

## “Captains Courageous”: Salvatore Ruffino and his *Italia*

By Giancarlo Cavallini (translation by Giovanni Uguccioni)

This is the story of a courageous man that built a car of such a beauty to leave you breathless; it is a story that remember us that there are men with the courage to jump beyond the obstacles, capable to get passionate about a project, knowing that the business risk is always round the corner.

It is also the history of a car that had not the fortune that her beautiful design would promise, but that is today among the most desirable cars.

This man was Salvatore Ruffino, and his creature was “*Italia 2000*”.

Salvatore Ruffino was born on April 19, 1913 in Carini, near Palermo and the blue sea of Sicily. He left Sicily after completing the high school to move to Rome, where he enrolled in the Guardia di Finanza (Financial Police) Academy. He successfully attended the Academy, graduating in 1932 as the younger “*Brigadiere*” (Sergeant major) in Italy. His first appointment was in Milano, were he took the opportunity to attend the faculty of Economy at the Bocconi University. He was then transferred to Gioiosa Marea, back in his Sicily. Two years later he was promoted Lieutenant and



*Cason di Lanza garrison*

transferred to Paularo, in the North of Italy, were he serviced as commander of the Cason di Lanza garrison, at the border with Austria, that was at those times a smuggling area. From the sun and the sea of Sicily to the snow and mountains of the Alps: Salvatore later mentioned that during winter the snow was so much to make the entrance door unusable, and to exit the barracks they had to pass through the roof, and Paularo, the nearest village, could be reached only by skiing. Not to tell of the generator that was often failed, forcing him to study at the light of candles. The times in Paularo were lived very intensely by Salvatore, who loved those places for the rest of his life. This probably also

because it was there the he met Elda, the girl that later become his wife. At the end of the thirties, Ruffino was moved to Milano again, now at the Tax Police section, and here he graduated. In those years, when the fascist regime was controlling

everything and everybody, Salvatore had clear political ideas in mind and was ready to defend them and born the consequences of his choices, as when he had to repeat three times an exam only because he did not accepted to wear the black shirt (symbol of the fascist party).

In autumn 1942 Salvatore and Elda married in Tolmezzo and in 1943 Salvatore moved his new family in Milano. With the armistice (September 1943) he decided to resign from the "Guardia di Finanza". Ruffino had an independent spirit that made him wish to have his own industrial activity. In Milano, in via San Sepolcro, he opened a paper production company, "3C" and in those months he met Enrico Mattei, that was then a small businessman in the chemical industry.

As Milano was exposed to the allied bombing, Salvatore evacuated his family on the Maggiore lake, remaining alone in the town. During this period he joined the "Resistenza" (the armed resistance to the fascists and Nazis occupation) together with Enrico Mattei, within the catholic groups that later became the Christian Democratic Party.

At the end of the war, Mattei was given by the Government the task to liquidate Agip (the state-owned Italian oil company), liquidation that he was able to avoid, notwithstanding the daily pressures of the American Oil companies on the Italian government.

Mattei understood immediately that his chances of success were based on the quality of his co-workers, in addition to the oil and gas fields in the Po Valley.

He needed honest, loyal and capable men around him. And he started looking for them among those who had fight and put their lives at risk with him during the "Resistenza", because he knew that he can put his trust on them. Ruffino was one of those men.

Mattei employed Ruffino in Agip as a consultant, and firstly gave him the responsibility to organize the Agip fuel sales points and gas distribution in Lombardia; Ruffino impressed Mattei with his capacity to create in a short time a dynamic and efficient sales network, and in 1953 he was given the responsibility of the whole Agip sales in Southern Italy. This new job made him move to Naples.

Salvatore had always a passion for cars, even if he was so little fond of driving to use often a driver for his movements. During 1953 he had the opportunity to get in contact with *Standard Motor Company* managers that were looking to replace their dealer in Naples, and Ruffino took over the Standard sales point in via Caracciolo in Naples.

