

Giulietta 116



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Alfa Giulietta 116
An Alfa for the
Seventies
Story by Hugh Doran

1977 was a pretty anonymous year wasn't it? As there was actually loads of stuff going on. The man that TV show *The Simpsons* described as "nature's greatest freak," Jimmy Carter, became the 39th president of America. Fleetwood Mac released one of the all time classic albums, *Rumours*. *Star Wars* was the big movie in the cinema and a Mr & Mrs Bloom became the proud parents of son Orlando. And Amnesty International was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Plus of course there was all the usual run of the mill things going on that maybe at the time warranted a few lines somewhere towards the back of the papers. Of course the odd car was launched around the world as is normal. Alfa Romeo choose this year to unleash the 116 series Giulietta on the world.

Now I have to confess that I actually like the Giulietta, in fact I like it a lot.

Now being a child of the Seventies meant that these "nuova" Giuliettas rolled off the production lines in some rather indifferent colours. Well those indifferent colours were in fashion at the time and at the end of the day there is no accounting for taste either. But one thing is true, no matter how god awful the colour was this car looked good.



This is one of the best preserved Giulietta's in the UK.

Wedge seemed to be the in word back then with a few car makers adapting this tradition cheese shape to their cars. One in particular, from the midlands, completely lost the plot and made the wedge a laughing stock with the Princess. But there were others who embraced the wedge and made it a work of art, witness the Lancia Stratos for example. Alfa Romeo applied the wedge to the Giulietta, but why did they succeed when Austin's attempt simply sucked. Well its simple the wedge on the Giulietta is aggressive enough to make its presence felt while at the same time being subtle enough to be inoffensive. Its this delicate balance that makes the car work so well. How many four door belinas are there out there that look like their doing 100mph when parked? The answer is not many. This is a facet that is more normally associated with sports and super cars, but nearly 30 years later makes the Giulietta a classic piece of automotive design.



Tha classic 1300 Alfa engine provided the push, while the drivetrain was pure Alfetta. Both 1300cc and 1600cc versions were launched in the first year of production, 1800cc and 2 litre versions would come later. However the earlier versions shared the same to tone interior upholstery and following the angular styling of the Seventies, the instruments were all housed in a rectangular binnacle. And it was these instruments that were to form a legendary talking point of this car. For both the rev counter and the speedo were semi-circular with one needle rising clockwise and the other rising anticlockwise. Folklore has it that if you can get the two needles to meet at the top then the car explodes.



Point both needles at the top and see what happens. But the Alfa 1300 did love to rev. You just know that there are people out there that have tried this. And you also know there someone somewhere has got the needles to meet and was rather disappointed that this didn't result in a large bang. Or was this not some folklore was there some truth in it, after all there were 348,161 Giulietta's produced buy the time the last car rolled off the production line. And today the Giulietta is a very rare sight on the roads. Or does this lack of numbers have more to do with the fact that in period the Italian car industry was riddled with low grade Russian sourced steel.



Silver is a colour that particuly suits the Giulietta. Better than some of the colours that adorned the car in period.

Just the car for Pikes Peak. This heavily modified Giuletta has a 2.5 liter V6 under the hood and is raced in Sprints & Hillclimbs.



f there is one area where Alfa Romeo were left lacking with the Giulietta it was the launch of the 2.0 Giulietta Super in 1980. This was the range topping Giulietta and only came in metallic grey. It also came with one ugly set of wheels. Ok so the wheels maybe Campagniois but they are horrid and do little for the car. The same is true of the beige strips that adorned the flanks and the word "Super" that seemingly had been stenciled at the base of the "A" pillar.

The Turbodelta on the other hand was an altogether different cup of tea. Developed by Autodelta who developed the car as a potential replacement for the GTV6 in touring car racing. The development models were fitted with Alfa's own Avio turbo. However by the time the car entered production , KKK units were fitted. Autodelta had planned to build 1000 cars, as required for homologation reasons. However the Turbodelta wasn't high on the agenda for Alfa's management. They were busy putting their weight behind the 75, to be launched in 1985, as a basis for the companies future racing activities.

Thus the Turbodelta was left to fly under the radar a little. All in all just 361 cars found their way into the motoring publics hands. All were painted jet black and came with a red strip down the side. Telephone dial wheels hid the ventilated disks and upgraded suspension. Under the bonnet in addition to the turbo you could find sodium filled exhaust vales with stellite seats. Inside there was a boost gauge and Momo steering wheel. This was by far the ultimate Giulietta and had it be born a few years earlier may have had more of an opportunity to turn the Giulietta into a legend.

