

3 Living with a Giulia coupé

– will you get along together?



Good points

If sitting behind the wheel of a Giulia coupé is your first experience of driving a classic car, then you're probably in for a shock - followed almost certainly by a very pleasant surprise. The designers of many modern cars seem to take pride in shielding the user from the sensations of driving, thus removing any feeling of being in contact with the road. The Giulias, however, were designed by the same small team that was responsible for the post war success of Alfa Romeo on the race track. They knew that what a racing driver seeks most of all is a good feel for what the car is doing underneath him.

Once the engine and gearbox oils are warmed up, and you have reminded yourself that you are not driving a modern car, you can relax into observing what driving should be about. Hold the large steering wheel lightly in your hands and note how you can feel precisely what the front wheels are doing relative to the road. Observe the precise 5-speed gear change, which has perfectly-spaced ratios and is remarkably slick if used relatively gently. Note the excellent braking, provided by four disc brakes - an unusual feature on a production car of this age and in this price range. Instant throttle response comes from carburetors that nestle tight against

the cylinder head. The rear axle can produce a strange wriggling sensation over bumps, but the whole car becomes utterly responsive at speed. The roof pillars are narrow, allowing good visibility in all directions. The mechanical components are generally strong and well engineered.



The classic profile with narrow roof pillars that give the driver good visibility.

Giulia range was well ahead of the opposition in terms of technical specification. It is, nevertheless, worth remembering that it was created nearly 45 years ago. You should expect heavy steering at slow speeds, a pedal layout that doesn't seem natural at first, longer braking distances, and a gearbox than cannot be rushed, at least not until the oil is thoroughly warm.

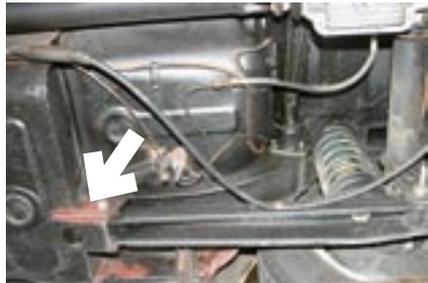
The clutch and brake pedals are a long way from the floor on right-hand drive examples, and changing gears requires an extensive arm movement. Once you have adapted to the pedals, will the novelty have worn off? The wind rushes around the 'A' pillar and the quarter-lights even on the tightest of examples. Care is needed stepping into the car if the frameless door window is wound down, as the top of the quarter-light frame can inflict a facial injury. A few enthusiasts drive Giulia coupés on a daily basis, but the cut and thrust of city streets may soon bring scrapes and dents, especially as the flanks have no rubbing strip. These cars can be hard work in stop and go traffic, and constant stopping and starting can oil up the plugs. The ribbed-for-cooling engine sump sits low, just itching to make contact with a kerb,

Bad points

A well set up Giulia will give great road feel but it will also require you to re-calibrate your senses. In its day, the



This early GT Junior is running without its front bumper to give it the GTA racer look, allowing an opportunity to examine how a front valance in good condition should look.



On the underside, look carefully at the area where the rear suspension trailing arm attaches to the underbody (arrowed). Severe corrosion here could be terminal.



This crossmember under the engine should be examined when the car is on the ramp. With the engine out it is clearly visible here.



If the seller tells you that the car has been restored, ask to see photographs showing the work at various stages.



The crossmember beneath the radiator and the valance in front of it can both rot away, as can the front spring pans (both arrowed).



A 1972 GT 1600 Junior with the original two-spoke plastic steering wheel. The vinyl seats can split at the seams. Replacement covers are available.



It may be possible to unscrew the metal kick-plates and peel back the floor covering to examine the condition of the inner sills.



Look to see that the drain holes beneath the doors are clear. Clear out with the blade of a screwdriver, if necessary.



Good panel fit around the doors and sound sills (rockers) is important.

Body panels (sills/rockers)

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1

Much of the structural integrity of the Giulia coupé lies in the three-piece sills (rockers), running beneath each of the doors. The outer sill can be visibly and magnet checked. This sill is designed to tuck behind the wings at each end (a channel will be visible), thus contributing to its strength. Many replacement sills have been cut and welded in place, but not fitted behind the wings and overall strength may be compromised as a result.

