

Bizzarrini GT Europa with an Opel engine

How much Opel is in this Bizzarrini?

TURN ON SOUND



The little Bizzarrini has almost been forgotten, even though it was supposed to save the brand. Is it really built on an Opel platform? The German owner knows.

Photo: Frank B. Meyer/AUTO BILD



[Frank B. Meyer](#)

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We are at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este 2025, Europe's most glamorous beauty contest for classic cars. On the white gravel between the Dino 206 GT and the Ferrari 330 GTC stands another Italian sports car—classic car connoisseurs passing by believe they recognize a Bizzarrini GT 5300, the brand's most famous car. But wait a minute! This one is much smaller.



This 1966 Bizzarrini GT Europa was on display at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este 2025. It was Giotto Bizzarrini's personal everyday car—more on that below.

Photo: Frank B. Meyer/AUTO BILD

What was the Bizzarrini Europa?

Yes, because this is a Bizzarrini Europa—the model series that was supposed to save the financially struggling brand from bankruptcy. That didn't work out; in the late 1960s, company founder Giotto Bizzarrini had to shut down operations. We'll find out shortly just how many—no, how few—of these small two-seaters his company actually built.



The radiator is located on the left, just in front of the bulkhead; some of the cooling air has to flow through the fender on the side. Giotto Bizzarrini dented this one in a minor crash.

Photo: Frank B. Meyer/AUTO BILD

First, let's take a look at the Concorso d'Eleganza program. There, in the organizer's official text, it states: "The platform and powertrain were sourced from Opel, specifically from the Opel GT and the Rekord C."

Is the platform from Opel?

How is that possible? The Bizzarrini Europa was released in 1966, while the Opel GT didn't come out until 1968. Does the organizer mean the Kadett B chassis, on which the Opel GT is also based?



View over the hood. Warm exhaust air flows through circular vents onto the windshield.

Photo: Frank B. Meyer/AUTO BILD

According to the owner, the car is not built on an Opel platform: “Bizzarrini developed a completely new chassis from scratch for this car,” says Malte Fromm (58) from Munich. He should know, because not only does he own this car, but he also claims to have purchased the bankruptcy estate of Giotto Bizzarrini’s company, including the archives.

What engine does the little Bizzarrini have?

How did the Concorso organizer come up with Opel? The 1.9-liter engine actually comes from General Motors; it’s the same one used in the Opel Rekord C and later in the GT. The owner confirms this.



The four-cylinder engine is mounted well behind the front axle, similar to the later Opel GT.

Photo: Frank B. Meyer/AUTO BILD

In the Bizzarrini, however, the four-cylinder has a different engine number than at GM; Bizzarrini had reworked it, and it has two Weber twin-barrel carburetors. The GT's power is listed in old data sheets as 110 hp according to the SAE standard; depending on the gear ratio, the GT Europa is said to reach 195 or 206 km/h with this. This is also due to the fact that the body designed by Pietro Vanni had been tested in the wind tunnel at the University of Pisa—the university where Giotto Bizzarrini had earned his engineering degree in 1953.

According to the brochure, the top-of-the-line GT Europa 1900/SS produced 120 hp and exceeded 210 km/h.



Curved logo on the wide B-pillar. The model is sometimes called the Bizzarrini 1900 GT Europa, sometimes just the Bizzarrini GT Europa, or simply the Bizzarrini Europa; the brochure listed it as G. T. Europa 1900.

Photo: Frank B. Meyer/AUTO BILD

How does the GT Europa drive?

The 1.9-liter engine is mounted well behind the front axle, resulting in nearly ideal weight distribution. Add to that the lightweight fiberglass body (the entire car weighs just 680 kilograms!) and the rear axle made of a magnesium alloy with independent suspension on trapezoidal wishbones and Campagnolo disc brakes. "This makes the car drive almost like an Alfa Romeo TZ2," the even lighter sports and race car, Fromm enthuses.



For easy entry, the door extends all the way up to the roof, and the curved glass ensures an even tan.

Photo: Frank B. Meyer/AUTO BILD

How many GT Europa cars did Bizzarrini build?

The Concorso d'Eleganza program states: "Depending on the source, only twelve to 17 units were produced between 1966 and 1969, although a larger number had originally been planned for the series." The owner of the car and the archive states unequivocally: "There were twelve production cars."



Historic “Prova” license plate for test and delivery drives, brand name in block letters, round taillight like on the 5300 GT.

Photo: Frank B. Meyer/AUTO BILD

Who was the first owner of this car?

For Bizzarrini connoisseurs, something else is truly exciting: This unrestored example in Giallo Medio (color code 1.217.2050) was the boss’s car, the personal everyday vehicle of Giotto Bizzarrini and his wife! On the left front fender, you can still see the spot that had to be repaired after Giotto crashed into a rock following a lovely meal.



A bird on the blade of a circular saw—that's how you could describe the Bizzarrini brand logo. The company was based in Livorno, west of Florence on the Mediterranean coast.

Photo: Frank B. Meyer/AUTO BILD

In 1978, he sold the car to Sweden for 1.8 million lire (the sales contract still exists)—which was only about 760 marks at the time.



The 1978 photo shows Giotto Bizzarrini (far left) selling his private GT Europa.

Photo: private

In 2012, the car came to Germany: Malte Fromm bought it from the previous owner. Now, at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este, he has presented the car to the public for the first time.

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