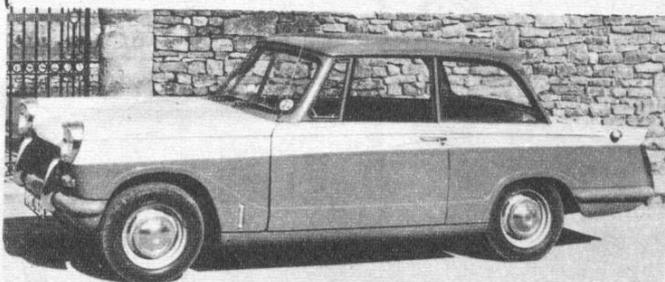
The C.E.S.A.C. S.p.A. was born, whose offices were in the same building of the Agip offices in via dei Mille. In 1957 Standard, that up to then was using only local dealers, decided to reorganize the sales system in Italy to exploit the potential growth perspectives of the Italian market, choosing Ruffino's C.E.S.A.C. as its sole distributor.



## TRIUMPH TR3/A

a SPYDER e COUPÈ

1991 cc • 100 HP a 5000 giri • Velocità massima:  
oltre 180 kmh • Freni a disco • Prezzo Spyder:  
L. 1.980.000 franco Napoli • Il 2 litri sportivo  
più diffuso nel mondo ed a più basso prezzo.



*Una nuova esperienza nel campo della  
motorizzazione*

*La vettura che ha fatto invecchiare l'intera  
produzione mondiale*

## TRIUMPH HERALD

BERLINA 4 POSTI e COUPÈ DUE + DUE

**BERLINA:** 950 cc 35 HP a 4500 giri - velocità massima: 125 kmh - consumo: 6 litri per 100 km - potenza fiscale 15 HP - 4 ruote indipendenti - non s'ingrassa mai - cambio olio ogni 10/15.000 km. - sterzo a cannocchiale - Prezzo L. 1.535.000 franco Napoli.

**COUPÈ:** 950 cc 43 HP a 5500 giri - velocità massima: 140 kmh - consumo: 6,8 litri per 100 km. Doppio carburatore. Altre caratteristiche identiche alla berlina. - Prezzo L. 1.635.000 franco Napoli.

Casa Costruttrice:

**STANDARD MOTOR CO. LTD. COVENTRY** (Gran Bretagna)

Distributrice esclusiva per l'Italia:

**CESAC S.p.A. CALATA CAPODICHINO 108 NAPOLI**

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The show room in Naples was moved in via Partenope. The commercial strategy that Ruffino adopted was aimed to target well defined sectors of the market, considering that the only car reasonably attractive in the market was then the TR3, that was having a huge success in the USA. Ruffino was also well aware that he could not limit the activities to Naples and Southern Italy, but he needed to build a dealers network on the whole Italian territory.

His experience in Agip had taught him the importance of a widespread presence to grow and reach the target sales volumes. He choose as his consultant a person of great experience and an old friend, Aldo Luigi Zambrini, that was in the past Commercial Director of Bianchi. C.E.S.A.C. needed dealers to be dynamic, competent and near to a young and wealthy market. The salesman in Rome was Franco Bornigia, driver and brother of Giancarlo, that later (1965) was one of the founders of the "Piper" club (that was one of the most famous night clubs, attended by the wealthy people in Rome). It was Bornigia, instructed by Ruffino, to propose to Federico Fellini the Triumph TR3 that was driven by Marcello Mastroianni in "La dolce vita". In a short time the dealers network grew, covering the Italian territory from North to South. But this was for Ruffino only the first step of a more ambitious Project: building a car, an idea that was later described in the famous slogan summarizing his project:

**Da una gamma  
di vetture di alta classe  
presentiamo due modelli famosi**



## TRIUMPH TR3/A spider

1991 cc.  
100 HP a 5000 giri  
180 Km/h.  
freni a disco

prezzo: L. 1.980.000  
il 2 litri sportivo più a buon  
prezzo nel mondo.



