especially true,"

"For our future product plan, we need the right balance between the two dimensions: the Fiat 500 family and family transportation. There will be no big cars, no premium cars, no sporty cars because they have no legitimacy. We will be present in the C-segment [Ford Focus class] but not much more. All models will sit within 3.5m and 4.5m. This is where Fiat will play. We need more EVs. And we need more 500 models that look legitimate enough to take higher pricing," the chief executive confirmed.

This seems to suggest we can rule a new 124 Spider out (unless it is Abarth only), the Tipo long rumoured to be killed off will indeed be the case, with the Fiat 500 family growing, leading the charge with five electric/plug-in hybrid models. This is no surprise as Fiat's main Mirafiori plant in Turin, Italy will be able to produce up to 80,000 electric cars to start with, which suggests there will be several models.

The next generation Fiat 500 model is expected to change from a 3-door design to a compact five-door arrangement with rumours suggesting it will incorporate small suicide rear doors like the BMW i3 and the Mazda RX-8, a design touch that would suit the stylish 500 very well. According to

François the electric 500 will have a modular battery system with a range rating of around 100km as standard. This can be upgraded "by renting, buying or leasing" extra battery cells.

The Fiat boss states "only the A- and B-segments can generate hundreds of thousands of EV sales", and believes the electric 500 can make a real change as the company "sells one in three small cars [across Europe] with the 500 and Panda."



The next-generation Fiat Panda due to arrive in 2021, will get an all-electric version with the design based on the Fiat Centoventi concept revealed earlier this year. Other models set for electrification are the 500X and the upcoming 500 Giardiniera which is expected to replace the 'love it or hate it' Fiat 500L. The Fiat 500 Giardiniera will have a Mild Hybrid version, with the FireFly engine flanked by an electric engine, when it arrives, with a fully electric version following shortly after.

The question mark over the Tipo remains however, some have suggested it could be replaced by a small SUV based on the same platform as the Jeep Renegade, however as Oliver François comments suggest, anything bigger than C-segment is a no go, and with the 500X in the range it doesn't need another small SUV.



*The Fiat Centoventi concept—pointing the way to the new Panda EV*



*Could this be the new Fiat 500 Giardiniera?*

## Subscriptions are now due!

A reminder that annual subs are now due – you can download a renewal form from our website:

[www.fiatnz.co.nz/](http://www.fiatnz.co.nz/)

Note, if you have recently joined the club in the last few months, then your subscription is valid for the next financial year.

## COMING EVENTS

**Sunday 29 September:** Road run to Wairarapa and visit the Pointon car collection:  
[www.pointoncollection.co.nz](http://www.pointoncollection.co.nz) Meet at **Caltex Rimutaka, Fergusson Drive** (Brown Owl) at **10am**, drive to Martinborough for lunch and then visit the private museum at 1.30pm. Entry costs \$10 per person (cash only). RSVP to [focnz.contact@gmail.com](mailto:focnz.contact@gmail.com)

**Sunday 3 November:** Road run to **Rongotea** to visit Thompson's Motorcycle Museum. The private museum is regarded as NZ's best collection of pre-1930s unrestored motorcycles, and totals over 100 including newer models. Entry costs \$5 per person. **Meet at Plimmerton Weigh Station at 9.30am**, and travel via Shannon. For those coming from the Manawatu, aim to arrive by 11.15am – the location is 1154 Rongotea Road. We will view the collection and then have lunch at a venue tbc.

**Sunday 8 December:** Xmas BBQ lunch. The club is once again hosting our popular annual end-of-year BBQ at the **Otaihanga Domain** in Paraparaumu. A BBQ will be available to cook food; bring your own salads and side dishes – the club will supply sausages and beverages. Its family-friendly, so bring the kids too! There's plenty of parking and there are public toilets. **Commences from midday.**

## FIAT WORKSHOP MANUALS AVAILABLE FOR LENDING

The club has a range of workshop manuals and parts catalogues that are available for lending to club members. Email [focnz.contact@gmail.com](mailto:focnz.contact@gmail.com) if you wish to borrow any.

