



Above- The 'Giulietta Speciale' (00001) as it appeared in the autumn of 1957

Below- a recent photo of the 1957 Turin show car (00001)



The 1958 Geneva show car (00002) as it looks today. People wonder why the front fender spears over such a clean shape. At 125 mph, the wheel wells create quite a bit of turbulence. BAT-like fender covers were not practical, the shape helped direct air away from the opening and directed it above. The effect was minimal, but that is the reason the bulge exists.



Ulrich Lanius

# very special special

by dave hammond

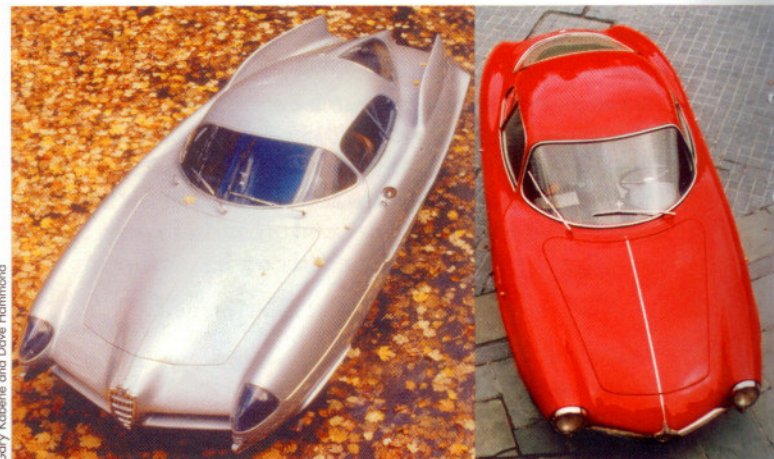
## The Sprint Speciale Show Cars

BAT 5, BAT 7 and BAT 9 (1953-1955) penned by Franco Scaglione for Bertone, became a BAT without wings in 1957, named the Sprint Speciale. The lineage is unmistakable.

The Sprint Speciale prototype shown at the Salone di Torino in October of 1957 did not have an Alfa Romeo shield in its grille, and no front bumper to interrupt air flow. According to Donald Hughes and Vito Witting DaPrato in Alfa-Romeo Veloce – The Racing Giuliettas, the SS initials originally stood for Sprint Spinta, meaning 'supertuned'.

By the time the first prototype, number 00001, had arrived at Turin, it was labeled as a 'Giulietta Speciale' (not 'Sprint Speciale'). A Bertone shield was set to the right of the script on the fender as it would be on production cars, but above the model name instead of below it. Judging a few photos from the 1957 show, the decision to go with Sprint Speciale might have already been made as the display stand the car sits on is labeled with a tentative "Alfa Romeo S.S."

The second Sprint Speciale, 00002, was shown at Geneva early in 1958, had rear and side windows of Perspex (plastic) set into a body body panels and trim made of aluminum.



Gary Kaberle and Dave Hammond

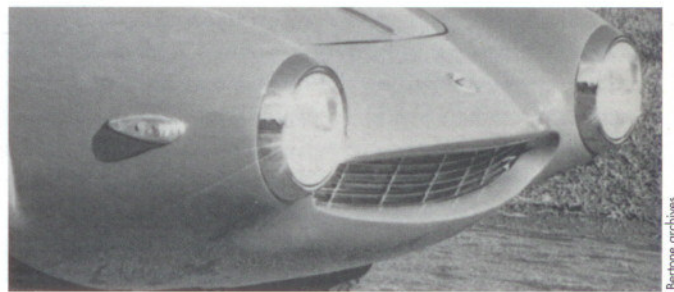
From the cut lines for the hoods and big curved windshields to the fastback rear glass, BAT 9 and the Sprint Speciale share much



### Different in Many Ways

The first two Sprint Speciales are in either remarkably good original condition or no longer exist. That contradiction is something collectors bump into when researching vintage prototype and racecars, especially Italian cars. The bodies on serial numbers 00001 (Turin) and 00002 (Geneva) are unique, ever so slightly asymmetrical in their curves as one-off bodies shaped long ago by hammer-wielding craftsmen often are. Even the big, curved windshields are unique, with their perfect 65-degree radius along the bottom edge. Heaven help the owner if that glass ever breaks. But the cars as they are today do not match archival photographs, yet everything indicates that these first two Sprint Speciales have been preserved exactly as Alfa Romeo sold them.

