

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## [Celebrating Italian car culture with these 10 fantastic Fiats](#)

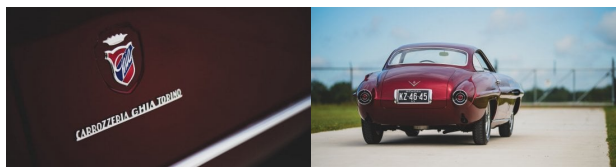
### Lead

When we think about Italian car culture, it's mostly the sports car from illustrious marques such as Ferrari, Maserati and Lamborghini that spring to mind. But it's Fiat that can look back at the most diverse catalogue, from microcars and beach toys to icons of style and elegance...

In the 1940s, '50s and '60s, the top Italian carrozzerie queued up for the chance to design coachwork for Fiat's latest wares, resulting in a multitude of drastically different shapes on a plethora of different cars, from the opulent Otto Vu to the dinky 500. In their own distinctive and interesting ways, Fiat's cars – be them styled by Zagato, Vignale, Pininfarina or Boano – always epitomised the cultural trends of the time.

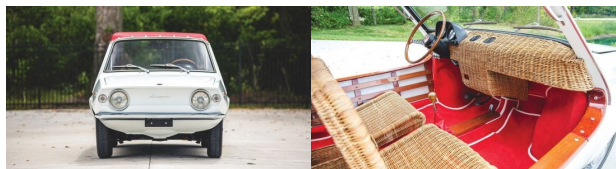
Incidentally, at its auction of The Elkhart Collection in October, RM Sotheby's will offer a mouth-watering assembly of Fiats with which you could build quite the collection. Our pick of the bunch? A tricky decision indeed but if we had to put our money where our mouths are, the sensational Otto Vu 'Supersonic' by Ghia is the car we'd drive away from the sale. You can see our other highlights listed below or, alternatively, [browse the entire catalogue in the Classic Driver Market](#).

### Going 'Supersonic'



The most eye-catching Fiat of them all is the Otto Vu (or 8V). And the most eye-catching Otto Vu of them all is the 'Supersonic' by Ghia. With its pronounced high waistline that spans the entire length of the car, subtle tail fins, yawning front grille and those small rear-lights suspended in turbine-like clusters, Giovanni Savonuzzi's streamlined 'Supersonic', of which just 15 were built on 8V chassis, was unashamedly inspired by the burgeoning aerospace industry of the 1950s – the Jet Age. It's culture and creativity personified, and we absolutely adore it.

### The wicker car



The special edition Jolly offshoots of Fiat's frugal 500 and 600 were the preserve of the jet set in the 1950s and '60s and a truly symbolic form of *la dolce vita*-era transportation. In 1969, Giovanni Michelotti had a stab at creating a more modern Jolly based on the humble 850 saloon. The drop-top, wicker-seated Spiaggetta, as it became known, was every bit as romantic as the cars that preceded it and promptly sold to the likes of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and the Dutch Royal Family.

### The Red Devil



Though not as dramatic as Ghia’s ‘Supersonic’, Vignale’s initial take on the Fiat Otto Vu, nicknamed the *Demon Rouge*, certainly made a splash when it debuted at the Turin salon in 1953. Giovanni Michelotti’s spectacular show car was so well received that it prompted Vignale to build a subtler second version, and that’s the car RM is offering. Gone was the unconventional rear roofline, but that did little to detract from its knee-weakening beauty. Note the upside-down V shapes in the front grille and the ornate metal I, denoting Italy, on the boot lid. This was Vignale at its most elaborate.

### Drop-dead Dino



We’re not afraid to say that the Fiat Dino Spider is every bit as sexy as the sultry Dino ‘Ferrari’ 206 and 246 with which it shares its soul-stirring six-cylinder heart. That’s of little surprise really, given that both were styled by that engineer of elegance Pininfarina. RM’s ‘Colorado Yellow’ is a rare 2400 model, fitted with the full-fat 2.4-litre engine.

