

Iso Rivolta

The best of two worlds—Italian body styling and an American V-8!

THE TERM "DESIRABLE PROPERTY" IS OLD IN USE, and sometimes misused, but occasionally we come across a car that fits the term in its fullest meaning. On such occasions it is all too easy to hate the man who gave it to us for wanting his machine back.

Our most recent experience was with a car, the prototype of which was tested last spring by European Editor Bernard Cahier in Italy. Said Bernard at the time: "When the Iso Rivolta reaches the States in its production form do not fail to try it."

We did just that and it was all we could do to keep from whacking the man in the eye when we were forced to return it, the man in this particular instance being D. D. "Mich" Michelmore, heretofore a friend of many years standing. Now he is the Western States distributor for Iso Rivolta (Inskip is Eastern distributor) automobiles and he wanted his car back.

The photos tell the story much better than we can of the pleasing lines of the Bertone body, one of that firm's better efforts. If we needed confirmation of our own feelings in this regard we would have had only to ask the crowds of people who congregated around the car wherever we parked it. The personal opinion of this writer is that we could have parked the Iso in the middle of the Mojave Desert and draw a crowd in under five minutes. There's something very satisfying and



PHOTOS: BOB D'OLIVO & TOBY PALMIERI



ego building about barging through a crowd of admiring onlookers, opening the door, climbing in and after answering a few questions, driving off. Prospective Iso owners can take it from us that they'll be answering questions for some time to come.

A pleasant looking car should be equally pleasant to drive, which is the case with the Iso (they're dropping the Rivolta name shortly, even though he's the man who builds it). The engine fires up virtually immediately with a twist of the key and right there is where one notices something different about the Iso. It's an Italian car, make no mistake about that; it has all the right smells, all the right looks, all the right doodads and makes all the right noises — but one. There is a complete lack of the busy sound of many bits and pieces whizzing around and moving up and down under the hood that is the hallmark of the Italian car. In the Iso there is just a steady, almost inaudible purr, the mark of the American V-8. It's no wonder, for under that Milanese facade sits a 327-inch Chevrolet Corvette engine, the quiet 300 bhp, single quad version thereof.

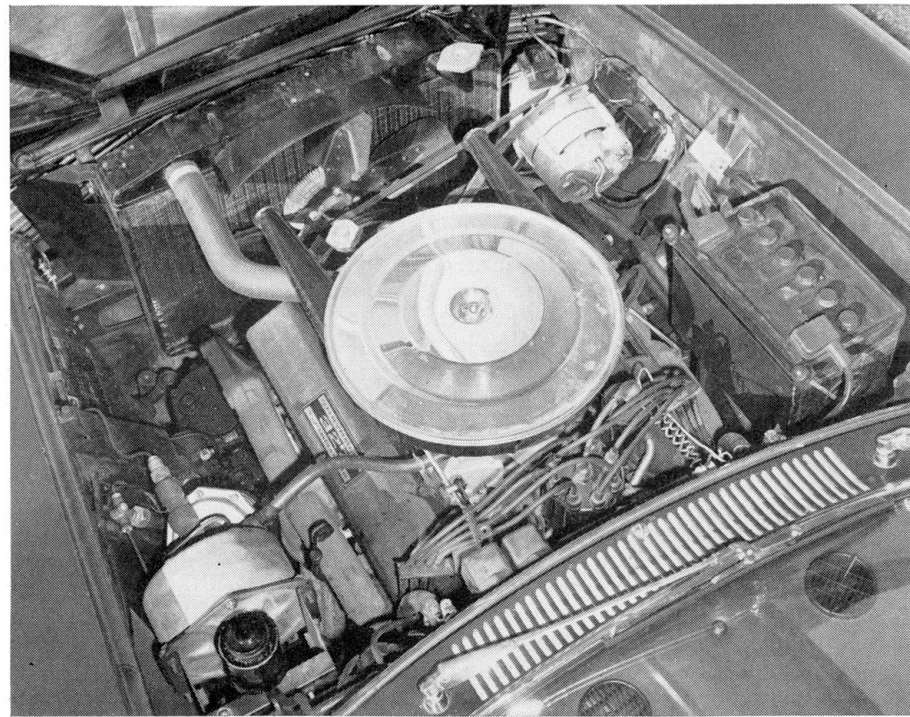
However, 300 horses are 300 horses whether they come from Detroit or from some place in Italy; in fact the former are often more prone to hairy chestedness than the latter. These particular horses do the job in grand style, taking the car off with a surging rush that is deceptively quick. It isn't the slam in the back delivered by a Cobra, or the rasping surge of a Ferrari, but more of a sudden whoosh like that of a high speed elevator. Regardless of how it's described it is a most pleasant feeling. The driveline is Chevy back to the Salisbury-centered DeDion rear end which is geared with a 3.07 to 1 ring and pinion, giving the car a very long legged sort of loping performance as well as excellent mileage for such a machine.

