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CULT CARS
Gold Dust or Junk ?

CULT CAR FOR A BAD GUY

THERE'S SOMETHING IRONIC BUT also fitting that a man who makes his living destroying cars spectacularly should be hoarding a trio of what is probably the ultimate cult car: Bizzarrini!

That he just about has the world concession on this particular breed of cult car does not worry Hollywood stuntman Carey Loftin. Grey-haired but iron-nerved, he makes his bread by accomplishing such mundane tasks as trying to run Steve McQueen off the road in *Bullit* or rolling a Beetle in Disney's *The Love Bug*. Loftin's infatuation with the Bizzarrini began with his earlier ownership of another Italian-American hybrid, the Iso Grifo. While his Iso certainly moved rapidly enough along the highway to please him, Loftin fell in love with the more fluid lines of the two-seater Bizzarrini GT America (nee

cars, including the original two-plus-two, the three-litre Testa Rossa and the GTO. After quitting Ferrari with a number of other key men following a famous rift in the early '60s, Bizzarrini moved to Lamborghini, where he worked on the design of the 3.5litre V12 that was the basis of the legendary 350.

Finally hanging out his own shingle, Bizzarrini found the role of a freelancer frustrating. Various proposals were bought but never reached production, such as the one-litre Ferrarina Baby Ferrari design bought by ASA or the small Opel-powered coupe he designed for Fiat. But his big break was the job with Iso, where he did the chassis and development work on the two-plus-two Rivolta and the GT car. Knowing the value of racing as a promotional tool, Bizzarrini donned

After *Bullit* and the *Love Bug*, home is a Bizzarrini

By Wally Wyss



Strada GT 5300) which he discovered at a Hollywood sports car dealers in 1968. After trying in vain to obtain an open version, Loftin ended up talking the distributor out of his demonstrator. In the ensuing months, he went bats for Bizzarrinis, buying two more.

Giotto Bizzarrini himself was involved with both the Iso Grifo and the car that bears his name—and heaven only knows what else in the future, although the Turin Show last year was a fair start for the 'seventies. When Renzo Rivolta, the prosperous Bresso manufacturer of Iso refrigerators, decided to celebrate his success with the creation of a GT car bearing his name, he turned to the famous Bertone for a design at the very moment when Giugiaro was beginning his career at the place. For Rivolta, Giugiaro developed a two-plus-two design that was restrained and tasteful, and then pulled all the stops on a two-seater GT only 43 inches high. This, the first Iso Grifo, was built in aluminium on a chassis designed by Rivolta's engineer, Giotto Bizzarrini.

Up until then, indeed until now, Bizzarrini has had a checkered career. He has played the roles of engineer, racing driver and stylist. He started out at the University of Pisa, worked for three years at Alfa and joined Ferrari just in time to get in on the development of some of their finest GT and racing

racing togs two years in a row, at Le Mans in 1964 and 1965, to run the competition Grifo AC3 to a first in class.

The success at Le Mans prompted orders for copies and Bizzarrini left the Iso organisation, taking the design for the AC3 with him.

Setting up in a one-car-per-month operation in Turin, Bizzarrini hired a crew to weld-up chassis from piles of round and square section tubing, only to find out months later that the spot-welded frames were too brittle to withstand the torque of the Chevrolet Corvette engine. The bodies were built from aluminium by Bertone although a few fibreglass ones were tried without much success. The suspension was coil springs all round with unequal length A-arms up front and a de Dion rear axle. Brakes were disc, with the rear ones mounted inboard.

Although some Bizzarrinis ran with hydraulic lifters for quietness, Loftin prefers the solid tappets for the extra revs they allow, but one of his cars, which is fitted with a TurboHydramatic built up by specialist Balchowsky, runs the smoother self-adjusting lifters. In keeping with the goal of easy servicing for the GT, which Loftin drives to shooting locations all over the country, he uses a Holley four-barrel carburettor rather than Bizzarrini's competition set-up of an alloy head packing four