## TRIUMPH HERALD convertibile

948 cc. doppio carburatore  
16 Km./litro  
140 Km/h.

4 posti confortevoli  
prezzo: L. 1.650.000

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**STANDARD**



**TRIUMPH**

Distributrice Generale per l'Italia: C. E. S. A. C. S. p. A.  
Calata Capodichino, 108 - NAPOLI.

"the art of Italian bodywork and the British sporting technique". The idea, born during Christmas 1956, was valid and the project was creative: Italy was at the beginning of a period of economic growth and prosperity, where everything appeared possible, and the car market was offering new and interesting opportunities. After having received green light by Mr Edmonds, manager of Standard Triumph for Italy, in 1957 Ruffino met Zagato, with whom he was acquainted since his period spent in Milano and that he valued, appointing him to develop the concept of a two seater sport car based on the TR3 chassis and mechanic.

But the Zagato design was not judged convincing.

Giovanni Michelotti, that had begun his collaboration with Standard, having been informed of the project by Standard, proposed his collaboration to Ruffino: Standard Triumph itself pushed for a meeting to be held.

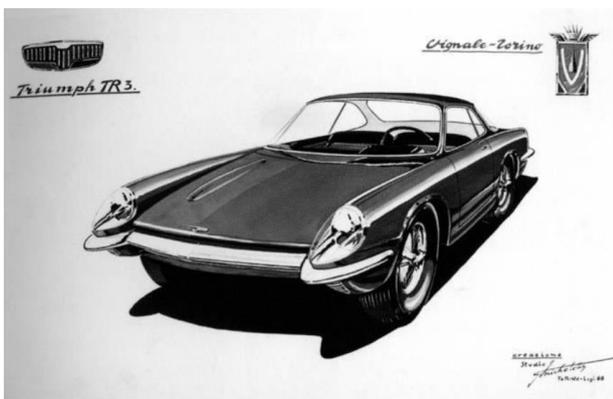
Ruffino immediately liked how Michelotti approached design and his artistic capacity and so, between May to September 1957 Michelotti developed a series of sketches.

The proposal of the designer looked convincing since the beginning: what Salvatore called "Progetto Italia" was born and with it the "Ruffino S.p.A.", company for "car assembling and construction".

In 1957 Ruffino moved his activities at 108, via Calata Capodichino where he had bought the buildings of the Romanazzi body shop and where he decided to build his own cars.

The name *Italia* was present since the beginning: this name was a precise choice of Ruffino. After years of humiliation, Italy was now recovering and moving to what was later named “the economic miracle”. Not only Italy left back the ruins of the War, but now it was developing like the other Countries, and probably even more. If a car was to be built by a man like Ruffino, obstinate and tameless, she could only be called *Italia* to be ambassador in the world of the redemption and rebirth of the nation.

Michelotti suggested Ruffino to rely on Alfredo Vignale to build the first prototype, that was unveiled at the Turin Motor Show in 1958. The Michelotti sketches still showed the name

