



ISO-Rivolta

Great big red-blooded American
horsepower meets exquisite
Italian craftsmanship—
the results could get to be very good

The ISO-Rivolta (hereinafter referred to as the ISO) costs \$10,000. That is the single most important and unforgettable fact about this car. Any evaluation of its looks, finish, or performance must be made with that feature uppermost in your mind.

It seems to us that the price of worthwhile GT machinery is creeping steadily upward, as though the European manufacturers are somehow under the misapprehension that we are all clipping coupons and having Aristotle Onassis in for drinks on Sundays. The latest Porsches, Mercedes, Astons, and now the ISO are really getting astronomical. They had better watch it, or somebody like the Ford Motor Company is going to sneak in with a 150-mph GT car for about three grand and leave the whole bunch of them with some unsold cars on the dock.

Every enthusiast worthy of the name has occasionally pondered the potential delights of mating American power and reliability to Italian bodywork and workmanship. The ISO, originally conceived in England as the Gordon GT, does exactly that. Ing Giorgio Bizzarrini did the original chassis designs, Bertone did the body, Chevrolet did the engine and transmission, and ISO (an Italian scooter manufacturer) puts them all together.

The ISO's looks are refreshingly un-farinalike. The bodywork is by Bertone and it has an organic quality, a roundness, that sets it apart from any of its fellows. If it must be compared to something, we'd say that it bears a more than passing resemblance to the two-liter Alfas of the early fifties. Whatever it looks like, we think it's pretty nice.

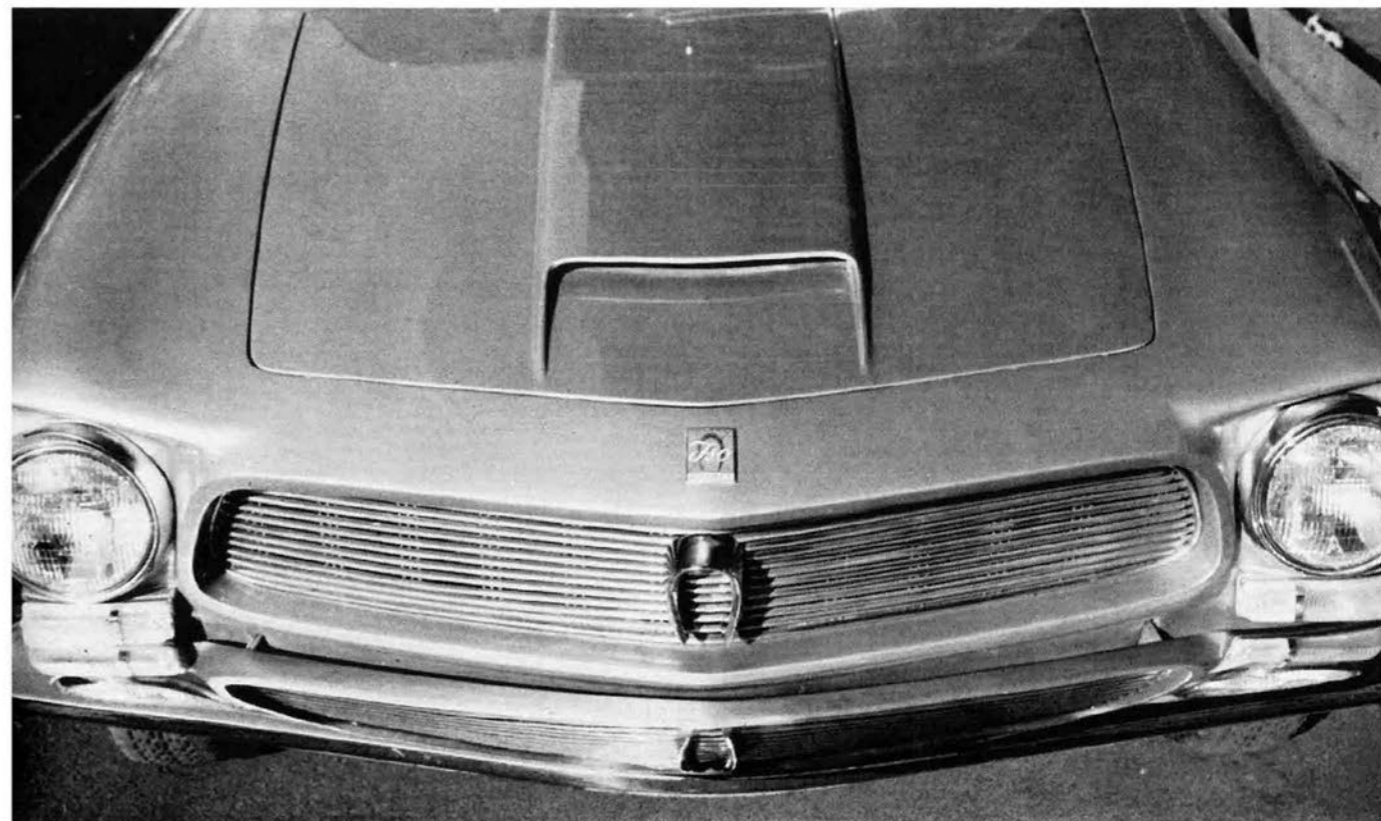
The interior shares the rich, functional look of the bodywork, but it isn't completely comfortable. The steering wheel and the pedals are all offset sharply to the left, actually about an inch-and-a-half to the left of what would be called normal. This can be gotten used to, but it means that the driver can never really settle into the seat—he must always be slightly cross-