Photographs and research published by various authors show that the first Sprint Speciale, as shown at Salone de Turin, October 30, 1957, had a longer nose, lower tail, different hubcaps and a pair of bullet-shaped tail lamps not unlike a '59 Cadillac. No such Alfa exists today. The second car is



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**The 'Giulietta Speciale' as it appeared in the 1957. The egg-crate grille may have been too Ferrari-like for Alfa.**

also missing its egg-crate grille and has grown the tail section from a 1959 SS. An enthusiast, armed with photos from Bertone and Alfa Romeo archives or reference volumes by Angelo Tito Anslemi or Hughes and DaPrato might assume that these cars with correct serial numbers on the firewalls are fakes or were wrecked and modified by an owner. But look closely at the old photos and notice that details such as side marker lamps move forward, back, or vanish altogether.

The 1957 'Giulietta Speciale' at the Turin salon. It looks long, lean and fast like a greyhound relative of the production Sprint Speciale. The wheel covers, with a stamped Alfa logo, look different than subsequent versions.



Bertone archives

### Piecing Fragments Together

So what happened to the show cars? A 1957 Alfa (00001) was recently listed for sale in by a dealer in California. The 1958 Geneva show car (00002) is currently owned by Sultan Karim in British Columbia. A third car is probably from the 1958 Turin show and was used in testing. What is known is that records were located describing the second SS as a "manchino presso il Servizio Esperienze Esperimentale," which roughly translates into a "press mock-up" (or mule) of the "Experimental Department," built in 1957 (but first shown in 1958), and a conflicting Certificato de Origine (Certificate of Origin) dated December 22, 1960, as sold to Nicola Cantu. The implication is that Alfa Romeo modified the show car over the course of two years. Once its display stand days were over by the end of 1960 and regular production Sprint Speciales were being assembled, Alfa sold 00002 as a new car. The engine in the car was also from 1960 – too late for a low-nose Sprint Speciale, but correct for the Certificate of Origin.

For collectors of rare cars, that list is known as a 'story.' The more stories a car has, the more of a problem it is on the collector market. The good news is that like a fine but unsigned piece of antique furniture, many details and clues when put together and viewed by an expert can still verify exactly what the item is. First, this is one of the cars with all-aluminum panels including the hood, doors and trunk. The only glass is the windshield, with rear window and side windows of plastic. Several parts are drilled and lightened, including both door frames. All the bright trim, from the window frames to headlamp bezels and rear bumperettes were hammered from sheets of aluminum. The front grille opening



A recent photo of the 1957 Turin show car (00001).

and Alfa badge on the nose were retained.

The body is clearly hand-built and consistent with prototypes of the period. Look very closely from various angles and some slight asymmetries will be noticed.

Sprint Speciale 00001 met a similar fate. Its original contours were shed and the front section shortened to look like the second prototype. The trunk lids of these cars have a small raised lip at the trailing edge for opening it, a detail found on only low-nose Sprint Speciales. The interior of serial number 00001, is black, simple and in keeping with a car intended more for weekend racing and less a Gran Turismo. At first glance, the interior of the 00002 looks like a standard production item, but the doors are just slightly different, the storage shelf is a few millimeters narrower, the steering wheel has a classic Enrico Nardi ebonized wood inlay in place of the production black plastic, and so on. The components look much like the interior of SS number 14. Among the first 20 cars a handful of aluminum-bodied, plastic-windowed versions intended for racing. The next 60 to 81 Sprint Speciales (the actual number is disputed, but no more than 81) were built as grand touring cars after it became evident that the Sprint Zagato was the better racecar. Did Alfa Romeo, for the purpose of displaying it at later shows, create an interior to better match the low-nose cars that followed, or is this the original interior as installed by Bertone because it displayed better at shows? There is no photographic record of which is correct for which car, only the fact that this interior perfectly fits and was made for this car.

