

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Are you ready to race Alfa Romeo's craziest creation?](#)

Lead

Sure, it might not be as beautiful as a 6C, nor as powerful as an 8C, but the Alfa Romeo SZ has rightfully earned its place in the brand's illustrious line up of classics. Let's take a closer look at why this particular SZ is rarer than most...



In almost all disciplines of motorsport, the desire for a level playing field makes for far more exciting racing, allowing the true talents on the grid to flex their overtaking muscles just that little bit harder than the slightly more anxious racers. Over the years, we've seen some incredible single-make championships, from the grassroots Renault Clio Cup, Lamborghini's Super Trofeo and many, many others. Even racers down under wanted a slice of the action with the Commodore Cup, but of all the weird and wonderful one-make events, it was a wholly-Italian series involving one of Alfa Romeo's craziest creations we were most interested in.

Presented on the Alfa Romeo stand at the 1989 Geneva Motor Show, some 35 years ago now, the S.Z. was a small but mighty sports car, boasting low ground clearance, a high beltline and a wedge shape that had people talking for the months that followed. This unusual exterior, which was the first in the industry to be produced using computer-aided design and manufacturing, was the product of Zagato's coachbuilding, allowing Alfa Romeo to focus entirely on the car's drivability. The SZ's codename, ES30, which stood for "Experimental Sportcar 3.0 litre", was a symbol of the brand's eagerness to reaffirm its tradition as a manufacturer of rear-wheel drive sports cars, while utilising the latest technology on offer at the time. By the turn of the new decade, production of the 1,036 cars had started, and Alfa Romeo started to look at other ways to draw in this occasionally sceptical crowd of potential buyers.



That's exactly where this particular SZ gets even cooler. Retained by Alfa Romeo and transformed into a fully-fledged racer by the factory, set to be used in the ultimate display of motorsport-meets-marketing – a one-make race held as the support for the 1993 Monaco Grand Prix. Although mostly unchanged, the Trofeo cars boasted a race-ready roll cage, bucket seats and a striking livery, but crucially leaving the heart of the SZ unchanged. Its V6 "Busso" engine featured a number of innovative features, and produced an impressive 185 horsepower. To aid its agility, the chassis consisted of a steel underbody covered by a then-modern, composite-fibre bodyshell. Track-tested over the years by motoring legends like Walter Röhrl, Karl Wendlinger and Joachim Winkelhock, this special Alfa Romeo Sprint Zagato Trofeo is one of the most remarkable road-legal race cars of its time.



We talk so much of future classics, and the SZ seemed to have proven its credentials almost from the moment the drape was removed back in 1989. Its styling was weird, awkward, and yet so utterly unlikely anything else before it, and people are starting to see its appeal. Nowadays, the car many once called 'Il Mostro' has become a symbol of Zagato's ambitious penmanship, while the car's driving characteristics quickly won the hearts of the nay-sayers. Of the few SZs on the market right now, this well-documented and highly loved example is perhaps the rarest of them all, and would look right at home amongst a collection of Zagato-bodied creations!

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