It may be possible to judge the soundness of each inner sill by tapping the handle of a screwdriver along its length inside the car adjacent to the seat (you might hear the cracking of rusted metal if it's badly corroded). If the owner is exceptionally helpful you may be allowed to unscrew the metal kick-plate and trim, and peel back the floor covering to reveal the inner sill.

The middle sill will have to remain a mystery, but should be fine if the inner and outer sills are good. Full sill replacement is expensive.

Body panels (doors)

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1

Do the doors open and shut easily? Try opening and closing them a couple of times. Do they latch easily and fit flush with the bodywork?

Examine the underside of the doors for rust: are the drain slots clear? If you need to clear them, you can be sure that moisture has rested inside the bottom of the doors and internal corrosion is likely.

Run your fingers around the door and window seals. Is the rubber in good condition, or has it perished? Old, tired door or window rubbers will let in rainwater, and may cause unnecessary wind noise.



The front spring pans can rust through and, in severe cases, the front suspension could collapse.



This 2000 GTV has been fitted with a Harvey Bailey handling kit.



Limited slip differential fitted to a 2000 GTV.

required as this can be a dangerous job.

The front suspension may creak, which could be due to worn bushes which are not easy to replace.

Dunlop disc brakes on the original Sprint GT were unreliable, but were replaced on the Sprint GT Veloce (and subsequent models) by more reliable ATE disc brakes.

Rear suspension & brakes

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1

Bushes wear out and rear spring life can be short, with the back of the car appearing to sag in relation to the front. It's not uncommon for a break to appear in the springs.

The characteristic jiggling sensation over bumps will be worse if the cone bushes that locate the suspension are worn.

The webbing rebound straps for the live rear axle can snap, but can be replaced. If the seller tells you that the car is fitted with a handling kit, ask exactly what was done and who fitted the parts. A car fitted with new springs will tend to sit rather high, until they settle.

The brake discs can become thin and rust-prone through lack of regular use, especially at the back where they tend to take less punishment. Look for scoring on the discs which may indicate pads that are severely worn. Some brake parts are difficult to source.

Rear axle

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1

Look for signs of oil leaking from the side seals or from the pinion. A limited slip differential was first offered as an option on the 1750 GTV, and became standard on the 2000 GTV.

Gearbox

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1

You'll be checking the function of the gearbox on the test drive, so for now, just check for any sign of leaking oil.

Test drive (not less than 15 mins)

Ideally, this should be over a variety of roads, but that will depend upon the location. These cars do not show their true driving qualities in urban traffic, and unless you are able to find some open road, you're not likely to really get the feel of the car.

Take a few moments to adjust the seat, and become acquainted with the controls before setting off. The pedals are offset to the right on right-hand drive cars and this, combined with the pedal action, can be off-putting at first. Most cars are now fitted with at least one door mirror, and if this is an original

13 Do you really want to restore?

– it'll take longer and cost more than you think ...



This Sprint GTV needs just a little light restoration to make it perfect.



The engine here has now been salvaged and rebuilt for another car with bodywork in better condition.

You may have found a Giulia coupé that looks as if it needs just a little work, and perhaps another that quite obviously requires a full restoration to get it back on the road. The frightening thing is that the cost of restoring either of these two cars could work out to be much the same - especially if you're paying someone to do the work for you. By far the biggest cost in any restoration is labour. Hourly rates can vary enormously, depending upon the location and nature of the business,

Fortunately, there are a number of specialists throughout the world who are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about older Alfa Romeos, and who seem to work for the love of being close to the cars - but they still need to make a living. Some of these specialists have worked at some time with an Alfa Romeo dealer and now prefer to run their own business, often in less salubrious surroundings with fewer overheads. Owners clubs and other enthusiasts can put you in touch with a specialist in your area. If you're fortunate, they may even be able to recommend someone from recent personal experience. It's worth discussing your needs with a specialist restorer before buying a car that needs extensive restoration. Some restorers will assess the car and give you an estimate, while others might prefer to start the work and log the hours they put in along the way. Either way, the total cost could work out to be much more than you bargained for.



If you're taking the engine out you'll need a hoist and an extra pair of hands!