The gearbox is also the Borg Warner used by Chevrolet (and a number of others) and is geared fairly evenly except for a rather wide spread between second and third gears. It shifts smoothly and easily, and the lever is short, well placed and convenient, with only a hint of the slight slop in the external linkage that marks this gearbox and separates it from a true remote-shift unit. At first there is a tendency to try to row the car with the gearshift (it's an Italian car isn't it?) but you soon get over it, using the lower gears only for starting and for extra (!) acceleration when it's wanted. The rest of the time you just stay in high gear and enjoy it. Unless you want to impress somebody, passing is just a matter of putting the right foot down a little harder.

Cruising is deceptive with the windows closed. There is so little noise that fairly frequent glances at the speedometer are necessary if one is to avoid unwanted brushes with the law. Figures well above the usual legal limit come all too readily into view unless one is consciously gentle on the throttle pedal, reminding one that this is a car built for cruising at 100 mph and up on Italian *autostradi* rather than pootling around town. Not, of course, that one can't pootle around to one's heart's content; one can, even in top gear, without a bit of trouble.

As one goes, so should one stop and this one stops, easily and right now without any wheel locking or other nonsense. The big disc brakes on all four wheels, or rather at each end — the rear ones are inboard — are power assisted but not so much so as to be obtrusive. They are light to the touch but not sudden, and enough effort to tell you how much pressure you are using is required for full hard stops. They are utterly fade-free and completely even, with no trace of pulling.

The steering is one of the few points which we can fault. It's too slow. It might be all right for Aunt

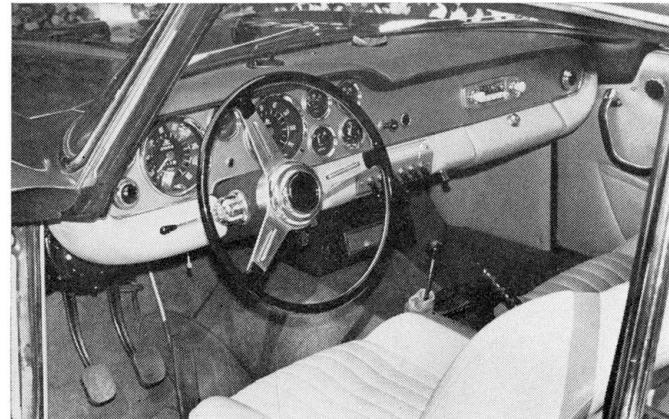


LEFT—The engine doesn't sound Italian and it isn't. Under the smooth hood is a big 327-inch Chevy "Turbo-Fire."

CENTER LEFT: Trunk is quite roomy, without resorting to excessive overhang, and without being too gigantic.

CENTER RIGHT: The Iso's dashboard is quite complete but does not give the effect of a 707 Jet or IBM computer.

BOTTOM: The Iso is a true "two-plus-two," with more than adequate room for two adults (not two midgets) in rear.



Iso Rivolta *continued*



Minnie for making parking maneuvers but this car isn't Aunt Minnie's dish of tea. Strongly understeering, the car doesn't need violent corrections but somewhat quicker steering is not only desirable but advisable on a car of this type. Otherwise the handling is good, with no play in the steering or linkage, a light return and just the right amount of road reaction, the sort of steering that invites the arms-out driving position.

Road holding and handling are both excellent for cruising and long, fast turns, although the combination of understeer and slow steering make things a little dicey for fast maneuvers on tight turns. It is, in short, no race car but rather an excellent, secure high speed touring machine that soaks up bumps both large and small, and takes all roads in stride and with the utmost comfort for drivers and passengers alike.

Climbing in and out of the Iso is as easy as anything we've seen, with the possible exception of a limousine. The seats are of the sort that give support but without feeling like a pew in a Puritan church, firm but definitely not on the hard side. Like most Italian seats they are on the flat side, with too little thigh support at the forward edge. This is being corrected on future models



ISO RIVOLTA: ROAD TEST 2/64

PRICE (as tested)\$9295.00
 OPTIONS wire wheels & leather upholstery;
 340 hp engine

ENGINE:
 Type Chevrolet "327" V-8
 Head Cast iron, removeable
 Valves OHV, pushrod/rocker, hydraulic lifters
 Max. bhp 300 @ 5,000 rpm
 Max. Torque 360 lbs. ft. @ 3,200 rpm
 Bore 4.0 in. 101.6 mm.
 Stroke 3.25 in. 82.6 mm.
 Displacement 327 cu. in. 5359 cc.
 Compression Ratio 10.5 to 1.
 Induction System Single Rochester four-barrel
 Exhaust System Cast headers into dual system
 Electrical System 12-V distributor ignition

CLUTCH:
 Single disc, dry
 Diameter 10 in.
 Actuation Mechanical

TRANSMISSION:
 4-speed full synchro,
 close ratio gears
 Ratios: 1st 2.2 to 1
 2nd 1.64 to 1
 3rd 1.31 to 1
 4th 1.0 to 1

DIFFERENTIAL:
 Salisbury with limited-slip
 Ratio 3.07 to 1
 Drive Axles (type) 2-joint, open
 slip-coupled

STEERING:
 Recirculating ball sector
 Turns Lock to Lock 4.25
 Turn Circle 39 ft.

