



## ROAD TEST

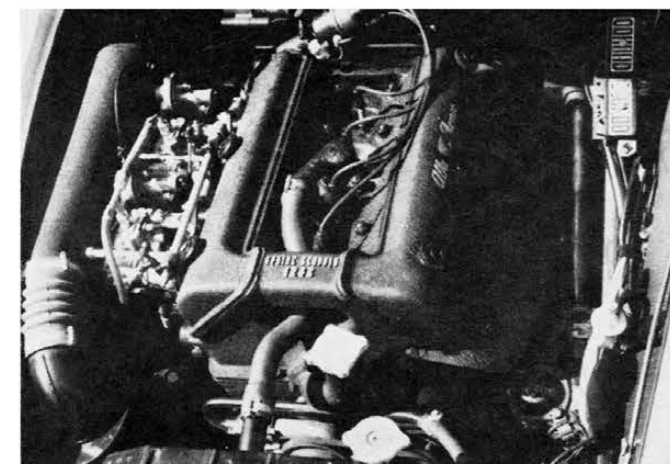
# ALFA ROMEO 2000 SPIDER

*Hansjoerg Bendel tests a dual personality from Milano*

**U**NTIL the advent of the Giulietta models, most Alfas were notable more for performance than for smooth running in the lower speed range. In this respect, the 2000 Spider marks a new high point: it is obvious that its designers wanted to provide maximum driving enjoyment in a comfortable, well sprung car, and that flexibility was of greater importance than maximum power. This aim undoubtedly has been achieved.

As its name implies, the Spider is based on the 2000 sedan (Road & Track, July 1958). The engine has 4 cylinders with twin overhead camshafts; for the Spider, the single dual-throat carburetor has been replaced by two horizontal dual-throat Solexes of the type fitted to the Mercedes 190-SL, i.e., with the throttle valve of the second throat actuated by the vacuum created in No. 1 throat. This has increased the output to 115 brake horsepower at 5500 revolutions per minute and also insures perfect idling and town performance. The wheelbase has been shortened from 107 to 98.8 inches; front suspension is by helical springs

*Solexes' float chambers vent into the intake air box.*

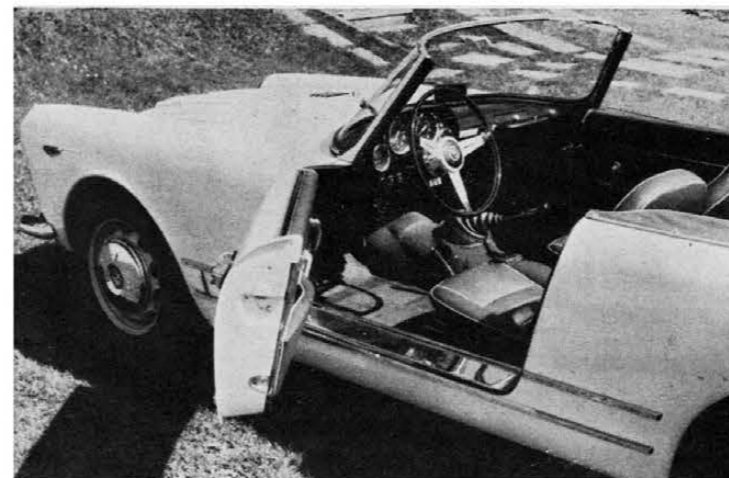


PHOTOGRAPHY: BENDEL

and wishbones, the rigid rear axle being located by two long trailing links and a central trailing triangle with helical springs, as on the Giuliettas. The open body is stressed and there is no separate chassis; Carrozzeria Touring of Milan, famous builder of the Superleggera bodies, is responsible for the coachwork.

Two comfortable bucket seats firmly hold driver and passenger even during fast cornering. Theoretically, the tilting back rests give access to two seats in the back, but these are very occasional; only small children can be carried over more than shopping distances. Very complete instruments, housed in a nacelle, face the driver; all dials are easily visible with the exception of the fuel gauge, hidden behind one of the wheel spokes. This gauge has a warning light, and others (besides the usual direction signal and high-beam lights) show whether the other lights, heater fan and choke are in operation. The foot-operated windshield washer automatically starts the electric wipers, which have two speeds. Separate levers control ventilation and defrosters.

