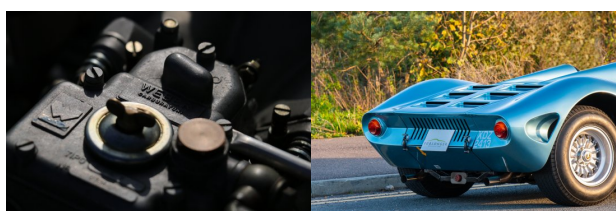


CLASSIC DRIVER

[Return to the racetrack with this glorious Bizzarrini P538 Spider](#)

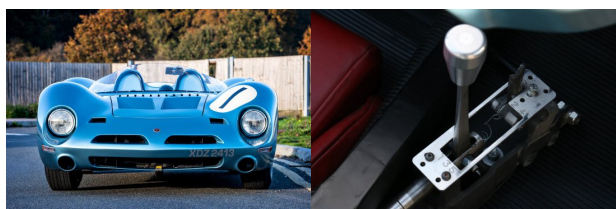
Lead

It might not even be Christmas yet – but we cannot wait for the historic racing season to start again. And could there be a better race car for the return to the track than this Bizzarrini P538 Spider, one of Giotto Bizzarrini's most stunning creations? We certainly don't think so!



If Dr Ulrich Bez has his way, it won't be long before we all know how to spell 'Bizzarrini' – because the former Aston Martin boss announced in November that he's leading a team to revive the legendary marque and ensure that it 'lives on to compete on the global stage.' But for the time being we'll have to content ourselves with the original models created by the consummate Italian test driver, engineer and designer Giotto Bizzarrini after he began producing Bizzarrini-badged cars in 1964.

Although best known for his work on the Ferrari 250GTO, the Iso Grifo and the Lamborghini V12 engine for the Miura, Bizzarrini's own cars were exceptional in their own right. The most successful were the 5300GT Strada (road) and Corsa (race) models, but perhaps the most fabulous was the Giugiaro-bodied P538 Spider that made its debut at the 1966 Le Mans 24 Hours. The two-seat, rear-engined car was designed to carry Chevrolet V8 or Lamborghini V12 power – although only four P538s were built before Bizzarrini's manufacturing arm went bust in 1969.



But it wasn't long before one of the firm's former engineers, Salvatore Diomante, began taking orders for 'continuation' cars. It is believed that three were completed, [one being the 1976 example pictured here](#). Details of its early history are scant but, during the early 1990s, it was discovered languishing in France by an English enthusiast who brought it to the UK and quickly sold it on to one of the founders of Californian classic dealership Chequered Flag International – who kept it for almost two decades, during which time he had its credentials thoroughly checked by marque expert Jack Koobs de Hartog.

Part of his exhaustive assessment of the car included showing detail photographs of it to Bizzarrini himself – who confirmed that he had personally built the chassis and that his wife, Rosanna, had constructed the body to the letter of Giugiaro's original design. Such cast-iron provenance meant the car deserved to be treated to a nut-and-bolt restoration, which was carried out over a period of several years and at vast expense. It included fitting a correct 5.3 litre Corvette V8 engine (the configuration that led to the cars '538' model name), a full interior re-trim in dark red leather and a finishing touch of Lamborghini's historic Azzuro 402 paint, the light blue colour used on the second 538 to have been built.



The car has subsequently thrilled the Goodwood crowds during appearances at the Revival meeting's Whitsun Trophy race in 2016, 2018 and 2019 and, following a comprehensive overhaul by IN Racing, is once again ready for the track – or indeed, the road, since this fabulous example of Bizzarrini brilliance is not only about to receive new FIA papers, it's street-legal, too. And the best news is, it's for sale – although prospective members of the decidedly exclusive Bizzarrini owner's club will need to stump-up a not insignificant £849,990 to buy it.

Gallery