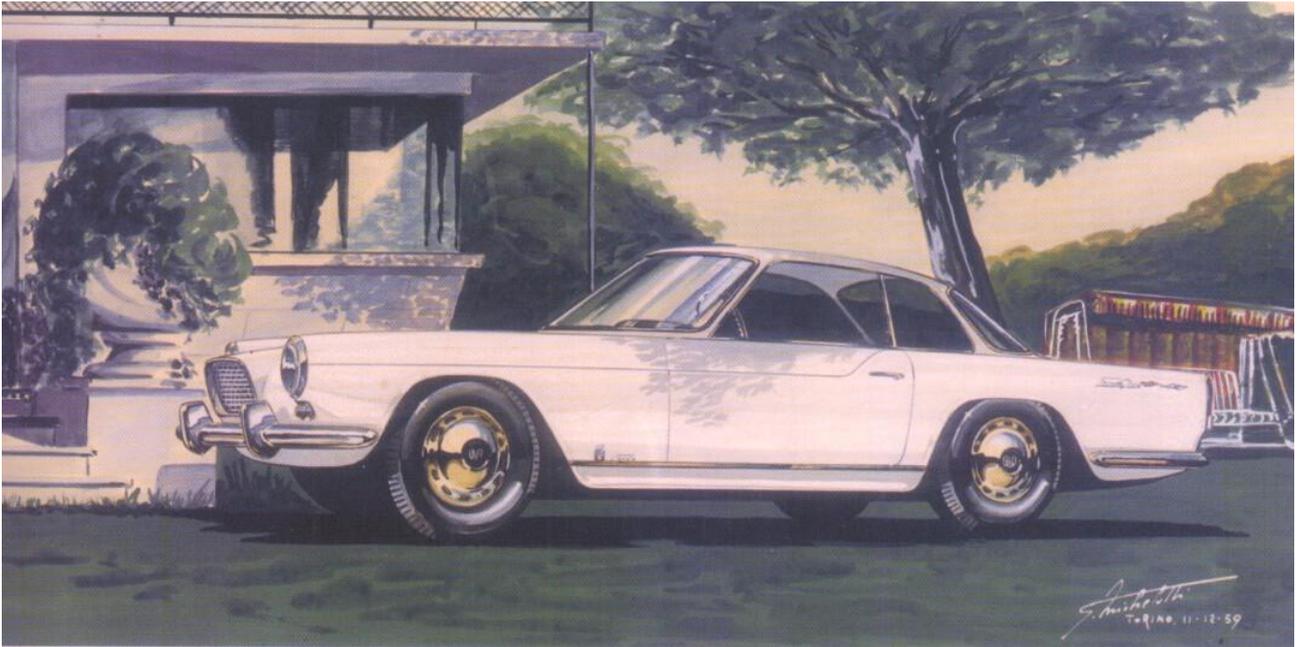


"Triumph TR3", but the prototype was accompanied by two new names: *Triumph 2000* and *Italia*. The prototype had elements that were discarded in the subsequent production, as the streamlined headlamps and the use of Aluminium for the doors and the bonnet. The tests done on the prototype at the British M.I.R.A. test track gave excellent results for the top speed, but brought out engine cooling problems .



Turin International Motor Show, 1958, November 5th, November 16th

The test results, and maybe also the desire to give a more traditional styling to the car, led Ruffino to ask Michelotti to develop a new design for the front section. This led to a design that, but for a few secondary details, was now the one that entered into production. The front section was now resembling the classical elegant lines of the Italian sport cars of the same period: some of the solutions of the *Italia* are found also in the Maserati 3500 GT designed by Michelotti, while other solutions will be followed by Michelotti in his subsequent designs for Standard Triumph: the line of the side of the Triumph TR4 presented in 1961, as well as the typical bulge on the bonnet to accommodate the twin SU carburetors, were both based on the same design of the *Italia*.



*This drawing, dated December 11th, 1959 shows all the artistic capabilities of Giovanni Michelotti*

The interiors were also very well-finished and comfortable. Available optional included a Nardi steering wheel, adjustable steering column, leather trim, tires with white band, aluminium oil pan and radio. Many of the body work finishing details were of Italian production, to facilitate supply, and used in other Italian cars of the period.



The body was bolted to the chassis and the engine, with serial number marked with an "I", was not modified: it was the reliable four cylinders, two litres, with distributions with lateral camshaft and reaching about 100 BHP. The gearbox had four gears, the first gear not synchronized, and optional overdrive.

It only remained to organize the construction of the cars.



Ruffino's plan was to give the construction of a first batch of *Italia* to Vignale, and then to move the production to Naples as soon as the "Cassa per il Mezzogiorno" (Bank for the development of industry in southern Italy) had granted the required financing. In the meantime, Ruffino provided Vignale with TR3 chassis and mechanics, instrumentations and other details.

