

1,735,000 lire for the Sprint and 2,050,000 lire for the Sprint Veloce. The corresponding Spiders were priced at 1,900,000 lire and 2,235,000 lire.

The first Spider

Chronologically the Spider came next, in the summer of 1955. This was a sports car by any definition, and it was to share Veloce uprating with the Sprint. This open version brought Pininfarina into the world of volume production.

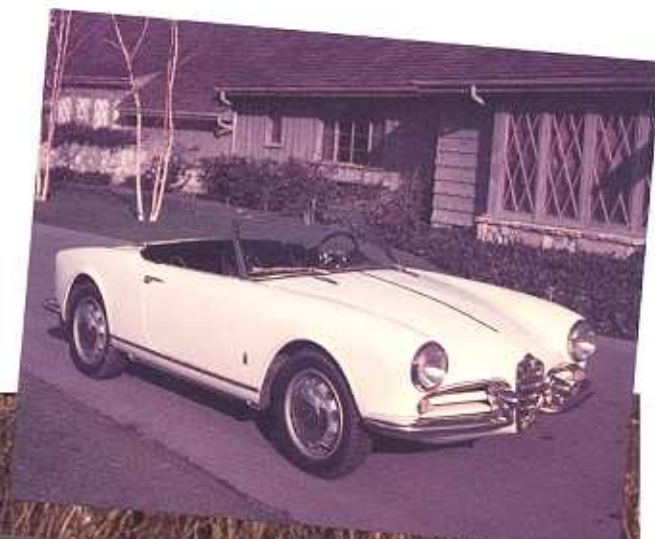
While the bodywork carefully retained strong Giulietta resemblances, none of the body panels was common to the other models. It was a beautifully balanced design, open to criticism only in the detail of nose styling, shorter than the Sprint and with no pretence to offer seating for more than two. In its fittings, the cockpit hardly improved on the coupé, with an open cubby hole and grab handle ahead of the passenger. There were three sensible round instruments in front of

Prototype and definitive Spiders. Apart from the window frames on the doors of the prototype, differences are in details such as the aggressive

bumper horn embellishments on the American production car (right) and the rounded windscreen corners on the prototype (below).

the driver, a central rev counter flanked by a speedometer on the right and a water temperature/oil pressure/fuel gauge on the left.

The pale grey Spider prototype in the Alfa Romeo Museum shows differences around the cockpit. This car has fixed side window frames, with fixed quarter lights and sliding sections in the main part. The soft-top was removable rather than folding, with three attachment points on the rear deck. The seat backs tipped forward and thus allowed enough luggage space for a briefcase to be stowed upright. There was neither a glove compartment nor a grab handle, but the passenger did face a row of four pull-push controls, for drivers with long right arms. The three main dials ahead of the driver





Pininfarina's 'Spyder' (above left) became the standard production soft-top, but this one looks curiously unfinished without its wheel trims. Bertone's chunky little Giulietta-based spider

(above right) was a one-off study and perhaps more attractive, but the addition of an adequate bumper might have spoiled the nose. US advertising from 1957



had the same functions, but were arranged with the rev counter at a higher level and in a nacelle extended towards the driver, as if to emphasise that this was the one that mattered. The gear lever looked exceptionally sturdy, but another early Spider had a column change. This museum car has no name on the rear, just an Alfa badge on the nose and Pininfarina's 'P' emblem behind the front wheel arches. Unlike the coupé, the chrome strip between the wheel arches ran below the doors and was unbroken.

The Spider scored over its popular British counterparts in sophistication, notably in its wind-up windows and its soft-top, which was easy to erect and fold, and could be tucked away under a neat cover between the seat backs and the front-hinged boot lid. Overall, as well as in its wheelbase, the Spider was shorter than the coupé, but the absence of occasional seats meant that more boot space could be provided, particularly as the spare wheel was stowed ahead of the boot.

Outwardly the nose followed coupé lines, but a divided bumper accommodated the lower central grille, and there were prominent overriders at front and rear. In a unifying touch, chrome trim was run along the flanks at bumper height, below the doors. Apart from a spine strip on the rear-hinged bonnet and Pininfarina badges behind the front wheel arches, there was no other embellishment.

Pininfarina achieved structural integrity without

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extensive bracing, the open car weighed slightly less than the coupé, and generally the Spider was rigid. While there was some scuttle shake, later Spiders were to regress in this important detail.

The only authoritative road test of one of these early Spiders appeared in *Road & Track*, which in 1956 treated 'the only Spider west of the Mississippi' very carefully. It recorded a 100mph (160kph) top speed, slightly higher than the claimed 96mph, although that itself was another conversion of a rounded figure (155kph). The magazine