ways, and thus, slightly uncomfortable. The instruments are classic Italian dials and gauges, and they all work flawlessly. The dash is padded and covered in the same leather as the seats, à la Ferrari, and it creates the same effect of masculine luxury.

The shift linkage is good—in fact it's basically the same linkage that Chevrolet used on that same transmission (Warner T-10) in its full-sized Chevrolet application. In this kind of sporting effort, we would have preferred the Corvette linkage complete with the reverse lockout trigger. The other controls function well enough, until we get to the steering, which is an abomination. The car has a turning circle of 47 feet and 5½ turns lock-to-lock. This makes parking an exhausting chore, and driving fast in close quarters dicey in the extreme. We simply cannot understand this kind of steering layout, when the ISO engineers were able to start with a clean piece of paper and design whatever they wanted. Even the Buick Riviera has a four-foot smaller turning circle and fewer turns lock to lock.

Accommodations for the other three occupants are quite good. There is more room for the rear seat passengers than they would get in a Ferrari 2+2, and the headroom is surprisingly good for such a small overall package. Again we must register a complaint. The coil springs in the seats were quite out of phase with the suspension, so that they were on bounce when the suspension was on rebound, often sending the driver skyward to meet the sturdy steel roof on its way down. We would have preferred unsprung bucket seats with some kind of foam padding. We did get tired of the continual vertical jouncing that we got from the seat. Seatbelts would have helped, but our car's belts had been fitted with Borg-Warner Roll-A-Belt retractors, which had come unsprung, leaving us with too much slack in the belt for comfort.

The Chevrolet engine is strong and smooth, as you would expect. It is the 327 cubic inch, 340 horsepower option from the Corvette and it has a single four-bar-



ISO CONTINUED

rel carburetor, solid lifters, 11.25 to 1 compression ratio, and great gobs of torque. The clutch is perfectly mated to the engine, and shifts can be made as fast as you can move the lever. The whole drive train meets the same high standards as on the Sting Ray.

Due largely to the very slow steering the handling is a disappointment. It is necessary to work out all kinds of little stratagems to really hurry with the ISO. Going into a turn fast, we found that the most efficient way around was to feed in about two-thirds of a turn on the steering wheel, just to the point at which the car started to react. Then at the point of entry we'd change the position of our hands back and throw the



The styling of the ISO is typically Italian, if somewhat busy. Design is by Bertone, to a Giorgio Bizzarrini chassis, from the original Gordon GT idea from Britain. The car could be a great one—but it has some problems to be worked out before it lives up to its fullest potential.

car with another full crank of the wheel. It's a busy way to go fast, but in the ISO it's the only way.

The strongest impression we got from driving the ISO was that it is very similar to an old Ferrari Mexico. We reflected on this while making the ninety-mile run home from Lime Rock, where we tested the car, and we decided that the ride, the performance, the quality of the interior appointments, are all what Ferrari probably would have done, had he not gone on to more modern cars. In fact, if the steering lock was reduced from 5½ to 2½, the ISO would even steer like an old Ferrari—that is to say stiffly.