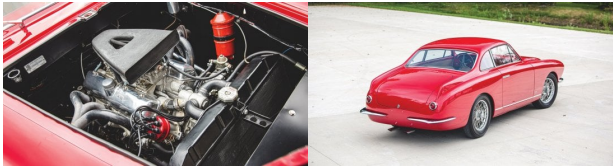
### Double Bubble, double trouble



First presented at Geneva in March of 1956, the Zagato-bodied Fiat Abarth 750 – with its characteristic ‘double bubble’ roof and rear intake – instantly proved formidably successful on the racetracks of Europe and, subsequently, the United States. In the 1956 season, for example, the likes of Mario Poltronieri, Ernesto Prinoth, and Vittorio Feroldi De Rosa wrestled the lightweight GTs to 31 class victories. More significantly, the 750 gave Carlo Abarth the taste of victory – one he’d relentlessly pursue for the following decade.

### Vivacious Vignale





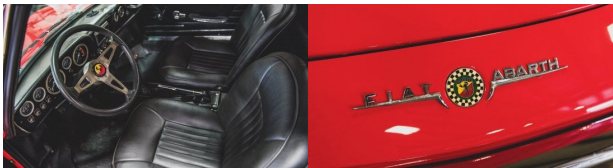
Yes, it's another Vignale-bodied Otto Vu, but the marked difference between this high-belted, tall-grilled Grand Tourer and the black and crimson *Demon Rouge*-inspired car is telling of the creative freedom designers were afforded in the post-War period. This stunner boasts more signature Vignale design cues and, from a distance, could be mistaken for a Ferrari 250 Europa or 375 America.

### The sexiest people carrier in the world



Has there ever been a more stylish people carrier than the Fiat 600 Multipla? Only the Italians could give a utilitarian car designed to fulfil the needs of larger families and taxi drivers such a distinctive and charming personality. The beautifully packaged Multipla was the work of Dante Giacosa – can you believe that in extending the cabin of the regular 600 over the front axle, he managed to find space for six passengers?

### The ‘first sports car’



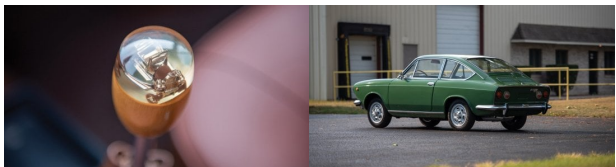
There was no pretence to Giorgetto Giugiaro's pretty 850 Spider, Fiat's first high-volume sports car, which he designed for Bertone. That's probably why Abarth was keen to impart its motorsport-born wisdom and inject a little bit more pizzazz into the modest convertible. The 49HP twin-cam engine was given front-mounted radiator, dual side-draft Webers and, of course, the famous Abarth exhaust, the scorpion's signature sting in the tail.

### The graduate



The 124 Spider is the Fiat that impressionable young enthusiasts graduated to from the 850 Spider, which, let's face it, was more 'show' than 'go'. Styled by Pininfarina, the 124 was a more squat and chiselled design worlds away from the softly styled Alfa Romeo Duetto against which it competed for sales. The Americans, whose hunger for convertible sports cars in the post-War period was inexhaustible, simply couldn't get enough.

### Balanced and handsome



"One of the best balanced and handsome designs available." That's how *Road and Track* magazine described the Sport version of the Fiat 850. The Boano-designed 'warm' saloon was indeed a very handsome thing, particularly in of-the-era colours such as the pastel green of RM's immaculate example. Perhaps the most elusive Fiat of them all was based on the 850 Sport. *Il Mostro*, as it was nicknamed, was Abarth's potent take on the car. Equipped with a powerful 2.0-litre racing engine, the car was originally conceived to climb into the large-capacity touring car ring with the likes of the Alfa Romeo GTA and Lotus Cortina. Now that we'd have loved to have seen - alas, their great production cost resulted in just three being built, one of which was sold to a certain Niki Lauda.

*Photos courtesy of RM Sotheby's © 2020*

### Gallery























































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