### Fiat workshop manuals:

Fiat 500  
Fiat 600  
Fiat 1100T  
Fiat 1400 – 1900 A&B  
Fiat 1300 – 1500  
Fiat 1800 & 2100, 1800B & 2300  
Fiat 125

### Fiat service manuals:

Fiat 126  
Fiat 131  
Fiat 132  
Passenger cars: 500, 850 coupe & van, 127, 128 & Sport



### Fiat parts catalogues:

Fiat 1100 & Fiat 1100 bodywork  
Fiat 1100T & Fiat 1100T bodywork  
Fiat 1400B  
Fiat 1300 – 1500 & Fiat 1300 – 1500 bodywork  
Fiat 1800 and Fiat 1800 bodywork  
Fiat 1800B bodywork  
Fiat 2300 bodywork

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### BoS Models 1:18 scale

BoS Models, short for "Best of Show," is a relatively new resin brand, which makes a range of 1:18, 1:43 and 1:87 scale models. They have been quite prolific since their launch in 2012, and whilst they make interesting or unusual scale models, they also produce a wide variety mainstream or family cars which is relatively unusual as most scale model manufacturers tend to stick to "popular" cars like sports cars or supercars. Being based in Germany, the models have a European flavour but include cars that would have once been common a few decades ago (if you lived in Europe anyway), although they also produce American makes.

Price-wise, they're in the middle of the pack, with prices around €120 (NZ\$200), not including postage, which is more than Ottomobile models for which their quality is similar, but less than other resin brands I have reviewed.

You'll forgive me for reviewing their model of the Fiat 2300S Coupe. Models of my Fiat 2300s are hard to find, with none in 1:18 scale, except for BoS Models Coupe – the only body style I don't own a 1:1 version of. So I had to buy this one as it fits in my theme of having scale models – or variants – of real cars I own.

It's a well-rendered scale model, with nice detailing, as is to be expected of resin models. In particular I like the detailing of the air vents on the front wing, and the accurately reproduced, art deco-style side indicator. The interior is also impressive, looking very much like a "poor mans Ferrari" which is how the Coupe was regarded in period.

If there is one slight weak point, it is the chrome trim around the side windows, which is simply a metal transfer. While it's sharply rendered, it doesn't look as solid as other chrome trim on the car, and at the price, does make the Ottomobile models I have previously reviewed look like better value for money. But overall it's a minor criticism, as you wouldn't get this level of detail on a diecast model.



BoS Models haven't produced many other Fiats or Lancias, except for a Fiat Dino Coupe, along with an 1100 berlina (see what I mean about producing mainstream models?), and the rarer TV roadster version of the 1100, plus a very rare Pininfarina Spider and Cabriolet version of the Lancia Aurelia.

- [www.modelcarworld.de/uk/hersteller/BoS-Models-18](http://www.modelcarworld.de/uk/hersteller/BoS-Models-18)



## SCALE MODELS AT THE FIAT CENTRO STORICO

*Story courtesy of Veloce Today, text by Aldo Zana*

Once upon a time no one even remotely thought about preserving a sample of the cars produced by a factory. Fiat complied with this dominant attitude until the late Thirties, when some managers were stricken by illumination: if we have not saved the originals, why not build scale models?

This model making activity endured through the early Eighties and led to the creation of one of the industry's largest collections of large-scale models in the world. Most of the models are still on display at the Fiat Centro Storico (the company's historical car collection and archives) at via Chiabrera 20, in Turin, located in one of Fiat's early 20th Century main facilities, now skillfully refurbished and repurposed as a car museum.

A hundred-plus Fiat scale model vehicles were built over the years. They reproduced cars, buses, lorries, tractors, aircrafts, ships, diesel-propelled railcars and encompassed the entire range of the Fiat product line, echoing Fiat's claim to produce transportation for the "Terra Mare Cielo" (Earth, Sea, Sky).



