



PRICE £8999, TOP SPEED 117mph, 0-60mph 9.1secs, MPG 26.2

FOR Convenience, performance AGAINST Driving position, body roll

BACK ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Alfa Romeo has gone back to its performance roots, giving the 33 extra power and performance from a bigger engine, but some faults remain

Following the Fiat takeover at the beginning of this year, the rationalisation of Alfa Romeo has begun, at least as far as the UK market is concerned. The trimmed and updated Alfa 33 range is now available and represents a return to the more 'sports' oriented Alfa ranges of old with the introduction of the two 1.7-litre-engined models; the Cloverleaf and Veloce.

Alfa has taken the opportunity to update the 33 range cosmetically at the same time with a new facia and dashboard, new seats, a close ratio gearbox with a slightly taller final drive and varying degrees of bodykit; all designed to enhance the sports image.

The 33 range now consists of just four models; two powered by the beloved 1490cc, 105bhp 'boxer' engine and two by the bored and stroked 1712cc unit. The Veloce designation for both engine options denotes only the fitting of a Zender bodykit.

It was always thought that the 1490cc engine was stretched to maximum capacity already but the Alfa engineers have done a great deal of work and managed successfully to squeeze out a further 222cc by increasing the stroke and bore to 72mm and 87mm respectively, from 67.2mm and 84mm. Modifications have also been made to the head and piston crowns and the valve seats and manifolds.

Petrol and air are supplied to each cylinder by two twin-choke down-draught carburettors for maximised efficiency and performance with a choke for each cylinder. In this specification the engine produces its maximum power of 118bhp at 6000rpm and develops peak torque of 108.8lb ft at 3500rpm.

To cope with the additional power Alfa has updated the clutch, fitted ventilated disc brakes at the front and stiffened suspension. The suspension layout remains basically the same as before with MacPherson struts, coil springs, telescopic dampers and anti-roll bar at the front and rigid beam axle, Watts linkages, Panhard rod, telescopic dampers and anti-roll bar at the rear.

The mean maximum speed recorded on a dry and relatively wind-free high-speed bowl at Millbrook was 117mph which corresponds to 5650rpm, with a wind-

assisted best of 118mph (5700rpm).

The indicated red-line on the large rev-counter starts at 6200rpm — shading begins at 5600rpm — and taking this as the maximum rev-point for the engine results in top speeds of 107, 83, 59, and 35mph for fourth, third, second and first gears respectively.

Rushing off the line for the standing-start acceleration runs, the 1.7 has a tendency to break traction easily so care and a subtle right foot are the order of the day. After a few practice runs, 4500rpm seemed to be the optimum revs for dropping the clutch. Wheelspin is feathered through the accelerator pedal until traction is gained and 30mph is reached in 3.1secs. Six seconds later and 60mph flashes up, with 100mph achieved in 30.0secs.

The quarter-mile distance is covered in 16.5secs at a terminal speed of 79mph from a standing-start with the kilometre post reached in 31.2secs at 99mph.

The Alfa 33 Green Cloverleaf we tested (*Autocar*, 15 August 1984) returned an overall fuel consumption figure of 26.5mpg — reasonable for a 1.5-litre 'hot-hatchback' but the 0-60mph of 9.8secs did not break any records. The Alfa 33 1.7 returned a figure very close to this — 26.2mpg — during its 634 miles with us despite improved performance, which is a clear indication that the Alfa engineers have done their job well.

Applying the *Autocar* average formula results in a consumption figure of 28.8mpg which is more

representative. Prospective owners should remember that our overall figure includes the performance testing and we do tend to drive test cars hard. The Alfa's cruising range is around 300 miles.

Ride and handling are the areas which always end up as a compromise in production cars and this is very much the case with the Alfa 1.7. It does have updated suspension to cope with the improved performance and in the normal course of driving it is adequate but driven really enthusiastically there is too much body-roll to suit the tastes of some 'hot-hatch' owners. The compromise is very much towards ride while leaving the handling on the safe, but not positive side.