BRAKES:
 Full disc, inboard at rear
 Disc Diameters 12 in. front
 11 in. rear
 Swept Area 380 sq. in.

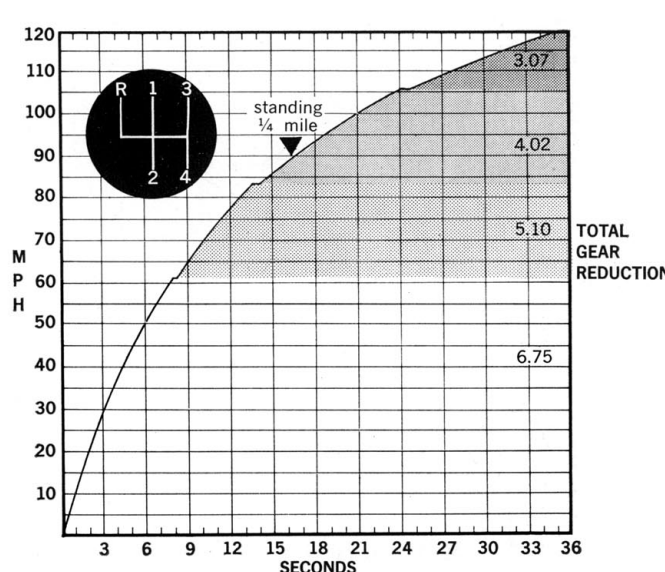
CHASSIS:
 Frame Box type, pressed steel
 Body Aluminum
 Front Suspension Unequal arms, coil springs, tube shocks
 Rear Suspension De Dion, double-trailing arms, coil springs
 Tire Size & Type 185 x 15 Pirelli Cinturato

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES:
 Wheelbase 105.5 in.
 Front Track 55 in.
 Rear Track 55 in.
 Overall Height 52.25 in.
 Overall Width 69.5 in.
 Overall Length 185.5 in.
 Ground Clearance 6.4 in.
 Curb Weight 2970 lbs.
 Test Weight 3329 lbs.
 Crankcase5 qts.
 Cooling System16 qts.
 Gas Tank25 gals.

PERFORMANCE:

0-30	3.2 sec.	0-70	10.2 sec.
0-40	4.6 sec.	0-80	12.8 sec.
0-50	6.0 sec.	0-90	16.1 sec.
0-60	7.4 sec.	0-100	20.9 sec.
Standing 1/4 mile	16.2 sec. @ 92 mph		
Top Speed (av. two-way run)	140 mph		
Speed Error	30 40 50 60 70 80 90		
Actual	29 39 49 59 68 78 88		
Fuel Consumption:		Recommended Shift Points:	
Test	19 mpg	Max. 1st	60 mph
Average	22 mpg	Max. 2nd	82 mph
		Max. 3rd	105 mph
RPM Red-line			6,000 rpm
Speed Ranges in gears:			
1st	0 to 60 mph	3rd	18 to 105 mph
2nd	10 to 82 mph	4th	25 to top mph
Brake Test: 73 Average % G, over 10 stops. No fade encountered.			

REFERENCE FACTORS:
 Bhp. per Cubic Inch 0.917
 Lbs. per bhp. 9.9
 Piston Speed @ Peak rpm 3,250 ft./min.
 Sq. In. Swept Brake area per Lb. 0.131



and those that already have this fault are easily corrected at the dealer level. The backs are adjustable for rake, and of the type that we once heard described as going from bolt upright to full adultery.

Interior room is vast for a medium sized car. The Iso is a real two-plus-two, not, as Cahier has frequently observed, a two-plus-two wherein the two rear seat passengers must be, of necessity, midgets. Real people can sit in the back seat without courting stiff necks or other reasons for visiting the chiropractor. Visibility all around is wonderful, with what seems to be acres of glass, although the glass area is not obvious from the outside as in some other cars of this class.

Small controls and instrumentation, those things that can make a car a pleasure or almost untenable, depending on how they are arranged are, in the case of the Iso, excellent. Typical Italian Veglia units, the instruments are complete and legible and have no fancy trim to detract or distract. They are well lit and well placed, with the most important ones in the most commanding positions. The small controls are equally good and well labeled. Once their positions and functions are memo-

rized one doesn't even have to look at them to see what they are; just reach and flick the toggle by touch alone. There's a fair sized glove box with a lock, and large door pockets for those items that make a car messy or tempting to thieves when left lying around. Other things that help liveability are a good heater and defroster, and all sorts of very controllable vents so that any sort of ventilation can be had by any person in the car, to his individual taste. Lighting—to us a very important point on a high performance car—is like many of the more expensive Italian cars: excellent, with a piercing high beam, a squarely cutoff low beam and a steering column mounted flicker switch for signalling.

The Iso, is, in short, one of the most desirable pieces of property we have tested in some time. Combining the smooth torque and ready serviceability of the Corvette engine (watch the Chevy dealer's eyes pop the first time you drive in), the sophisticated chassis of a modern Grand Touring machine, and the best of Bertone body design, it is hard to see where anyone could go wrong, even at the rather stiff price this machine brings.

—John Christy