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[Iso Lele Sport: Can you resist those eyes?](#)

Lead

In period, automotive eccentricities produced by the likes of Iso Rivolta had a tough time. Even decades later, the luxurious, Bresso-built cars lacked the desirability of their aspirational peers. But in recent years, their appeal has become apparent...

Imagine wearing a fine Italian suit tailored to perfection, then combining it with heavy American work boots

Many will be familiar with the tales of woe behind Bizzarrini, De Tomaso and Iso Rivolta. Even before the landscape-changing oil crisis, they were struggling to find buyers.

Although clothed in era-defining Italian coachwork, cars such as the Bizzarrini 5300 GT, De Tomaso Pantera and Iso Lele used heavy-handed American engines and were considered inferior as a result - at least in comparison to the high-performance 12-cylinder cars from Maranello. Imagine wearing a fine Italian suit tailored to perfection, then combining it with heavy American work boots. In addition, economies of scale meant the small Italian factories charged high prices for the few cars that were sold.

Love at first sight



The Lele made use of both GM and Ford engines over its lifetime. Interestingly, it was originally intended as a one-off: a wealthy American commissioned an IR 300 to be clothed in custom bodywork, but the Gandini-penned lines proved massively successful when shown to the public. As a result, Piero Rivolta not only ordered series production for the 2+2 GT, but also that it should take the name of his wife, Lele. Over a production period of 1969 to 1974, only around 300 cars were built.

From no-go to speculative superstar



Some 35 years on, the tide began to turn. "Ten years ago, collectors had little interest in the Iso Lele," recalls Andrew Brasch of Steenbuck Automobiles. "However, with prices for the 7-litre Grifos currently around 300,000 euros and steadily rising, interest in models such as the Lele has followed - and one would speculate that it will continue to do so."

Bedroom eyes





Andrew's conjecture is easy to believe once your gaze is captured by the Lele's bedroom eyes - revealed in full when the low beams are switched on, a flourish most will more commonly associate with the Alfa Montreal, also styled by Gandini while at Bertone. But it's not only the looks that seduce: being a second-generation model, this particular car is equipped with a Ford-sourced 5.8-litre V8. It's one of the 20 or so 'Sport' models built, particularly desirable thanks to the engine being uprated to 360HP and mated to a manual 5-speed gearbox. It's no Ferrari Daytona, but take into account its rarity and pretty yet quirky appearance, and you have to admit it's worth a look.

Photos: Jan Richter

Gallery

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