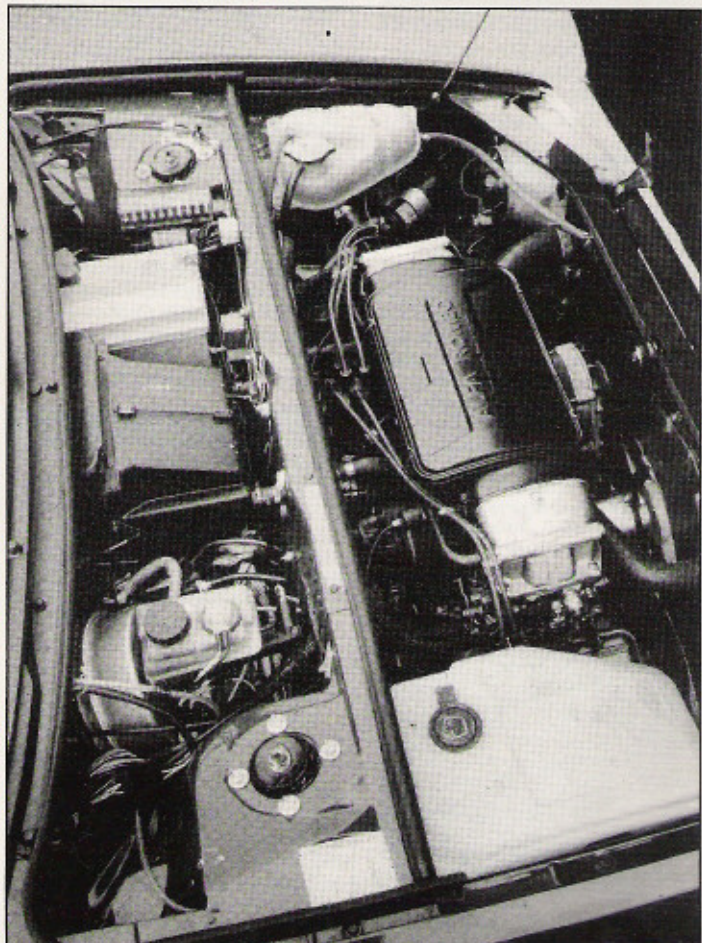
Being front-wheel drive and with a

weight distribution biased to the front — 62 per cent/38 per cent — the 1.7 has a natural tendency to understeer. Lift-off mid corners and the front end tucks-in to correct the line accompanied by wheel scrub which reduces speed. If the driver is really driving hard a rear inside wheel will leave the ground on lifting off the throttle but this is not to the detriment of the handling.

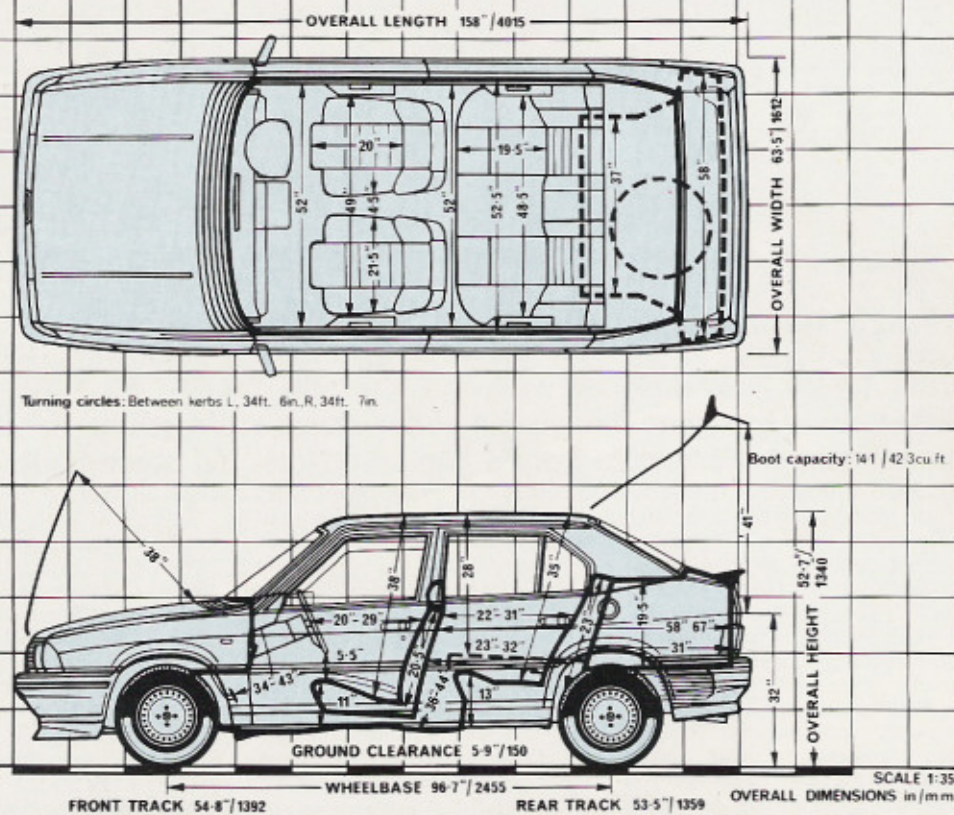
The sheer amount of roll under hard cornering is readily noticeable. Anti-roll bars are fitted front and rear but the body roll is still sufficient to make the driver feel a little uneasy. It's not in the least dangerous as it is virtually impossible to make the rear-end step out of line, but the press-on driver may feel as if the car is becoming uneasy through a series ▶



