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This man traded his Porsche collection for the ultimate 3 Alfa Romeo GTAs

For many, Porsche represents the ultimate garage goal. But after Paolo Vanotti experienced his friend's Alfa Romeo GTA, he traded his rare Porsches to start the Alleggerita Collection. We joined the trio of lightweight Alfas at the Balocco testing grounds for a very special day of filming...



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ALLEGGERITA - 3 Alfa Romeo GTA at Ba...



It's a stormy day at [Alfa Romeo's](#) iconic Balocco test track. A mixture of sun, rain, and wind have created a dramatic atmosphere for the culmination of a multi-year project that has involved some of the biggest names in the classic Alfa Romeo World. Three perfectly-prepared Gran Turismo Alleggeritas, expertly rebuilt by Formula GT, are sitting among the fallen leaves, awaiting their beauty shots courtesy of Stephan Bauer, while Alex Schiller and the team from Friends & Fellows man the video equipment, ready to immortalise this moment with a very special film. However, before you watch the stunning video above, we urge you to read on for a little more context about this trio of Italian automotive art pieces...



Younger classic car aficionados often complain that they were born in the wrong generation, citing the ridiculously low prices of Porsches and Ferraris during the 1970s and 1980s before collector car fever took the world by storm.

Paolo Vanotti was not one of these people: Born in the 1960s, and by the time he graduated university and got an entry-level job, he was able to afford a Ferrari Dino Spyder as his daily driver. Thus began a life-long relationship with then-affordable automobiles that now occupy auction headlines.

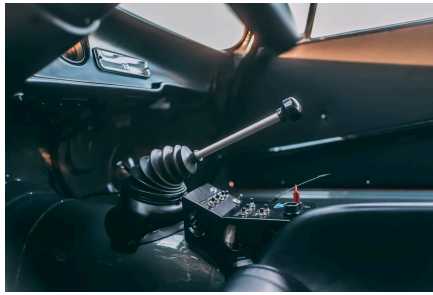


Following his Ferrari, Paolo was entranced by Stuttgart's finest. His first foray into the world of Porsche was a black 911 2.7 Carrera RS, but he didn't stop there, remaining loyal to these German dream machines and adding highlights like a 904 GTS, several early 356 Carreras and Speedsters, as well as all the important 911s of the 1960s to his collection. However, this all changed after an encounter with a friend's Alfa Romeo. In Paolo's words, "Quite simply, a ride in a friend's 1600 GTA Stradale was enough to convert me. All my Porsches were sold as a result of this drastic experience. A GTA was needed!"



However, by the time Alfisti fever had well and truly gripped Paolo, the car market had already begun to heat up, and rare models such as Alfa's ultra-desirable Gran Turismo Alleggeritas were already difficult to find. Luckily, a trip to Retromobile in Paris resulted in a fateful encounter for Paolo. "I discovered and purchased an original 1300 GTA Junior as a gateway drug, so to speak." The car was extensively restored and optimized at Formula GT in Munich according to the company motto: "Enjoy Your Finest Car Faster". "Participating in Passione Engadina showed me what this little car can do: While other cars brake early before the corner, the GTA flies into it. It's therefore suitable for short and painless overtaking maneuvers. The look on the faces of the drivers in their important but heavy Ferraris undoubtedly gave the overtaking in the corner a special appeal."





The addictive handling of Paolo's GTA did have some negative side-effects, as he recounts: "Driving a GTA sooner or later leads to the race track, as the GTA encourages driving behavior that has no place on the public road." Thus Paolo's first foray into racing began, assisted by none other than Christophe Schmidt from *Weekend Heroes* and Peter Praller from Formula GT. Christophe tracked down an incredible 1965 Alfa Romeo 1600 GTA with a great racing history, VIN 613420 and the number 84 car on your screens, which was promptly given to Peter for race preparation.



Keen to live up to the "Alleggerita" name, Paolo was adamant that they meet the original homologation weight of 760 kg for the 1965 GTA. Thanks to Carlo Rosponi, a former employee of Formula GT, this goal was undercut with Paolo's car weighing in at an incredible 741 kg in race-ready condition including the fire extinguisher. Not long after, on-track success followed, culminating in a class victory at the Peter Auto Sixties' Endurance at Mugello in April 2022, which he achieved together with Peter Praller.



This racing success did nothing to quench Paolo's obsession with these incredible racers, quite the opposite in fact. "As I delved into the development history of the GTA, the fascination for these vehicles grew ever greater. When a customer of Peter's sold a GTA with a great racing history, VIN 613667, which was also prepared by Autodelta in 1968, I knew I had to have this car." After all, the highest level of development of the 1600 GTA had been achieved for the 1968-1969 Group 5 season: with an engine output of up to 200 hp, these GTAs successfully resisted the Ford Escorts for the last time, which were later clearly superior.



The specialists at Formula GT were tasked with getting Paolo's GTA prepared, this time to the 1968/1969 Group 5 specifications, and while the car had changed, Paolo's high standards had not. "It was subjected to the same, uncompromising treatment and despite the heavy sliding axle and injection system, the car again achieved the ambitious goal with a ready to race weight of 759 kg." This Alfa, wearing the number 51 and featuring gorgeous riveted rear fender flares, boasted narrow-head engine powered by a Spica injection pump, which was successfully developed by Formula GT specifically for Paolo's car and produced an impressive 200 hp at 8,250 rpm.



As the saying goes, though, all good things come in threes, which brings us to the final and most bombastic of Paolo's GTAs. "Peter told me about an unrestored 1969 1300 GTA Junior racing car, VIN 776004, with an important racing history," Paolo recalls. The car had enjoyed many successful racing appearances before disappearing without a trace, locked away for decades in a garage. "The Vehicle had to be kissed awake," as Paolo puts it. Luckily, Peter had introduced him to Gaetano di Donna from Automaster, an Italian master of coachbuilding who dedicated himself to building the lightest GTAs. The plan was simple: they were going to build the lightest and stiffest GTA ever.



Once again, Paolo's dream became a reality, and the result is the jaw-dropping Bianco Spina GTA you see here, weighing in at just 731 kg. Boasting a 1600cc narrow-head carburettor engine, which produces about 190 hp, this GTA was just as fearsome as its wide arches would have you believe, and it quickly took first place overall at the opening round of the 2024 Alfa Revival Cup in Vallelunga in April with Peter Praller at the wheel, outclassing the competition, despite being down on displacement.





All three of these fabulous GTAs are now available with [Weekend Heroes](#) and would surely be an outstanding choice for anyone looking to follow in Paolo's footsteps and get stuck into some historic racing. As for Paolo? Well, with the film finally complete, Paolo's GTA obsession has been satisfied for the time being. "Being able to drive these GTA in the wet at Balocco - the very place they were initially developed - was a dream come true. I must admit that seeing the three cars racing down this historic track in the short film we have produced has clearly been one of the highlights of creating the *Alleggerita* Collection." What his next passion will be will remain to be seen, but as Paolo tells us, "The *Alleggerita* story is not yet over; stay tuned!"

Video: Alex Schiller and Friends & Fellows Photos: Stephan Bauer © 2024

Learn more about the cars in the Classic Driver Market

1965 Alfa Romeo GTA - Rebuilt to 68/69 Gr.5
Spec
P.O.R.

1965 Alfa Romeo GTA - GIULIA SPRINT GTA
1600
P.O.R.

1970 Alfa Romeo GTA - Junior | Period Race
History | 2024 Alfa Revival Cup Winner | 731 kg
P.O.R.