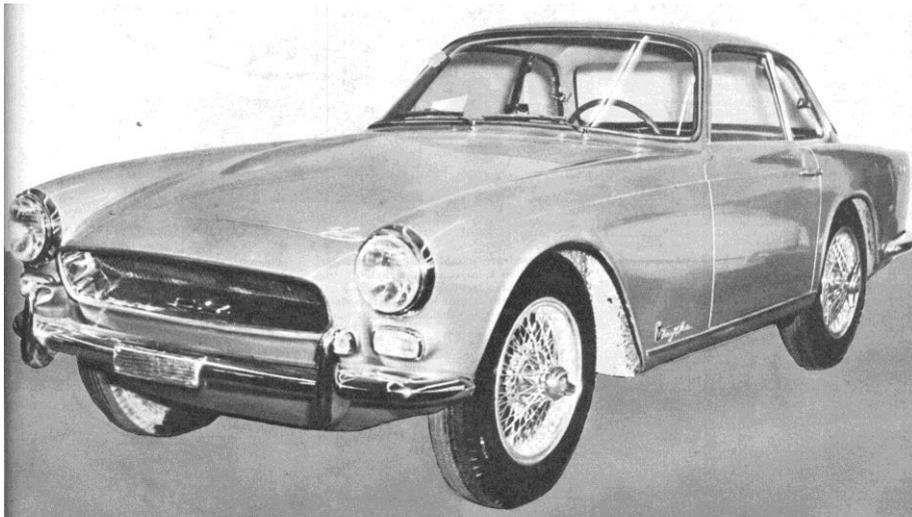


*Alfredo Vignale and Giovanni Michelotti*

All the paperwork for custom duties and homologation were in charge to Ruffino. Vignale had to provide specialized workforce and the space for the *Italia* production line, that was property of Ruffino.

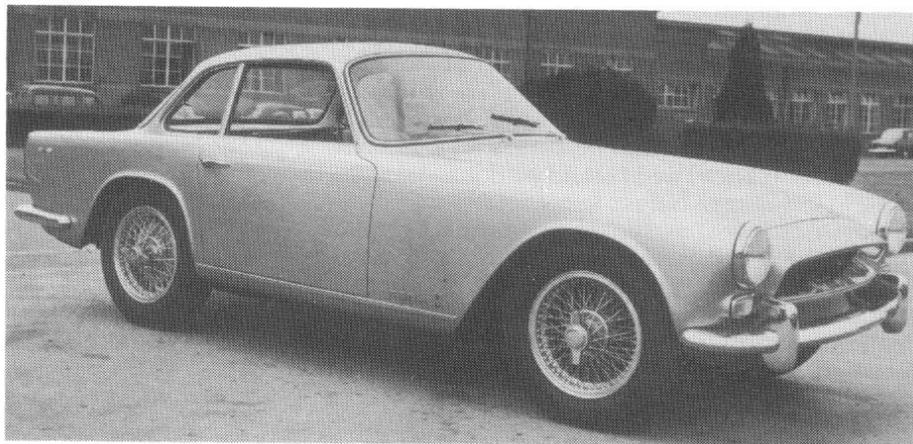
Vignale took also care of the production of the moulds commissioned, as usual for him, to external firms as L.I.T.L.A. and O.TO.CAR in Grugliasco. This situation, that was intended to be temporary, would however become definitive and the production was never transferred to Naples

The promised Bank financing remained infact just a promise.



TRIUMPH «ITALIA» Con la parte anteriore completamente rifatta, e ispirata ad altre sue precedenti creazioni, Vignale ha ripresentato il suo modello «Italia» coupé per telaio Triumph TR 3.

The new prototype was presented at the Geneva Motor Show in April 1959 in the Vignale stand, before being sent to Coventry where it had the appreciation of Alick Dick, the boss of Standard Triumph. The official presentation of *Italia* was at the autumn Turin Motor



*Italia in Banner Lane*

Show where she received positive feedbacks by the public and by the specialized press, notwithstanding the high price of 2.500.000 Italian lira.