Luggage capacity with seats folded is a creditable 42.4cu ft



Double twin-choke down-draught carburettors maximise efficiency



MODEL

ALFA 33 1.7 VELOCE

PRODUCED BY:
Alfa Lancia Industriale,
Stabilmato di Arese,
Milan 9391, Italy

SOLD IN THE UK BY:
Alfa Romeo (GB) Ltd,
Poulton Close, Dover,
Kent CT17 0HP

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Longways, front, front-wheel drive.
Head/block al. alloy/cast iron.
4 cylinders horizontally opposed,
bored block, 3 main bearings. Water
cooled, electric fan.

Bore 87mm (3.4in), stroke 72.2mm
(2.8in), capacity 1712cc (104.5 cu in).

Valve gear ohc, 2 valves per
cylinder, toothed belt camshaft drive.
Compression ratio 9.5 to 1. Electronic
ignition, 2 twin-choke downdraught
carburettors.

Max power 118bhp (PS-DIN) (68kW
ISO) at 6000rpm. Max torque 108.5lb ft
at 3500rpm.

TRANSMISSION

5-speed manual, single dry plate,
diaphragm spring clutch.

Gear	Ratio	mph/1000rpm
Top	0.854	20.71
4th	1.027	17.22
3rd	1.323	13.37
2nd	1.864	9.49
1st	3.143	5.63

Final drive: helical spur, ratio 3.7.

SUSPENSION

Front, independent, MacPherson
strut, coil springs, telescopic dampers,
anti-roll bar.

Rear, rigid axle beam, Watts linkage,
Panhard rod, telescopic dampers, anti-
roll bar.

STEERING

Rack and pinion. Steering wheel
diameter 15.0in, 3.3 turns lock to lock.

BRAKES

Dual circuits, split diagonally. Front
9.4in (239mm) dia ventilated discs.

Rear 8.0in (203mm) dia drums.
Vacuum servo. Handbrake, centre
lever acting on rear drums.

WHEELS

Alloy, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in rims. Radial tubeless tyres
(Michelin MXV on test car), size 185/
60R14, pressures F26 R23 psi (normal
driving).

EQUIPMENT

Battery 12V, 45Ah. Alternator 45A.
Headlamps 110/120W. Reversing lamp
standard. 14 electric fuses. 2-speed
plus intermittent. Electric screen
washer. Water valve interior heater;
air conditioning N/A. Cloth seats, vinyl
headlining. Carpet floor covering.
Screw pillar jack; 2 jacking points each
side. Laminated windscreen.

PERFORMANCE

MAXIMUM SPEEDS

Gear	mph	kph	rpm
OD Top (Mean)	117	188	5650
(Best)	118	190	6200
4th	107	172	6200
3rd	83	134	6200
2nd	59	95	6200
1st	35	56	6200

ACCELERATION FROM REST

True mph	Time (sec)	Speedo mph
30	3.1	32
40	4.8	43
50	6.8	55
60	9.1	66
70	12.6	78
80	16.5	89
90	22.2	99
100	30.0	110
110	—	121

Standing $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile: 16.5sec, 79mph
Standing km: 31.2sec, 99mph

IN EACH GEAR

mph	Top	4th	3rd	2nd
10-30	—	10.0	6.9	4.4
20-40	11.6	8.3	5.8	3.8
30-50	10.7	8.0	5.4	3.7
40-60	10.6	7.8	5.3	4.3
50-70	10.8	8.1	5.8	—
60-80	11.8	8.8	7.1	—
70-90	13.4	10.1	—	—
80-100	18.4	13.9	—	—

CONSUMPTION FUEL

Overall mpg: 26.2 (10.8 litres/100km)
5.8mp/l

Autocar formula: Hard 23.6mpg
Driving Average 28.9mpg
and conditions Gentle 34.1mpg
Grade of fuel: Premium, 4-star (98 RM)
Fuel tank: 11 Imp galls (50 litres)
Mileage recorder: 3.1 per cent long
Oil: (SAE 10W/40) negligible

