

Road Beat: Alfa Romeo Giulia, a near luxury contender



The Alfa Romeo Giulia is turning heads in the luxury car world. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

One of the biggest markets in autodom is the near luxury segment comprised of BMW 2,3 and 4 series, Audi A3 and A4, Mercedes C class, Lexus IS, ES (ES is a front driver), Infiniti Q50 and Cadillac ATS. Alfa Romeo Giulia is the new, near luxury entry into this crowded, highly competitive field so it will take a dazzler to make an impact and, yes, the new Giulia is a dazzler.

It accomplishes this most difficult task with new style, performance and grace giving the discerning buyer a more difficult choice when selecting one of these somewhat

practical rides that attempt to provide distinctive style, a dash of luxury, performance, ride, handling and fuel economy a cut above the mundane compact or mid-size automobile, like your run of the mill Camry, Altima and/or Accord.

All of the cars above do that, but with the addition of the new Alfa Giulia, the decision just got more difficult, if not downright unfair. Giulia is a stellar new ride with fabulous Italian styling which is sexier, sinewy, and muscular than the rest of the pack. Overcoming BMW is an extremely difficult proposition with its "ultimate driving machine" reputation, but if any car can do it, Alfa Giulia might be the one. And here's why.

I have written about the Giulia Quadrifoglio, which is a \$70,000 super car version of Giulia that has real, out of the box race track capabilities starting with its 505 hp V-6 turbo engine. The regular Giulia, which is nearly identical to the Quadrifoglio except for the engine, has a starting price for us mere mortals at \$37,995. Giulia comes with a no-excuses 2.0L turbo, direct injected inline four that cranks out a substantial 280 hp at low 5,200 rpm and whopping 306 pounds of twist starting from 2,000 rpm. Those numbers mean instantaneous response, especially with the 8-speed auto tranny which shifts like a dual clutch although it uses a torque converter of which engineers are making great strides in feel and efficiency, witness this Alfa.



There is no skimping on comfort with the Alfa Romeo Giulia.

My too short of a drive (a couple of hours instead of the half an hour would have been better) demonstrated why this new Alfa is the benchmark in this class of near luxury, premium cars as they like to be called. Performance is at the top of the class with a reported 0-60 mph time of 5.1 seconds from major mags. Response is tremendous at 10 mph or 70 mph. It is the smoothest vehicle as well with an absolutely turbine like feel and a deafening quiet not found in the others. For 99.9 percent of the drivers, the V-6 will supply superfluous power and performance, especially with 306 pounds of torque available with this standard four at just 2,000 rpm.

Fuel economy is rated at 24/33 mpg city/highway, but the Giulia showed just 1,600 rpm at 70 mph when loafing down the highway, which should yield perhaps better than 40 mpg. Hopefully I will get a Giulia shortly to affirm my suspicions. Otherwise those EPA numbers are about average for the class and for that matter it would be about the only thing "average" about the Giulia.

Incredible handling is the result of an advance suspension system with double wishbones up front with a multilink system in the rear, instead of the lesser up front MacPherson struts

found elsewhere. One drive, one good corner and you will feel the confidence. As mentioned above, the ride is extremely quiet and smooth.

Inside is the trick Alfa IP, all business with Swiss watch like precision and a proper starter button on the steering wheel, like many race cars. The standard leather interior is sublime and the saddle tan of my tester was gorgeous as well as comfortable with excellent rear seat comfort and legroom provided by the Alfa's huge 111-inch wheelbase. For a car, just 183 inches long it is a true long distance four passenger car with the 74-inch width, it provides massive shoulder and hip room.

And then there is the voluptuous styling, nothing else comes close to standing out as the looker of the class with curvaceous lines and rippling muscles with perfect proportions including the modern rendition of its timeless and distinctive signature grille. Even the badging is best in class. This makes other near luxo rides mundane, banal, clichéd and ordinary. My adjectives might be repetitive, but worthy. As I said before, the Alfa Romeo Giulia has the panache to elevate it above the others.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.