La TRIUMPH «ITALIA». Sul telaio dello spider inglese Gran Turismo Triumph «TR.3», Vignale ha realizzato, su disegno di Michelotti, questo semplice coupé. Prodotto in piccola serie costa, in Italia, due milioni e mezzo, anziché 1.980.000 lire, come la vettura di serie costruita in Inghilterra. Altri dati che differenziano la Triumph «Italia» dalla versione inglese: lunghezza metri 3,94, anziché 3,80; peso kg. 998, invece di 935; velocità 190 km/h. contro i 170 della versione aperta.

In the Motor Show inauguration day, Ruffino received at his stand the visit of Giovanni Gronchi, President of the Italian Republic and his friend since the times of the “Resistenza”. The *Italia* was proposed in seven colours: black, “blu sera” (evening blue), grey, “verde pallido” (pale green), red, “bianco Pergamena” (parchment paper white) and “bianco Andalusia” (Andalusia white), but colours on request were also possible. A few months later the *Italia* was presented in New York, a market that was much relied upon, mainly because of



*Salvatore Ruffino in the middle with President Giovanni Gronchi on the right*



To ensure a better support to the new project, the Coventry men created in Turin, corso Francia, the dedicated company *Standard-Triumph Italiana S.p.A.* . The above photographs document the presentation of *Italia* in New York in 1960, and the colour photo shoot taken in 1961 in Rome with Audrey Hepburn and Mel Ferrer witness how *Italia* was considered to be at the same level of the most prestigious Italian GT “*fuoriserie*”, Ferrari and Maserati first of all.



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*Audrey Hepburn and Mel Ferrer in Rome*



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## STANDARD-TRIUMPH REVIEW

### THE ITALIA 2,000 CREATES WORLD-WIDE INTEREST

NEW showrooms for Standard-Triumph Italian Distributors, CESAC S.p.A., were opened in Naples recently by Mr. C. L. P. Edmonds, Standard-Triumph Export Divisional Manager.

Combined with this opening ceremony was the announcement that CESAC S.p.A. had come to an agreement with Standard-Triumph Sales Ltd. and were forming a separate Company whereby they would import the Triumph Sports car chassis on which Sr. Vignale would build a special body designed by Sr. Michelotti, the car to be known as the Italia 2000. This announcement created a considerable amount of interest in the Italian Press, and the early reactions to the Italia 2000 were most encouraging.

Dr. S. Ruffino, Managing Director of the new Company, Ruffino S.p.A., has reported receiving enquiries from many parts of the world, indicating that the interest in the Italia 2000 will not be confined to Italy.



Mr. C. L. P. Edmonds congratulating Dr. S. Ruffino on his splendid new Showrooms. Standing on Dr. S. Ruffino's right is Signora Ruffino; and on Mr. Edmonds' left is Mr. Rodino, President of the Italian Radio State Company

A small section of the crowd in the Showroom listening to the blessing of this new enterprise by the Bishop of Naples. Dr. Ruffino faces the Bishop, on whose left can be seen Right Hon. Alberti, M.P. Immediately in front of him is Dr. Ruffino's son, Dario Ruffino, and on the Bishop's right is Mr. Edmonds.



A section of the new showrooms with the Italia 2,000 in the centre.



## TURIN MOTOR SHOW

AT the Turin Motor Show held early in November the following Standard-Triumph vehicles were exhibited on a stand arranged in conjunction with Cesac S.p.A., Standard-Triumph distributors for Italy.

Triumph Herald saloon, Triumph Herald coupé, Triumph Herald convertible, Triumph TR3 soft top, Triumph TR3 hard top, Vanguard Six saloon, Triumph Herald cut-away coupé.

This was the first overseas motor show at which the six cylinder Vanguard has been exhibited and considerable interest was shown by visitors to the show in all the Standard-Triumph vehicles.

On an adjacent stand was exhibited the Italia 2000. This car, which utilises the Triumph TR3 chassis and engine, is produced independently in Italy by Messrs. Ruffino S.p.A. It is built by Vignale and has been designed by Michelotti.



