

Just for fun.

by Joe Sage

Head-turning looker, persona projector, hands-on performer

When I once mentioned the low mileage on a performance sports car of our own at the dealership. "These all have low mileage," the service rep noted. "They're everybody's second or third car." Case in point: the Alfa Romeo 4C Spider, an absolute blast to drive, but about as far from a do-everything daily driver as you can get.

Getting in and out is the first challenge—the taller you are or the bigger your feet, the moreso. But once in, time to fire it up and get underway.

The shifter is a four-button affair (neatly in a quadrifoglio pattern): A/M in a red circle at the left (auto/manual); "1" up top, N on the right, R at the bottom. The parking brake is a classic manual lever between the seats. There is no Park, as it's a twin-clutch manual, accessed electronically by these buttons and paddle shifters (the shift buttons are tucked under the dash, where a shift lever would never fit). Or you can run in Auto, but you still start out by pressing "1." Give it some gas and it feels as though the brake is still on, though it's not, so give it some more. This car seems to want to you to let it know you're the boss.

The powertrain has notable sound effects, fun in their own right, though hard to reduce if there's a

cop next to you or you're in a family neighborhood.

The Alfa 4C begs for the open road. It wants to be pushed. And you'll want to push it.

Steering is manual rack and pinion, with a heavy touch that's a bit of a workout but rates very high for connected feel, as does the suspension. It's a full-on sporting experience.

Even with the Spider's removable top (also a manual affair; release inside, but step out to roll up from both edges), the car is remarkably solid and tight. Every change in pavement surface and every Botts' dot is communicated to you accurately. The Alfa 4C is as track performance kartlike as anything you'll find. It's not the kind of car that makes you wish you had 12 errands around town, but it's definitely the kind that makes you think you need to drive to Payson for lunch. The shift points are so well mapped, you can perform very well just in "A" much of the time. In top performance drive mode, on your way to that high country sandwich, you'll engage the paddles.

Instruments and controls are both spartan and very complete, a winning combination. The interior is big enough to be comfortable, but small enough that even an owner's manual just over 100

pages is relegated to the trunk. The car is constructed of an extremely strong and lightweight unidirectional carbon fiber monocoque tub, with aluminum structure in front and behind. The body shell is low-density, high-strength composite. There is no front trunk, despite a body seam that suggests one—structure, suspension and your footwell occupy this space.

A transverse mid-engine and rear drive leave 3.7 cubic feet of trunk space in the rear. The rear hatch (released by a button on the driver's door frame) is heavy and requires a rod to keep it open—creating a near-comic scenario in any number of what might best be three-handed maneuvers.

The Alfa 4C requires a high level of attention. The experience is raw yet rewarding, in the best tradition of a sports car. Whereas so many of today's performance cars have not only shot into six figures but also into grand touring luxury and size, the Alfa 4C Spider has that true sports car character and high level of engagement, though with such modern conveniences as power windows, traction control and driving modes, unlike such a car from 60 years ago.

It's increasingly rare to find something cool in the performance and sports categories that everybody else doesn't already have. But the Alfa Romeo 4C is still relatively rare and certainly distinctive, even here. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING CAPACITY	.....two
ENGINE	.....1742cc turbo 4-cyl mid/transverse
HP/TORQUE	.....237 hp / 258 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....6-speed automatic / manual twin clutch
DRIVETRAIN	.....RWD
STEERING	.....manual rack & pinion
SUSPENSION	.....F: double wishbone: high-strength tubular control arms, alum knuckles & tubular anti-roll bar; R: MacPherson: rear strut: shocks w hollow piston rod & side-load spring; high-strength steel tubular control arms & aluminum knuckles
BRAKES	.....F: 12x1.10 vented; Brembo fixed four-piston calipers. R: 11.5x.087 vented; dual opposing calipers. Tandem diaphragm pwr w zero lost travel.
WHEELS	.....Fluoroformed alum alloy, 5-dual-spoke staggered F: 17x7, F: 18x8
TIRES	.....Pirelli P Zero AR 3-Season: F: 205/45ZR17, R: 235/40ZR18
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....157.0 in / 93.7 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....40.5 ft.
CARGO VOLUME	.....3.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT / DISTRIB F/R	.....2487 lb / 41/59%
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....9.1 premium unl / 10.5 gal
MPG	.....24/34/28 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$65,900
ALFA ROSSO (RED) PAINT	.....1500
RACING MICROFIBER/LEATHER SEATS	.....500
SPIDER CONVENIENCE GROUP (PKG 22A): cruise control, rear parking assist	.....900
SPIDER TRACK PKG 3: leather/microfiber steering wheel, race tuned suspension	.....1600
ALFA ROMEO RED CAR COVER	.....400
CARBON FIBER ITALIAN FLAG MIRRORS	.....300
BI-XENON HEADLAMPS	.....1000
EXHAUST: Akrapovic dual mode cntr mount	.....3000
AUDIO: Alpine premium w subwoofer	.....900
TIRES: 205/40R18 & 235/35R19 performance	.....1200
WHEELS: 18x7 & 19x8.5 bright fan spoke	.....1800
BATTERY CHARGER	.....150
ALFA RED BREMBO BRAKE CALIPERS	.....350
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1595
TOTAL	.....\$81,095

HAGERTY FUTURE COLLECTIBLE

Hagerty classic car experts have added the Alfa Romeo 4C Spider to their "Hot List" of Future Collectible Vehicles—chosen for their joy of driving and anticipated future collectibility for enthusiasts—citing a stand-out combination of Italian design and hand-craftsmanship, race-inspired technologies and supercar level performance. "At a time when many vehicles are growing increasingly larger and more sophisticated, the Alfa Romeo 4C Spider offers a refreshing alternative with an extremely lightweight and simple roadster," said CEO McKeel Hagerty. "It provides the same amount of fun as far more exotic and pricier vehicles." The Hagerty Hot List represents the most collectible cars under \$100,000 to buy today. In order to be selected by Hagerty experts for their annual Hot List, a vehicle must deliver the joy of driving today, will continue to further every gearhead's love of driving and become collectible in the future. ■

The \$150 trickle charger on our car's option list is a worthwhile investment, as you will likely not be driving this car every day. But oh, those days you do!