*High-quality tools are at left; spare drops down below.*



*Instrumentation includes tachometer and oil thermometer.*

Layout of pedals, controls, and the aluminum steering wheel is excellent; the right hand automatically falls onto the gear lever. The handbrake is actuated by a shortish pull-up lever of now outmoded fashion; this probably explains why it can actually stop the car if need be.

Visibility over the sloping hood and across the slightly curved windshield is excellent; the corner posts are very thin and the side windows, of course, have no frames.

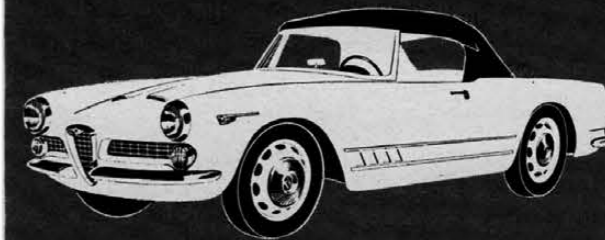
The first big surprise comes when the engine is switched on: even when starting from stone cold, it runs smoothly after just a few seconds and can drive the car away without protest. The exhaust note is deep and pleasing but definitely not cop-attracting, even under full power. The clutch is light and positive, and it is impossible to make it judder or grab; after numerous full-power starts, it still gave no sign of weakness or smell. The Porsche-type ring synchromesh will respond no matter how fast you move the short, stiff lever—and this includes all 5 gears. At first, we were not too convinced of the practical worth of the 5th (overdrive) speed. After getting accustomed to car and engine, we found ourselves using it oftener. Due to the flexibility of the engine, it is really useful at speeds from 40 miles per hour upwards, when it will provide effortless cruising and noticeably improve gas mileage.

According to the mood of the driver, the power and willingness to rev can be used, or it is possible to accelerate—slowly—in 5th gear from 1500 rpm onwards. Maximum power comes in at 5500 rpm; above this, power begins to drop noticeably and 6000 rpm, representing a piston speed of 3520 feet per minute, appears to be very near the upper limit. The 2000 engine has not yet been pushed to its potential maximum; it appears quite possible that a more highly tuned version may be produced, but most people will find that the present acceleration and maximum speed of over 110 mph are quite satisfactory.

Incidentally, we could not help wondering a bit over the accuracy of the factory specifications: measured top speed was within a mile of the claimed speed, weight was a few pounds over, dimensions dead accurate (it's surprising how often they're not), and the fuel consumption also lined up. Over 1400 miles we averaged 16.9 miles per gallon, and touring consumption during somewhat more normal use was 19.5 mpg. Those fortunate enough to pick up their Alfas in Europe will do best to avoid benzole-blended fuel: the 2000 obviously likes aviation gas similar to that available in Italy. In the U.S., any premium brand will do nicely.

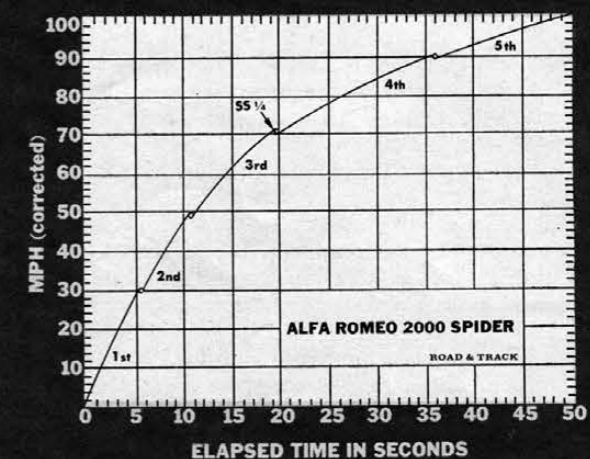
Though the frontal area is of course increased with the top up, the improvement in aerodynamics is evident. Figures in the data panel were obtained with the top up, as usual, but acceleration was noticeably better even before it was verified by the instruments. (continued)