*A sample of what Fiat meant in the Fifties and Sixties: Terra Mare Cielo, i.e. Land Sea Sky. The model car is the 850 saloon presented in 1964; the aircraft is the prototype of the G.91 small fighters, winner of a NATO concours in 1958; the ship is the Italian transatlantic liner "Cristoforo Colombo" launched in 1953, whose power plant was made by Fiat; the DMU is the ALn 56, widely used by the Italian State Railways in the Fifties and Sixties*

The collection presents the early Fiat cars as well as the newly introduced models up to the Eighties. While the models built of the early cars were meant to fill the gaps in the history of the company, the later models were built as promotional items to be displayed by dealers and subsidiaries.

Most of the model cars are in 1:5 scale – an imposing size, asking for top class modeling and detailing skills. The orders stated the use of metal as the basic material because they had to be built to last. As a consequence, the bodies over a strong metal frame were usually shaped from aluminum sheets beaten on a wooden buck. Skilled panel beaters from the Turin carrozzerie connected with a select group of professional modelers to create these masterpieces which never were marketed or advertised.

The main supplier of the large-scale models was Bruno Reggiani, a Turin-based professional modeler born 1927. In 15 years of work he devoted 800 to 1,000 hours to crafting each

model for Fiat. He was also in charge of their maintenance, as some were returned in damaged condition from short-term loans outside the Centro Storico.

Rubber tires cannot withstand the typical 40 lbs. weight of a 1:5 scale model. Reggiani therefore turned to plexiglas, painted black; they remain in perfect shape after so many years. His main job was the reproduction of the racing cars destroyed in 1927 by order of Senator Agnelli. They remain the sole three-dimensional proof left of their existence.



*The girls admire a selection of Fiat car models including the Mephistopheles in the 1924 version and the 130 HP racer, winner of the GP de l'ACF 1907, both models by Bruno Reggiani; and (front row, left) the 1899 3 1/2 HP, model by Silvio Morselli*



*The Tipo 802-805 Grand Prix racer of the early Twenties. Model by Bruno Reggiani. These cars were destroyed on order by Senator Giovanni Agnelli*

Reggiani's list widened to other racing cars, including the land speed record car "Mephistopheles", driven by Ernest Eldridge at 146.01 mph in 1924. The original car was later retrieved and restored by Fiat, many years after the model had been ordered. It is today on display in the Centro Storico.

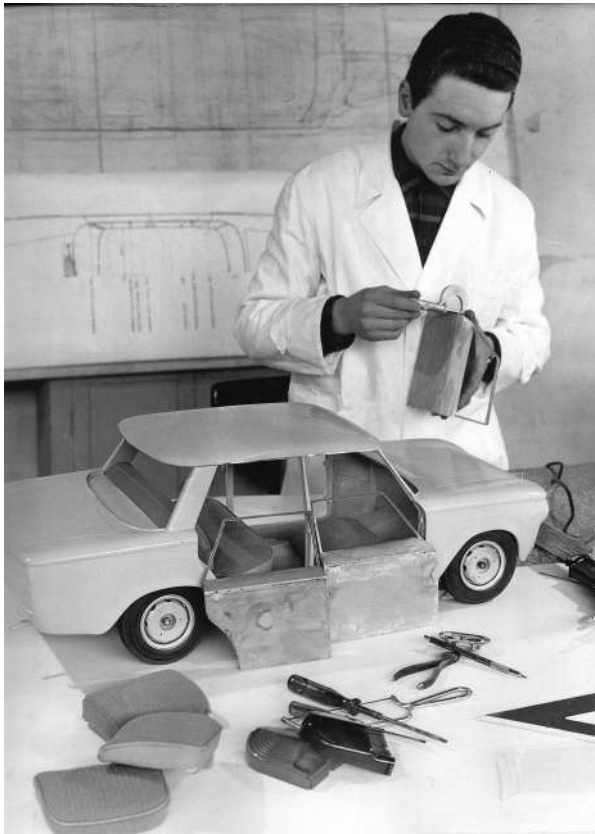


*Mephistopheles as raced by Ernest Eldridge when he won the land speed record on the Arpajon (France) public road on July 12, 1924 with a speed of 146.012 mph*