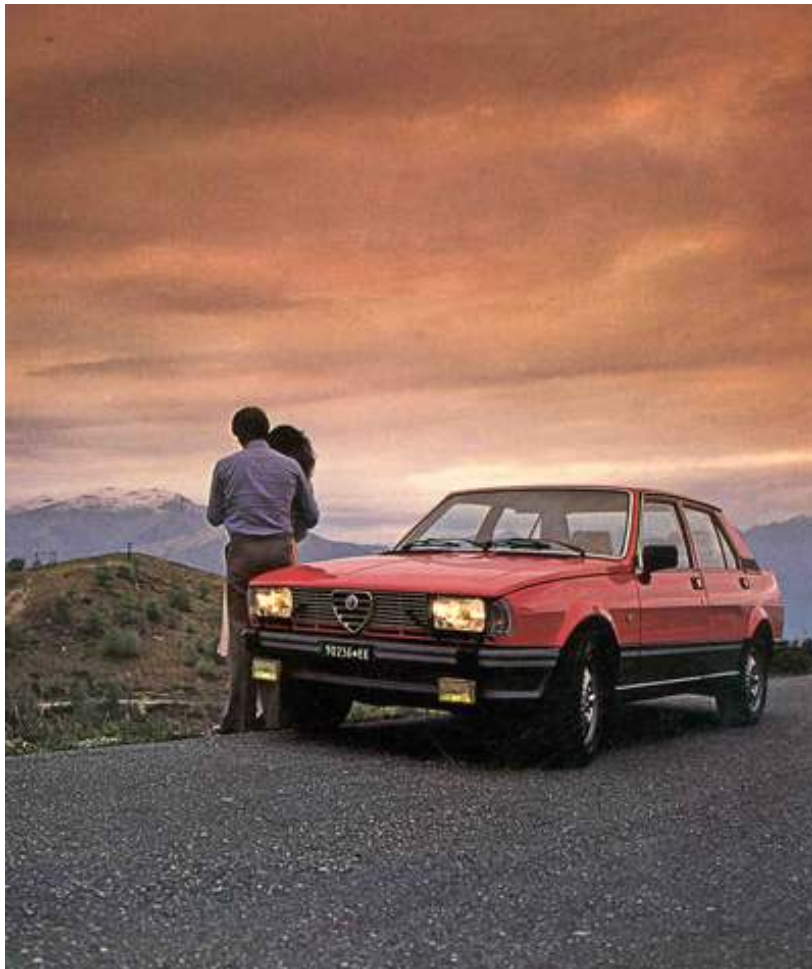
The Turbo delta wasn't the only Giulietta to be turbo charged. For nearly two years form 1983, until production stopped in November of 85, Alfa offered the Giulietta VM Turbodiesel. This version was visually more or less identical to the rest of the range. Only the extra air intakes giving the game away, oh yes and the extra sound deadening material inside - remember these were the days when diesels tended to sound like a bag of rusty bolts.



Andy Page, seen here at Silverstone showing that the Giulietta has a front hinged hood, has raced his car for many years.

After the launch in 1977 it was not until 1981 that the car received any styling tweaks. And even then the "facelift" was mild by today's standards. Fog lights were fitted to a deeper front valance, a rubbing strip was fitted on the sides running at bumper height. Wipers were also fitted to the headlights. And it's a matter of personal preference as to whether you prefer the earlier or later cars as the differences really were that minimal.

In fact the biggest difference came in the naming of the range. With names such as Nuova L and Ti being added. There was also a 2.0 Turbo in there that is not to be confused with the previously mentioned Turbodelta. There was also a limited edition in the form of the 2.0 Ti. Whose rubbing strip was matt black and the area below was painted grey. The chrome around the front and rear screens was gone and all the windows were lightly bronze tinted. The Giulietta came from the pen of the Rudolf Hruska, the father of the Alfasud. And at the time of the launch there were those who questioned the need for another saloon in the Alfa range. However Alfa had correctly identifies an unfilled gap. They believed that there was a need for a smaller car to sit below the Alfa6 that visually looked more sporting than the Alfetta but would also serve the needs of those who were frightened off by the Sud's front wheel drive. It is easy to see that Hruska's creation filled this gap completely and was a worthy addition to the range. Naturally considering its siblings, the Alfetta parts bin was heavily borrowed from during the development. In fact mechanically, the Giulietta is an Alfetta. Hence why its a 116 series car. The Giulietta was more than just an addition to the range. It introduced the wedge styling that would be continued with the Milano and 155. In fact if you compare the Giulietta and 155 you can see that they carry the same styling clues. The 155 may have been the replacement for the 75, but in spirit its a front wheel drive Giulietta.



A goodbye scene from a French Alfa brochure.

Thinking back to the late 70's, early 80's I have one abiding memory. Every morning when going to school I would be passed by a blue Giulietta, the first Giulietta and probably the first Alfa I was truly aware of. And to be honest I didn't really know what it was at the time. But I did know that it was something different and probably the only one in town. And every morning I used to turn around and watch that Giulietta disappear into the distance. And you know what on the odd occasion that I see a Giulietta when out walking I still turn around and watch then disappear into the distance. The only difference being is that now I wait for a moment or two in the hope that the driver turns round and comes back. Like I said at the start, I like the Giulietta, I like it a lot.