The 1958 Geneva show car (00002) as it looks today.



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Casey Annis

**A gaggle of Speciales on display at the 2007 Detroit convention.**

### Light, Lithe and Quick

Papers that accompanied the second car list the weight as 700kg (1,543 lbs.), a very low number for a road-going GT and not yet verified by the owner. Regardless of the actual weight, a person who has often driven the car describes it as much lighter, more lithe, and quite different from driving a production Giulietta Sprint Speciale, which is listed in Luigi Fusi's table as weighing 950kg/2,094 lbs.

All three prototype/show cars were built on a Giulietta Sprint chassis shortened 5-inches to an 88.6-inch wheelbase. That makes the chassis even shorter than the SVZ cars from Zagato, a much smaller vehicle. Speculation as the reason for the short wheelbase is because Scaglione and Bertone realized that the long front and rear overhang used for channeling air over the tapered body needed a short chassis or the car would weigh too much. Although the later Sprint Zagato and early Sprint Speciale share the same basic chassis, the aluminum body from Bertone was formed around a rigid, heavy steel structure to support the long body. Zagato employed a lightweight tubular cage and as small and simple a body as possible, favoring instinct and experience over wind tunnel testing. The official but possibly incorrect weight of the 1958 Geneva

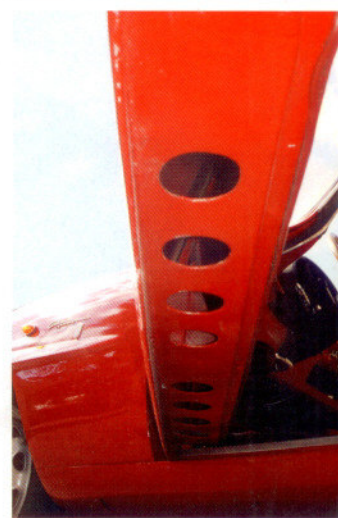


Dr. Axel Marx

**The original aluminum panels and plastic rear side windows.**

show car is only 1,543 lbs, while Hughes and DaPrato list the 1957 SS prototype as having weighed 1,720 lbs (without oil, water, lubricants or fuel) in its original form. Although the second chassis shows extensive work to make it light (an "alleggerita" or "lightened" version), nothing that is visible suggests a 200-pound difference between it and the first car. The Sprint Veloce Zagato racecars also had variations, but a 1958 (series 1) SVZ weighed approximately 1,600 lbs. while Fusi lists the 1960 Sprint Zagato at 785 kg (1,731 lbs). Even if the heavier number is correct, the first SS weighed only 11 lbs more than a Sprint Zagato. Hardly the difference that most authors indicate made the SZ a racecar and the Sprint Speciale a GT. Alfa's records list SS 0004, 0005, 0007 and 0009 as "alleggerita", which seems to imply that only four all-aluminum bodied Speciales were assembled in addition to the first three cars.

**Several parts are drilled to lighten, including both door frames.**



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Other modifications to the Sprint chassis for the SS prototypes included dropping the radiator supports a few inches and lowering the floor pan and make the car 4.5 inches lower to the top of the roof than a Giulietta Sprint. The truly amazing part is that the much longer SS prototypes have a higher top speed (approximately 130 mph) than a Sprint Veloce or even Sprint Zagato, plus better gas mileage due to the low drag of the Sprint Speciale.

By 1960 the production Sprint Speciale added front bumpers, a taller roof, headlamps raised to US regulation height, and grew to 1,925 pounds.

**The serial number on reported first SS.**



but possibly incorrect weight of the 1958 Geneva

**Several dozen low-nose Sprint Speciales for test driving at the Monza Autodrome, northeast of Milano, in June of 1959.**



Bertone archives

**A very early SS outside Bertone, probably 1958.**



Bertone archives