*continued on next page*



The craftsman of the X 1/9 and 1100 Colonial 1:5 reproductions, as well as a Turin trolley bus in 1:10 scale, was Sergio Abrami, born 1927 in Trieste. Contemporary cars of the Fifties were modeled by Piero Ferré in his workshop north of Milano. He was also the creator of many wonderful models of the Fiat aircraft, completed with the scale frame showing through the transparent skin. He was also the builder of the 1913 Fiat Zero.



*The 1300/1500 saloon model in the production process at the Acerbi workshop. The model of a contemporary vehicle was aimed at dealer's showrooms*



*Final polishing work on the painting of the 1300/1500 saloon model in the Acerbi workshop. The imposing size and the fine detail of the model can be easily understood*

Silvio Morselli, working near Turin, delivered his first model in 1962, the 3.5 HP, the very first Fiat produced in 1899. He then moved on to build model buses, the reproductions of the 24 HP 1902 racing car and the well-known 130 HP Grand Prix "F2" from 1907. Enrico Acerbi, born 1925, was also briefly active in the craft, creating a few scale models in the late Sixties in his workshop in Aosta. He built six models in the regular 1:5 scale, including the contemporary 1300/1500 saloon, the 8 HP 1901, the 508 "Balilla" saloon and the 500 "Giardiniera", a small woody from the Fifties.



# FIAT ALFA

CENTRE

## Mal Simmonds

Owner/Operator

Tel/Fax: [+64] 7 827 8918

Mobile: 027 495 2415

Email: [malsim@fiatparts.co.nz](mailto:malsim@fiatparts.co.nz)

Web: [www.fiatparts.co.nz](http://www.fiatparts.co.nz)

Dino Enterprises Limited

40 Matos Segedin Drive

Cambridge 3495, New Zealand





# Coupe de Grace

Four coupes all born in the 1990s, all with powerplants to die for, and all currently enjoying an upswing in value. Now is definitely the time to buy – but which of these modern classic coupes is our favourite?

Story: Richard Bremner  
Images: Michael Ward

**E**ngines. They're a huge draw with each of these cars, and one reason why they're gathered here. There are 25 cylinders in this picture, three turbochargers, 90 valves, 1034 horsepower and, while we're at it, 11,353cc. More important than this inventory-taking, however, is the fact that all four engines function with flair and charisma from the very top drawer of entertainment.

Another trigger for this gathering is that the prices of all four models – having been on the floor for some time – are now very much on the rise. The collectors' market now considers these cars old enough, rare enough and interesting enough to push their values up.

Or to put it another way, people have realised what excellent value these rather special cars are.

Probably the least expensive, as you might expect, is the one with the Fiat badge. It's still possible to find a Coupe 20V Turbo with high miles and in need of some TLC for under £1000. At the other end of the scale, also as you would expect, is the Maserati 3200 GT, the best examples of which are now advertised at up to £30,000. Quite a range. The two Alfas fall in between but very much at the lower end of the spectrum.

Our four enthusiast owners have brought their cars to Bruntingthorpe proving ground, where we soon learn that a long straight with no speed limit and no cameras





is an unexpectedly useful tool for exploring the considerable potency of these machines. In that sense, the Alfas and the Fiat are a lot closer to the Maserati than might be anticipated, given the disparity in cylinders and horsepower.

