

CLASSIC DRIVER

Alpine A110: Close to the road, yet near Heaven

Lead

When asked to name a red sports car, even the uninitiated would say ‘Ferrari’. Likewise, one model stands out as a synonym for ‘azure blue rally icon’. We arranged to meet her...

It glides low over autumnal leaves as a stingray does the seabed

Picture the situation: you’ve worked late into Saturday evening, and duly rewarded yourself with a glass of wine or three before dozing off in front of the fire. You wake the next morning and, although it’s a chilly winter day, the sun is out. Rather than waste your sole day of rest nursing a hangover in bed, you choose instead to blast it out of your body.

Escape from everyday life



Unless you’re one of those people who spends the majority of your spare time running half-marathons or spontaneously surfing in the ice-cold sea (and the rest of the time telling anyone who’ll listen how great it is), a morning drive in an Alpine A110 is the solution. Nowadays, aside from track-day specials, it’s rare to come across a driving machine as pared to the bone. It’s also rather petite: a little taller than one metre, and no longer than four, it glides low over autumnal leaves as a stingray does the seabed, the striking negative rear camber augmenting the hunkered look. Your workout has begun before you’ve even sparked the ignition – the most graceful way to enter is to drop backwards into the seat, then stuff your legs into the cramped footwell. Once there, the side-bolsters hold you in a vice-like grip, serving as a reminder of the A110’s competition focus.

Lady in blue



Although it was thrown into competition from its inception, the car’s origins are in fact attributed to the civilian A108, which founder Jean Rédélé had presented to the public as a convertible in 1958. The A110 retained the tail-engined layout, with comparatively tiny four-cylinder engines steadily growing in displacement over the car’s lifetime. Having been introduced in its famous ‘berlinette’ shape, convertible and ‘GT4’ 2+2 editions were made in limited numbers.

Four-eyed Frenchman



Between 1961 and 1977, thousands of A110s were produced, with updates applied continually over the years – in fact, some were even badged as Renaults. Our example is a 1971 example in the traditional ‘bleu alpine métallisé’ colour, fitted with the Gordini-optimised 1.3-litre engine that produced just 90HP, according to factory specifications. That might not sound much, but weighing around 750kg, the Frenchman is by no means underpowered. Guiding the fast-revving engine through the five-speed gearbox is an engaging experience, more than enough to take you away from petty things such as work stress and hangovers. It’s one of the few experiences that would get us out of bed on a cold Sunday morning, anyway.

Photos: Jan Richter

Gallery

Source URL: <https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/cars/alpine-a110-close-road-yet-near-heaven>
© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.