The best way to evaluate the ISO is to see how it compares with the Corvette Sting Ray, since it should go at least as well and have twice the quality, more refined handling, and more sophisticated chassis and suspension, to justify the extra \$5000 you must pay for it. Let's see. First, the car is nearly 200 pounds heavier than the Sting Ray, and doesn't go as fast. Second, the quality of the bodywork and interior appointments is definitely in the Ferrari class, much better than the Sting Ray. Third, the chassis and suspension are more sophisticated than the Sting Ray *as a design*, but at their present level of development they don't work as well as the Sting Ray, so we'll call that one a draw.

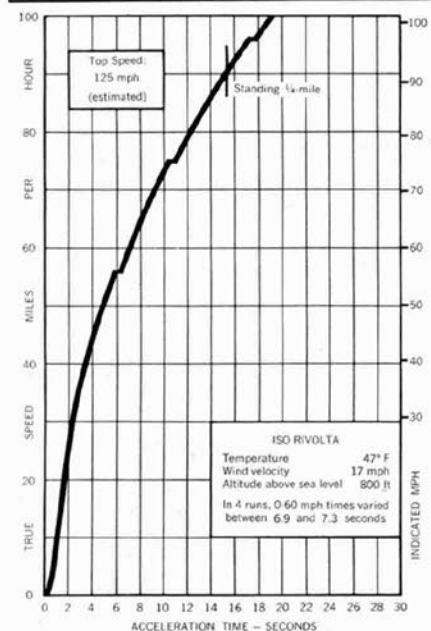
The ISO Rivolta's two cardinal advantages over its cousin from Detroit are the fact that it is a genuine four-seater and it has beautiful workmanship. Whether those factors are enough to justify the \$10,000 price tag is a question that only the prospective buyer can answer. As for us, we can't help but see visions of Pontiac Grands Prix, Tempest GTOs, Corvette Sting Rays, Buick Rivieras, and E-Types, all of which offer similar performance and accommodation, and all of which cost a lot less money. **c/d**

ISO RIVOLTA

Importer: J.S. Inskip Inc.,
304 East 64th Street, New York, N.Y.
Price as tested: \$9451 POE East Coast

ACCELERATION:

	Seconds
Zero to	
30 mph	2.2
40 mph	3.3
50 mph	4.7
60 mph	7.0
70 mph	9.3
80 mph	12.2
90 mph	15.1
100 mph	19.0
Standing ¼ mile	15.4 @ 90 mph



ENGINE:

Water-cooled V-8, cast iron block, 5 main bearings
Bore x stroke . . . 4.00 x 3.25 in 101.6 x 82.55 mm
Displacement 327 cu in 5359 cc
Compression ratio 11.25 to one
Carburetion Single four-barrel Carter WCFB
Valve gear Pushrod-operated overhead valves, mechanical lifters
Power (SAE) 340 bhp @ 5000 rpm
Torque 340 lb-ft @ 4000 rpm
Specific power output 1.04 bhp per cu in, 63.8 bhp per liter
Usable range of engine speeds 600-5500 rpm
Electrical system 12-volt, 60 amp-hr battery, 440W generator
Fuel recommended Premium
Mileage 10-18 mpg
Range on 25-gallon tank 250-450 miles

DRIVE TRAIN:

Clutch: Borg & Beck 10-inch single dry plate
Transmission 4-speed all-synchro gearbox
mph/1000 Max
Gear Ratio Over-all rpm mph
Rev 2.61 7.51 -10.0 -55
1st 2.54 7.43 10.2 56
2nd 1.89 5.54 13.6 75
3rd 1.51 4.35 17.4 96
4th 1.00 2.88 26.2 125
Final drive ratio 2.88 to one

CHASSIS:

Sheet steel platform frame, steel bodywork
Wheelbase 106.25 in
Track F 55.5, R 55.5 in
Length 187 in
Width 69 in
Height 56 in
Ground clearance 4.75 in
Dry weight 3220 lbs
Curb weight 3350 lbs
Test weight 3600 lbs
Weight distribution front/rear % 49/51
Pounds per bhp (test weight) 10.6
Suspension: F: Ind., wishbones and coil springs, anti-roll bar.
R: De Dion axle, double radius rods, coil springs.
Brakes Dunlop 11.75-in discs front, 12-in discs rear, 552 sq in swept area
Steering Burman recirculating ball
Turns lock to lock 5½
Turning circle 47 ft
Tires 185 x 15
Revs per mile 799