#### **ALFA ROMEO GTV 3.0 V6**

"Ah, the Busso V6." If you hear this phrase, or something like it, within distance of certain Alfas and find yourself baffled, here's an explanation. Alfa Romeo and sometime Ferrari engineer, Giuseppe Busso, designed the V6 in this GTV and in doing so, produced one of the most richly tuneful engines to be

heard in any car, ever. For that reason alone, cars with this engine are desired, although this V6 engine is entirely capable of producing memorable performance to go with it, especially in its later bigger, bore, four-valve per cylinder formats. Aboard this GTV, the 3.0 V6 produces 220hp and 0-62mph sprints of 6.7 seconds, which is pretty brisk, even by today's performance car standards.

But the acceleration stats don't begin to convey the pleasure of driving with this engine, nor the welling power that it can deliver once you've broken the legal limit. The power just keeps on coming, the more so because there are six gears to work your





## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

### ALFA ROMEO GTV 3.0 V6

ENGINE:	2959cc V6 DOHC
POWER:	220hp @ 6200rpm
TORQUE:	199lb ft @ 4800rpm
TRANSMISSION:	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive
BRAKES:	305mm vented discs (front); 240mm discs (rear)
TYRES:	225/45 R17
DIMENSIONS:	4285mm (L), 1780mm (W), 1320mm (H)
WEIGHT:	1415kg
TOP SPEED:	155mph
0-62MPH:	6.7 sec
VALUE RANGE:	£2000-£14,000

yours for as little as £3000 if you don't mind high mileage – the car we sampled here felt fine on 135k miles. At the top end, rare Cup and late 3.2 V6 models can cost well north of £10,000. That's more than you'd have paid a year ago, but still great value for a car this handsome, rare, fast and fun.

*Slightly agitated ride is the GTV's biggest bugbear. Its 3.0-litre Busso V6 engine is easily its greatest asset*

way through, and it's all so effortless. When you realise that this really rather compact car has a top speed of 155mph, you understand why.

It is, of course, front-wheel drive, Alfa Romeo only recently admitting to the misguidedness of pursuing this mechanical layout given its history, but its admission is admirable, the resulting rear-drive Giulia still more so. But when the g16-series Spider and GTV were revealed in 1993, six years after the last Alfetta GTV, most enthusiasts were delighted simply at the fact of their arrival, and never mind the front-wheel drive.

Which was, and is, mitigated to some extent by the Alfa's quick steering, confident grip – aided by a multi-link rear axle specific to these models – and ability to handle a sizeable 199lb ft of torque. You can make this car torque steer, but the snaking is slight and far from enough to make you wish that the V6 was putting out less power. All of which means that you can consume Tarmac at considerable pace, encouraged by that addictively sonorous engine.

These days, you notice a slightly odd but liveable driving position within the GTV's snugly comfortable cockpit, and the same lightly agitated ride that's perhaps this car's worst failing. But you won't fail to enjoy it. Especially given that this pleasure can be





# ALFA GT VS GTV VS FIAT COUPE VS MASERATI 3200

## ALFA ROMEO GT 3.2 V6

Mechanically the GT is of much the same confection as the GTV, with a slightly larger (3.2-litre) and more powerful version of Busso's V6. It shares some of its Fiat Tipo roots with the GTV, although there's less of the Fiat in this car, which was a very clever combination of Alfa 156 and 147 components. It's a proper five-seater with a surprisingly large boot, and many were equipped with what was then a very practical and economical 1.9-litre diesel engine. That the bulk of GTs are oil-burning 1.9 JTDs will doom most of these cars to the crusher, leaving the rare four-cylinder petrols and the even rarer V6s as classic survivors. The V6's rarity was further heightened by its deletion in 2008, two years before the end of the GT's six-year production run.

You sit higher in this car than in any of the others, and behind a dashboard that also feels the most modern (it came straight from the 147). It also has the least readable instruments unless they're lit. The V6 waxes and wails from behind the dash, but sounds even more refined and sophisticated than it does in the GTV. It's also more powerful, but the GT's greater weight means that it turns in an identical 0-62mph time. But this car feels unexpectedly quick, and like the GTV, delivers a pretty thrilling stream of power not only at commuting speeds, but also well into three figures.