BRAKING

Fade (from 79mph in neutral)

Pedal load for 0.5g stops in lb	start/end	start/end
1	20-20	6 40-90
2	20-30	7 45-60
3	20-40	8 45-65
4	30-45	9 40-55
5	40-70	10 40-55

Response (from 30mph in neutral)

Load	g	Distance
10lb	0.21	143ft
20lb	0.59	51ft
30lb	0.86	35ft
35lb	0.90	33ft
Handbrake	0.34	88ft

Max gradient: 1 in 3
CLUTCH Pedal 37lb; Travel 5.5in

WEIGHT

Kerb 18.4cwt/2060lb/932kg
(Distribution F/R, 62/38)
Test 21.5cwt/2411lb/1091kg
Max payload 783lb/355kg
Towing weight 1000lb/2203kg

COSTS

Prices	
Basic	£7282.50
Special Car Tax	£581.85
VAT	£1134.65
Total (in GB)	£8999.00
Licence	£100.00
Delivery charge (London)	£210.00
Number plates	£20.00
Total on the Road	£9329.00
(excluding insurance)	
Insurance group	OA
Blaupunkt Melbourne SQR 26 radio/cassette	£190.00
Total as tested on the road	£9519.00

SERVICE & PARTS

Change	Interval	6000	12,000	24,000
Engine oil	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oil filter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gearbox oil	No	No	Yes	Yes
Spark plugs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Air cleaner	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Total cost		£69.70	£123.42	£151.12

(Assuming labour at £18.50 an hour inc VAT)

PARTS COST (inc VAT)

Brake pads (2 wheels) front	£43.12
Brake shoes (2 wheels) rear	£68.23
Exhaust complete	£214.99
Tyre—each (typical)	£92.00
Windscreen	£133.31
Headlamp unit	£106.24
Front wing	£111.91
Rear bumper	£213.45

WARRANTY

36 months/UL, 6-year anti-corrosion

EQUIPMENT

Ammeter/Voltmeter	N/A
Automatic	N/A
Economy gauge	N/A
Fivespeed	●
Limited slip differential	N/A
Power steering	N/A
Rev counter	●
Wheel reach adjustment	N/A
Trip computer	N/A
Headrests front	●
Heated seats	N/A
Height adjustment	N/A
Lumbar adjustment	N/A
Seat back recline	●
Seat cushion tilt	N/A
Seat tilt	N/A
Split rear seats	●
Door mirror remote control	●
Electric windows (front)	●
Interior adjustable headlamps	N/A
Sunroof (manual)	£220.00
Tinted glass	●
Headlamp wash/wipe	N/A
Tailgate wash/wipe	●
Central locking	●
Child proof locks	●
Cigar lighter	●
Clock	●
Fog lamps	N/A
Internal boot release	●
Locking fuel cap	●
Luggage cover	●
Metallic paint	£150.00
Radio/cassette	DO
Aerial (manual)	●
Speakers	●

● Standard N/A Not applicable DO Dealer option

TEST CONDITIONS

Wind: 8mph
Temperature: 9deg C (49deg F)
Barometer: 30.1in Hg (1022mbar)
Humidity: 56per cent
Surface: dry asphalt and concrete
Test distance: 634miles
Figures taken at 1261 miles at the Motor Industry Research Association proving ground at Nuneaton and the General Motors proving ground at Millbrook.
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Subtle panel kit and more distinctive rear spoiler mark out Veloce



Seats are improved and steering column tilt adjustable

◀ of long, fast bends as found so often on British A-roads.

In general, the ride is good. Small high-frequency bumps are taken in the 1.7's stride and we are glad to report that the slight floating sensation over long low-frequency undulations we noticed on the last 33 tested (*Autocar* 26 March 1986) is no longer present — on British roads at least.

One criticism of the 1.7 which remains is the feeling through the steering wheel. A 15in diameter steering wheel is retained although of slightly different design — which requires just over three turns lock-to-lock and is not power assisted. This is well weighted at speed to give reasonable feedback to the driver but at slow and parking speeds, it does require a little too much effort. Power steering is not an optional extra and probably should not be as it would spoil the feel of the car at speed for the driver. It is marketed as a hot hatchback after all.

