

Godzilla Lives!

Some cars are brutes—if your wife enjoys driving this one, her name is George

THE BIZZARRINI G.T. AMERICA IS VERY MUCH A MAN'S CAR, CREATED FOR THE INDIVIDUALISTIC, PURE AUTOMOTIVE ENTHUSIAST. It's that kind of a car because it was designed, developed, and to some extent built, by a man who is an individualist—whose whole life has been devoted to the demanding cult of the high-performance car.

Giotto Bizzarrini's G.T. America is exactly what you'd expect from the drawing board of an inspired engineer. It's a five-year-old design that remains bold and daring today, even alongside a Miura or Mangusta. Its far-out proportions and layout give it striking virtues. By the same token, as the work of only one man, it has some startling shortcomings of convenience and accessibility. These serve also as reminders that the G.T. America is a partially tamed version of an automobile that, originally, was never intended to be used on the street.

In evaluating the Bizzarrini, it's important to keep in mind that, by today's standard of the 50-cent dollar, its price is not wildly inflated. The sole importer of Bizzarrini cars in the United States is now Robert Grossman's Foreign Car City on Route 59 in West Nyack, New York. Bob, who is also one of the key Maserati importers, has priced the G.T. America at \$11,900, which places it several thousand dollars under any Maserati or Ferrari.

So the Bizzarrini is fairly priced. But if you buy one, you'll not want to ask too much about warranty, or expect to find an owner's manual in the glove compartment (there isn't any glove compartment), or try to buy a shop manual, or try to see the stocks of spare parts on hand. With a car like this from an ultra-small auto builder, you're flying high, fast, and strictly on your own, brother. Even the government disclaims responsibility for your safety in the products of those who build fewer than 500 cars per year.

To some, the Bizzarrini is powerfully attractive. It's so bizarre and far-out that it hits you like a slug in the stomach every time it comes into view. Giorgio Giugiaro of Bertone, who laid down the original lines of the car, ignored absolutely the doctrine that a front-engined sports car has to have a long hood to look right. Of course, the G.T. America is so low (42 inches) and its windshield and deck slope so extreme, that the traditional sense of greenhouse-hood relationship is almost entirely absent.

Perhaps you could make a lower front-engined car, but not with the Chevrolet engine. Visibility forward is already marginal, even for a tall driver, over the cowl and hood. The car is very hard to maneu-

ver in tight spaces—or even in open spaces. And the almost flat rear window, with its electric defrosting wires, is worse, especially in the latest cars, which have a changed frame structure that raises the rear edge of the window so it's even flat-

more oversteer with the throttle, but it's more than the "low-powered" model that we drove needed.

The low center of gravity also means that the car sits very flat under hard acceleration or severe braking, which the



ter. Head room, with the very low seating, is surprisingly good.

The Bizzarrini is low for a reason. With a center of gravity no higher than a hare's navel, and with a reasonably wide track, it has tremendous cornering adhesion. The car just sticks and sticks as lateral g loads approach unity, accompanied by a howl from the German Dunlop radials. With smaller front tires than rears, plus six-inch rims in front against seven-inch rears, there's powerful understeer—really more than is pleasant or necessary for U.S. road driving. However, the added rear rubber is just about right if your car has the potent engine options, as you can induce

vacuum-boosted Campagnolo disc brakes achieve progressively without fuss or drama. Further, the low overall height means the frontal area is low, which, with the clean, Kamm-tailed shape, means the Bizzarrini will go about as fast as you want it to. The 3.07 axle in our test car would deliver 160 mph at 6000 rpm, which we're sure it could have reached. Just for the record, in 1965 a competition version was clocked at 186 mph at Le Mans. Very few cars were faster that year.

Lowness has its negative side, too. It means that the normal headlight beams seem to be too low and the high beams too high, and anybody's beams coming

your way zap you right in the eyes. Lowness also means that the ground clearance is more suited to the race track than the road. This car had a scant three inches from the pavement to the special magnesium-finned sump and the bottom

firewall hit the distributor cap when the engine moved on its mounts, thereby cracking the cap and breaking the rotor. And to get at the distributor, you have to remove a cover in the top of the dashboard—not an ideal way to spend a Wed-

nesday evening.

For the latest G.T. Americas, Bizzarrini has adopted a neat, simple instrument layout, inset in a vertically pleated dash. Instrument lighting is an on-off affair. The



BIZZARRINI—Who Is He?



Giotto Bizzarrini is a mechanical genius who, like it or not, is building an automobile in his own name. After years of tribulation, he's now ready to produce his Chevy-engined dream car, the Bizzarrini G.T. America. One thing is for certain—Giotto Bizzarrini is a hell of an engineer. There's no other way to describe a man who has works like these to his credit: the Ferrari GTO, the original layout of the Lamborghini V-12 engine, the design of the Iso Rivolta, the Iso Grifo, and now his own Bizzarrini G.T. America. All the basic work on these cars was done in a span of little more than five years.

Those cars would be excellent references for any designer. If Bizzarrini suffered engineering setbacks during his career, he's managed to sweep them briskly under his office rug—not an easy thing to do in Italy's close-knit (Continued on page 64)

of the vertically-stowed spare, and its coil springs had to be shimmed to get it up that high! It's perilously easy to touch ground on uneven surfaces, or when cornering hard on a bumpy bend like 'The Hook' at Lime Rock.

Another bold Bizzarrini design feature is the extreme rearward placement of the engine, the foot pedals being at about the mid-engine line. The result is 50/50 weight distribution and a close-in disposition of the main masses that improves the car's "turnability." However, it also brings problems of service and accessibility. On our test car, the engine was so close to the firewall that, in going over a bump, the

Generally, the Bizzarrini's ride is very good—supple and not over-controlled. The low center of gravity also allows soft springs to be used, at the cost of occasional contacting of the rear bump stops. Road and wind noise are very low; the gearbox is quiet, and there is a click now and then from the rear axle-shafts to remind you you're operating a machine. Good muffling is applied to the Chevy V-8, but it still speaks out with that hard, high Corvette howl when the Holley's four throats are full-open.

Luckily the car is well sprung, because there's little padding in the seats. In fact,

fuel gauge was apparently insane, falling to the zero mark after nine gallons of the supposedly 35-gallon, three-tank fuel supply had been burned. As far as we were concerned, the car had a nine-gallon tank—with all the inconvenience that implies. It did go pretty far on the nine gallons, though, giving very good mileage in relation to the performance on tap.

Front quarter windows, a cowl vent, and rear-deck extractors combine to give the Bizzarrini surprisingly good ventilation. Strange knobs and levers under the dash afford erratic control over a powerful heating system. Twin electric cooling fans are mounted ahead of the radiator, con-