These speeds can highlight wind noise issues with the GT's frameless door glass, although this example is fine. That affords it the same effortless, civilized demeanour as the GTV, the same ability to dispatch

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

### ALFA ROMEO GT 3.2 V6

ENGINE:	3179cc V6 DOHC
POWER:	240hp @ 6200rpm
TORQUE:	213lb ft @ 4800rpm
TRANSMISSION:	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive
BRAKES:	330mm vented discs (front); 276mm discs (rear)
TYRES:	225/45 ZR17
DIMENSIONS:	4489mm (L), 1763mm (W), 1355mm (H)
WEIGHT:	1410kg
TOP SPEED:	151mph
0-62MPH:	6.7 sec
VALUE RANGE:	£4000-£10,000

miles vigorously and the same feeling that you're driving – and hearing – something different. The GT rides better than the GTV (and all the cars here, in fact) but the trade-off is less eager turn-in through curves. It's capable but unexceptional, the V6 providing more excitement than the chassis.

The front seat bolstering makes the seats feel narrower – and you wider – than the reality, but you get used to it. Worth looking for, if you fancy an extra flash of cabin glamour, is an interior in red leather rather than the more common black.

The rarity and desirability of the V6 GT is now being cashed in upon, the best of them costing around almost five figures if they're low mileage and have the desirable Q2 limited slip differential. At the time of writing, there's a Category D light accident-repaired example in good condition for £4500, which is probably where prices for decent examples start.







## FIAT COUPE 20V TURBO LE

Here's another car from the Fiat Group's Tipo-derived architecture period, although you'd never believe it when you see designer Chris Bangle's slash-arched, billowed headlight, clam-bonneted machine. You can't call the Fiat Coupé beautiful, but it's compellingly attractive, has aged well and has no imitators. It was also one of the best cars Fiat produced during the 1990s, mixing four-seat practicality with decent value, good manners and terrific engines.

The Coupé started life with four-cylinder 2.0 twin-cam engines from the Delta integrale, good for 195bhp and low-sevens 0-62mph times. But when Fiat installed a five-cylinder 2.0 engine, the turbo version briskly warbled its way to 217bhp and some properly impressive performance (6.5sec 0-62mph streaks). But this is not where the 20V Turbo coupé is at its most impressive. Instead, you need a long straight, fourth gear and 60-70mph before you floor the throttle, the strength of the resulting surge, which barely diminishes in fifth or sixth, prompting me to ask this car's owner whether his beautifully kept limited edition had been tuned.

It had not. Instead, I had forgotten how massively rapid these cars were when they were new, and still are today. And the Fiat puts all this power down as if

feeding 229lb ft of torque through the front drive shafts was normal. Thank the so-called Viscodrive limited slip differential for that, this device taming torque steer, as does an extra crossbeam between the lower front wishbones. The result is a very well-behaved car, although one that's also a bit inert, playing around with the throttle to adjust your line having less effect than you might expect. Although that may be as well, given the available power.

You enjoy all this from an interior that feels slightly less luxurious than those of the Alfas, not to mention the leather-sheathed Maserati's, but it's given a substantial lift by the body-colour dashboard and door tops, a stylish steering wheel and appealingly simple instruments. The Fiat is pretty refined too, its balancer shaft-becalmed five-cylinder issuing an engaging throb that never turns turbulent, its ride adequately absorbent and its seats comfortable. The driving position is just about the best here, too.

Fiat sold just over 7000 Coupés during the late 1990s, but despite their desirability only 1100 are still on the road. However, there are almost 1500 on SORN, so a third survive. And values are finally on the rise. £8000 to £10,000 gets you an excellent example of a 20VT but it's still possible to get a Coupé in need of a fettle for under £1000.



## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

### FIAT COUPE 20V TURBO LE

ENGINE:	1998cc 5-cyl turbo
POWER:	220hp @ 5750rpm
TORQUE:	229lb ft @ 2500rpm
TRANSMISSION:	Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive
BRAKES:	305mm vented discs (front); 240mm discs (rear)
TYRES:	205/50 R16
DIMENSIONS:	4250mm (L), 1770mm (W), 1350mm (H)
WEIGHT:	1310kg
TOP SPEED:	155mph
0-62MPH:	6.5 sec
VALUE RANGE:	£1000-£10,000





# ALFA GT VS GTV VS FIAT COUPE VS MASERATI 3200



## MASERATI 3200 GT

The 3200 GT is very obviously the most glamorous car here, coming from a blue-blood manufacturer with a powertrain, styling and interior furnishings to match. But until very recently, it was possible to buy one for under £8000, which isn't a whole lot more than you'd pay for the very best examples of the Alfas and Fiat. But in the last six months the starting price for a 3200 has climbed to five figures, those in the £10-11k bracket likely to have travelled 90,000 miles or more. The very best 3200 GTs are now brushing £30,000, perhaps optimistically. The best of them will probably get there, though.

This Giugiaro-designed coupe with its 3.2-litre twin-turbo V8 engine had a relatively short four-year life before being replaced by the facelifted 4200, which was improved on some fronts but suffered a cheapened interior and the substitution of the distinctive hockey-stick taillights for a pair of remarkably bland lenses. The 3200 is the purer design, and in many ways the more dramatic car, sometimes for reasons its maker hadn't quite intended.

The 3200 was one of the first cars to have a fly-by-wire throttle, the relative electronic crudity of this system combining with a pair of flighty turbos to produce sometimes sudden throttle response



## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

### MASERATI 3200 GT

ENGINE:	3217cc V8 twin turbo
POWER:	368hp @ 6250rpm
TORQUE:	362lb ft @ 4500rpm
TRANSMISSION:	Four-speed auto, rear-wheel drive
BRAKES:	330mm vented discs (front); 310mm vented discs (rear)
TYRES:	235/40 ZR18 (fr), 265/35 ZR18 (rear)
DIMENSIONS:	4510mm (L), 1820mm (W), 1310mm (H)
WEIGHT:	1590kg
TOP SPEED:	174mph
0-62MPH:	5.1 sec
VALUE RANGE:	£10,000-£25,000







and, if you're cornering in second gear on a wet road at the time, the need to perform some swift corrective wheel swivelling. Couple this to the slightly uncertain steering, whose resistance sometimes seems weirdly inconsistent, and you have a car that can feel a bit intimidating if you want to harness most of its 363bhp. That inconsistency seems to vary from car to car as well, your reporter having driven plenty over the years.

Not helping is an odd driving position that will likely place you some distance from the dash if you're to arrange your legs comfortably, the clutch in the manual model being slightly awkward to sink. For that reason, many argue that the auto is preferable, especially as the manual has an appetite for clutches. The upshot of all to this is that the 3200 is more of a cruiser than an apex slicer, especially as an auto. That said, you do get used to these dynamic foibles, allowing you to read the car and get a lot more from it.

And there's a lot to get with all this power. The 3200 is truly rapid, needing little more than five seconds to spear 62mph, and it doesn't run out of romp until it's hit 174mph. All this is to be enjoyed in a spectacularly sumptuous interior that will just about seat four adults, making this Maser more practical than it looks. It will obviously cost more to run than the others, but there are specialists that can soften the blow. And then there's the promise of a real upside on values.

## VERDICT

Like so many Italian cars, each of our 1990s coupes is beguiling, and each has flaws to test you. But as they shift from ageing daily drivers to occasional-use classics, those flaws will diminish, to the benefit of their many positives. In every one of these cars that's mainly about the engine – its facility for powering you towards triple figures with an orchestra of combustion. All four are great to look at, decently practical and relatively painless to run. All four have their appeal but the most surprising, the most polished and, together with the Alfa GT, the easiest to live with is the Fiat. Get shopping now, I say. 🇮🇹

