

CLASSIC DRIVER

[These four young Belgians are keeping the love of Alfa Romeo alive](#)

Lead

If you think of Belgium, Alfa Romeos aren't the first thing that comes to mind. Thankfully, photographer Sian Loyson opened our eyes to the country's young and vibrant Alfisti scene.

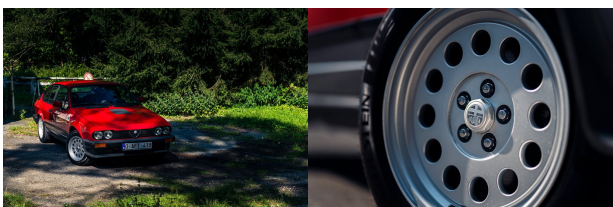
Ward Lemmens



The passion for cars runs deep in our family: as a major, my grandpa promoted the once famous track of Zolder, which is right next to my house. My mother also loved going to the Grand Prix and has dozens of stories to tell. In the beginning, I was interested in classic cars in general. Then, a friend recommended me an Alfa Romeo GTV6 - I wasn't convinced at first, but I kept reading about it until I fell in love. Eventually, I bought one. Ever since, Alfas are all I see.



The first GTV6 I owned needed a total restoration, so I sold it and bought my current car - a GTV6 from 1983, finished in Rosso Alfa. When I first got in the car, a new world opened for me - it was so good! I love driving it. It isn't as fast as a modern car, but I can enjoy it to the fullest. That's driving pleasure! The car handles really well because of the transaxle layout, but the only downside is the transmission - it is so badly designed.



A while ago my friend Rafael and I did a road trip - him in his Alfa 75, me in my GTV6. We did 300 to 400 kilometres a day, from Belgium to Luxembourg, through the Vosges and back through the Black Forest in Germany. During such road trips, you develop a bond with your car. The car is stored at my grandpa's place, so sometimes I don't see the

car for a few weeks. Seeing it after a while, the smell, the sound it makes, it all makes me smile.

There are many aspects that make Alfa Romeo such a fascinating brand – from racing history to design and development. Alfas will always be cars that you have to love, they are not for everyone – and they don't have to be.

Ben Gryspeirt



I've been passionate about cars and oldtimers as long as I can remember. When I was a toddler, my dad owned a blue Alfa 166 2.0 V6 Turbo. I remember it had a greyish interior and a wooden steering wheel. When I was older my mother owned an Alfa 145 T. spark - ugly, but it had around 130-140hp and a hole in the exhaust *laughs*. It was like a rally car, my mom hated it.

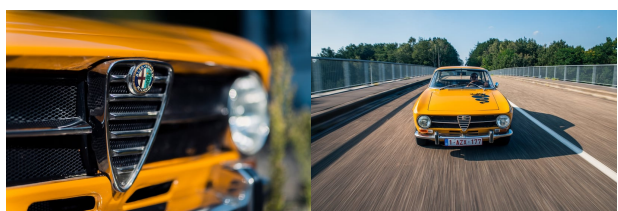


My current car is an Alfa Spider „Beauté“. I also have an Alfa 33 QV 16v, which I was able to buy really cheap — it's a long term project. The spider is perfect, I drive it very often. My grandma bought it new in 1991. This special edition was only available in South France and only 120 were built. It's like the “final editions” we get today. It has the QV engine and all of them were two-tone: white on top, blue at the bottom, white wheels, etc.. The car still belongs to my grandma, but I maintain it, along the other cars of our family collection.