The 1960 Turin Motor Show was officially opened by the President of Italy, Mr. Giovanni Gronchi (fourth from left) who is seen here at the Standard-Triumph Stand with Dr. S. Ruffino (second from right), Managing Director of Cesac S.p.A., Standard-Triumph Distributors for Italy, and Mr. M. J. Tustin. Other members of this group are the Right Hon. Liguori (first on the left), who is a member of the Italian Parliament and Secretary to President Gronchi and also one of the Directors of Messrs. Ruffino S.p.A. Mr. Pastore (third from the left) is the Italian Minister of Transport. Mr. H. G. Webster was also present but not visible in picture.

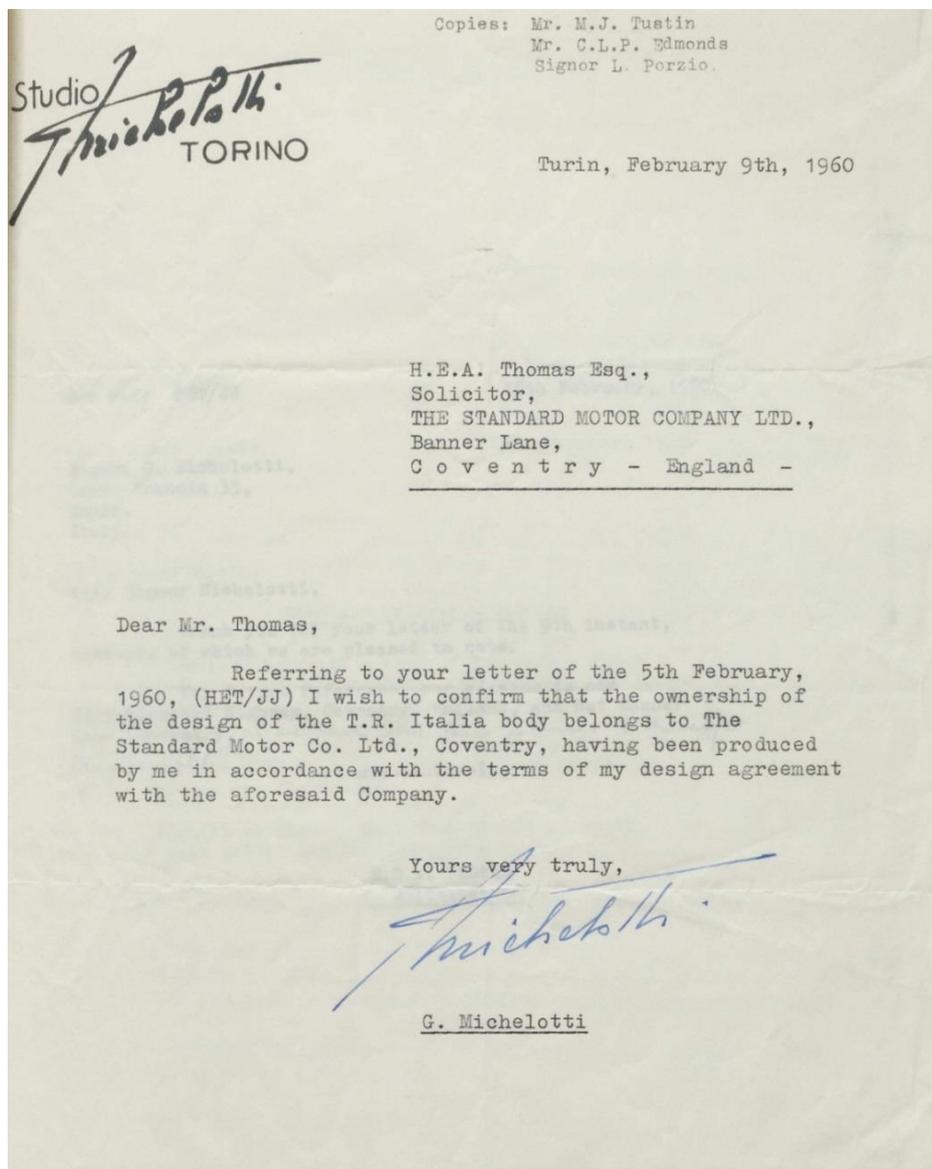


A cutaway Triumph Herald coupé was the centre of attraction on the Triumph stand at the opening of the Turin Motor Show.