The uprated brakes — ventilated discs at the front, inboard-mounted — respond well to pedal pressure but are not progressive enough and have a tendency to lock up at the front too soon. This is perhaps an indication of over-servoing or it may well be that this was peculiarity with the test car. Brakes which lock up the front wheels on a dry surface with a mere 35lb of pedal pressure are not exactly ideal for day-to-day driving . . .

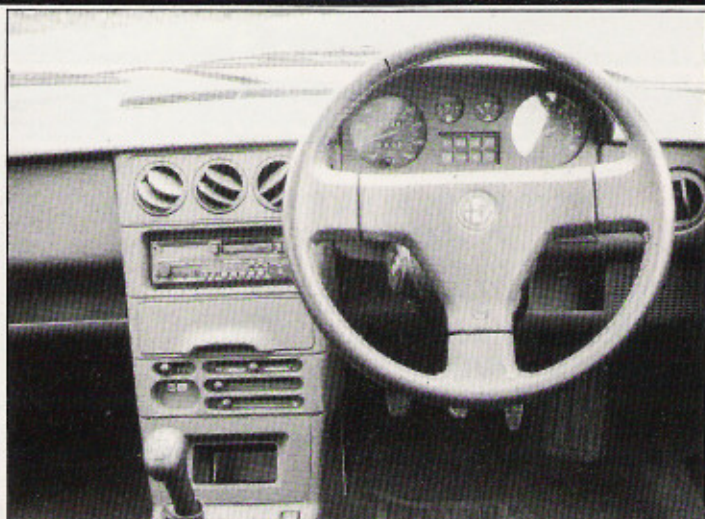
The 10-stop fade test, however,

was more positive with an acceptable degree of deterioration but sufficient recovery towards the end of this extreme procedure.

As far as refinement levels are concerned there seems to have been an improvement. This is probably due to better fit-and-finish as it appears to be the wind noise that has been reduced — at motorway speeds at least.

The predominant source of noise is the engine — as befits a 'sports' oriented car — but in the past this has been matched by the wind noise in the Alfa 33 range. It is possible the change is attributable to the wind deflectors on the front doors — similar to those fitted to the Strada Abarth 130TC — but whatever the reason, there is no longer a continuous whistle in the driver's right ear. Road noise and tyre roar are also kept to acceptable levels.

Finding a comfortable driving position in an Alfa 33 is still a problem for a lot of people. The reason is the off-set pedal box — very much to the left in the right-hand drive versions due to the massive wheel-arch intrusion which also means there is no room to the left of the clutch pedal for the foot — and the steering wheel/seat relationship. The latter is the best it has ever been in the 33 range due to the improved seats and the rake-adjustable steering column. The bucket-style seats now have more padding and provide far better



Perspex cover over instruments can cause unwelcome reflections



Access to the rear is good

thigh support. But when are the Italian engineers going to be as canny as the Japanese?

Soon, with any luck. It should be possible for a driver — of whatever size or shape, within reason — to step into a car and at least be able to find a comfortable driving position. Surely that is not too much to ask? The human frame is very adaptable but there is no need to test the theory. Those of average height will find no problems, but if you are over 6ft tall and do not wish to drive with knees splayed either side of the steering wheel, this is not the car for you.

The sports seats are welcome as is the rest of the redesigned fascia. It is cleaner — if a little more plastic — than before but the perspex cover over the instruments binnacle would benefit from being tilted at a different angle. There is too much reflection which tends to distract the driver in bright sunlight as well as making the instruments awkward to read. All of them are visible but difficult to see at times due to unwanted reflection.

Alfa has succeeded in producing a convenient and practical package with the latest version of the 33. Access to the rear seats is good, although those passengers have to suffer restricted legroom, and the hatch has a remote release. The split rear seats can be folded to increase luggage capacity from 14.1 cu ft to 42.4 cu ft.

As far as the UK market is



Heat output is prodigious

concerned, the Alfa 33 is now oriented towards performance and so only the 1.5 and newly introduced 1.7-litre versions are available — with or without a Zender bodykit. The kit, fitted at Sheerness, essentially turns the car into Veloce spec.

The Alfa 33 1.7 is an improvement over previous models in terms of performance and is just as convenient but it still has the same basic fault: it takes time for the driver to get used to the seating and driving position and make himself comfortable.

Nevertheless, it is worth persevering as the 33 1.7 is a rewarding car to drive with its close-ratio gearing and the distinctive high-pitched bark on the overrun. With a few minor improvements and an even more powerful engine, Alfa has the potential to offer a world beater but in the meantime the 1.7 is a good proposition at £8599; plus £400 for the bodykit. ■