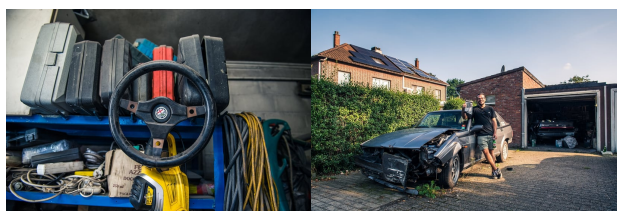


The thing I like most is that it is so unique. Nowadays, you don't see these colour combinations on production cars. And again, the wooden steering wheel. The QV-engine produces a wonderful sound, and It's an easy car to drive. The condition isn't perfect, but it fits the story of being a family car. I drive it for fun, mostly in the summer, or even better, with the roof down on a sunny autumn day. Driving it is so peaceful.

Rafael Urbini



My father was a coach builder, so I actually grew up with cars. I am Italian and grew up in an Italian neighbourhood here in Belgium; there used to be a lot of Alfas. When I was 17, my father did some repairs on an Alfa Romeo 166 2.5 V6 that belonged to an acquaintance. I didn't have a driver's license, but after begging my dad for a long time, he let me drive it home from the car wash. It was the first time I felt what power is. The experience has always stayed with me.



Italians are proud people, and that goes for me too, that's why I love Alfa. Besides that, the mechanics were always perfect. Their design was incredible and they have such a great history. I drive an Alfa 159 as daily, a 1300 GT Junior when the sun is out, and I'm currently restoring a 75 2.0 Twin Spark Allestimento Speciale Numerato. I used to own a normal 75 2.0 Twin Spark, and in fact, I still do, but it's a wreck. The car was freshly restored, sitting outside, and someone drove into it. Anyway, now I use it as a donor for my 75 2.0 ASN restoration project.



I bought the 1300 GT Junior when I was 17. I didn't have a drivers licence, but I really wanted a classic car. It was dirt cheap. The car had a bit rust underneath but we fixed the problem, and we redid the whole body, finally repainting it in the colour it left the factory: Giallo Okra. What I like most is the pleasure of driving it. I've owned it almost 10 years now and it still drives like new. The car is alive, and it communicates when you drive it. It's like the car is an extension of my body, it's so unique. The car is registered for daily use, so whenever I feel like driving it, I drive it - the only downside is the lack of comfort. For long drives I prefer the Alfa 75.



I've been to Italy already with my Alfa 75. People go crazy when you drive a car like that there. Like I said, Italians are proud people. Anyway, I was driving and got pulled over by the police at midnight. I was very surprised as I did absolutely nothing wrong. They just loved my car and wanted to have a closer look. After a good talk, they were willing to let me go on one condition: I had to leave with smoking tyres. Only in Italy!

Roman Iwasiuk





My father was a huge car freak, and when I was younger he often took me to car events. He was a car salesman and I loved visiting the garage. Throughout the years, he did a lot of good deals - and he kept many of the cars. It's like a hobby that got out of hand. There is a picture of me unscrewing the number plate of our Montreal in my diapers. So I grew up with the car. My father struggles to get in the car now, so I maintain it.

Alfa Romeo's cars have always been very progressive. To develop the engine of the Montreal, they fused two 1300 Giulia engine blocks into a V8 engine. Also, all Alfas are alike to work on. I own an Alfa Romeo Montreal, Giulia Nuovo Super 1600 and 1300, and an Alfetta GTV.



For some years, the Montreal was stored underneath a shelf with exhausts and unfortunately one of them fell and smashed the front window. Eventually we found a Montreal-specialist in Switzerland. He was 76 and apparently used to be the mechanic for the Alfa Romeo museum. I've never seen anything like it: he started at 7 o' clock and at 10 the engine and gearbox were already out of the car. Here in Belgium it would take 2 days. He re-did the whole car like they made it back in the factory, with original pieces. And if there were no pieces, he made them himself. We stayed with him for the whole project, visited him twice a week for two weeks. It was quite an experience.



When the car finally arrived at home, I drove it for the first time. What I like most about my Montreal is the engine, a 2.6-litre V8. And of course the design. The front end is amazing to look at. Imagine driving it in 1972. There's no car I'd rather drive.

Photos: Sian Loyson © 2022

Gallery

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