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### ALFA ROMEO 2000 SPIDER

SPECIFICATIONS		PERFORMANCE	
List price	\$4995	Top speed (5th), mph	111.3
Curb weight	2770	4th (6000)	96
Test weight	3100	3rd (6000)	71
Weight distribution, %	53/47	2nd (6000)	49
Dimensions, length	177	1st (6000)	30
width	65.4		
height	53.5	FUEL CONSUMPTION	
Wheelbase	98.5	Normal range, mpg	16/20
Tread, f and r	55.2/53.9		
Tire size	165-400	ACCELERATION	
Brake lining area	263	0-30 mph, sec	5.5
Steering, turns	3.2	0-40 mph	7.9
turning circle, ft	35	0-50 mph	10.9
Engine type	4 cyl, dohc	0-60 mph	14.2
Bore & stroke	3.33 x 3.46	0-70 mph	19.4
Displacement, cu in	120.5	0-80 mph	26.5
cc	1975	0-90 mph	35.5
Compression ratio	8.50	0-100 mph	50.0
Bhp @ rpm	115 @ 5500	Standing 1/4 mile	19.5
equivalent mph	103.5	speed at end, mph	70
Torque, lb-ft	115 @ 3700		
equivalent mph	69.5	GEAR RATIOS	
		0/d (0.85), overall	4.08
		4th (1.00)	4.78
		3rd (1.36)	6.48
		2nd (1.99)	9.47
		1st (3.26)	15.6
		TAPLEY DATA	
		5th, lb/ton @ mph	70 @ 98
		4th	135 @ 80
		3rd	240 @ 58
		2nd	415 @ 20
		Total drag at 60 mph, lb	103
		CALCULATED DATA	
		Lb/hp (test wt)	26.9
		Cu ft/ton mile	80.2
		Mph/1000 rpm (5th)	18.8
		Engine revs/mile	3197
		Piston travel, ft/mile	1844
		Rpm @ 2500 ft/min	4250
		equivalent mph	80
		R&T wear index	58.9
		SPEEDOMETER ERROR	
		30 mph	actual 28.3
		40 mph	37.6
		50 mph	46.8
		60 mph	56.3
		70 mph	65.6
		80 mph	75.5
		90 mph	84.8
		100 mph	93.9





*The paired lights below the headlights contain the directional signals above and standard fog lights below.*

*Front leg room is superb, and the seats provide good lateral stability. The top disappears behind the auxiliary rear seat.*



The road holding with Pirelli Cinturato tires and the accurate, highly responsive steering are even better than expected. The car corners without any roll and can be taken around any bend very fast indeed, without having to indulge in fireworks. Steering is neutral, and in spite of its length, the car is noticeably more willing to go around corners than earlier Giulietta models. On dry and wet surfaces, break-away is always under perfect control; the engine responds so well to the throttle that rear-end steering is easily accomplished. Springing is surprisingly soft: even on very rough or undulating roads, irregularities remain almost unnoticed. It is obvious that the road-holding qualities very much depend on adjustment of the dampers, and they do their job faultlessly. Ground clearance is adequate even for rutted mountain roads.

Brakes follow established Alfa practice. Aluminum drums have helical fan blades on all four wheels. The feel of the brake pedal is fairly hard by modern standards, but the brakes pull the car down from any speed with a reassuring feel of absolute control. Continuous hard applications during acceleration testing failed to produce any sign of overheating.

Running at speeds around 100 mph for extended periods, wind buffeting and noise get more prominent. On the whole, even with both side windows lowered, protection is above average, due probably to the slight wrap-around of the windshield. The body structure itself appears exceptionally stiff, which justifies the comparatively high curb weight of

2770 pounds; heavy braking or full-throttle acceleration on bad road surfaces never produced any trace of body shake or vibration.

The unpadding top offers practically perfect protection without flapping noises. In rain of cloudburst intensity we detected leaks in one corner of the windshield and around the plastic rear window. Visibility forward and towards both sides is good and rear visibility satisfactory, though there are two quite important blind areas between rear and side windows. Opening and stowing the top is very easy, but closing it and inserting the rear top rail underneath the three body-mounted locking points is difficult even with experience. This, as well as the robustness of some of the top fasteners, should be improved.

The sprung bumpers should prove adequate even for American use. The tank holds just under 16 U.S. gallons. Accessibility of all engine compartment items is excellent; for repairs at night, there is the well known light in the center of the padded hood. The rubber-matted trunk is roomy. Inside, door pockets are a useful adjunct to the locking glove compartment. When no one is riding on the nonpadding rear bench, it can be used for luggage.

The main attraction of this latest Alfa is its double personality: it can be treated like any ordinary sedan, ambling gently along without special attention, but it is always ready with the exhilarating performance apparently exclusive to designs with long years of competition experience behind them.