Unfortunately, the beginning of the production was troublesome. Some of the first cars produced were refused due to water ingress in the cockpit, others had body defects causing air draughts, noise and vibrations. The most important mechanical issue was the presence of road handling problems. A frantic race against time started to find a solution to the problems. Thanks to the testing done by the test driver and race pilot Piero Drogo, the road handling problems were solved adopting a front stabilizer rod, more rigid shock absorbers and a rear seven-leaves leaf spring. But due to these modifications the TR3 chassis sent to Turin from Coventry had to be modified, causing the production times and costs to rise. New unexpected problems arose in 1960. The main Ruffino's reference person in Standard, Mr Edmonds, that had shared with him the project since the beginning, was unexpectedly called back to the UK and Ruffino found himself, out of the blue, without his main Company reference person in Italy. Also, since January 1960 the Standard management started objecting to the use of the *Triumph 2000* name for the *Italia*, and also the property of the body design was challenged, on the grounds of the contract existing between

Michelotti and the *Standard Motor Company*. In the same 1960 the financial difficulties of Standard brought the Standard Motor Company under the control of Leyland. As is often the case in these situations, whatever was done under the previous management is considered wrong by definition, and this caused new problems because the new Leyland management was not recognizing the commercial commitments of the previous management. All these issued caused a legal argument that ended in a trial, where Ruffino was assisted by prof. Ferri, that was then an eminent professor of International Law in faculty of Law of the University of Milan that

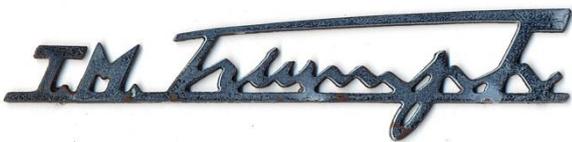
contradicted the Leyland case, confirming that Ruffino was the only owner of the *Italia* design.





A second case was taken to the court, against Carrozzeria Vignale, due to the defects of the cars built by Vignale in Turin. Ruffino found himself left alone to face this situation. He was however a man used to look always ahead, to the future, therefore he decided to go ahead, mainly because he was still in love with his project and still convinced of its soundness.

After the first cars made, the badge *Triumph 2000* was then substituted by a small *Italia 2000* script and on the side and a new badge *TM Triumph* was installed, to indicate that the chassis and the engine were of British origin. Near to this badge, the two signal flags typical of the Vignale production showing the letters “V” and “S” to indicate the Carrozzeria Vignale and the Standard Motor Company.



Having lost the commercial support from Coventry, Ruffino tried to build his own dealers network outside Italy, independent from the Triumph one.

A solution was found for France and Germany, but a distributorship was to be found for the USA, the richest and most interesting market for the *Italia*.

Ruffino identified a distributor in the Stutz Plaisted Imports of Salem, Massachusetts, an importer that in a short time started agreements with other distributors, but proved to be not up to the

expectations. Circumstances were made difficult because for American buyers no body spare part was available, and this was certainly not helping sales.

The result was that many *Italia* stayed unsold in the USA for a long time.

## ITALIA 2000 GRAN TURISMO

With a body designed by Michelotti, one of the worlds leading stylists and built by Alfredo Vignale, an artist in his line.

Ruffino S. p. A. of Napoli, Italy produces the most versatile G. T. of the times

The Italia 2000 Sports Coupe incorporates the world famous Triumph TR 3-A engine and chassis.

Contact your Foreign Car Dealer  
or Write Direct to —

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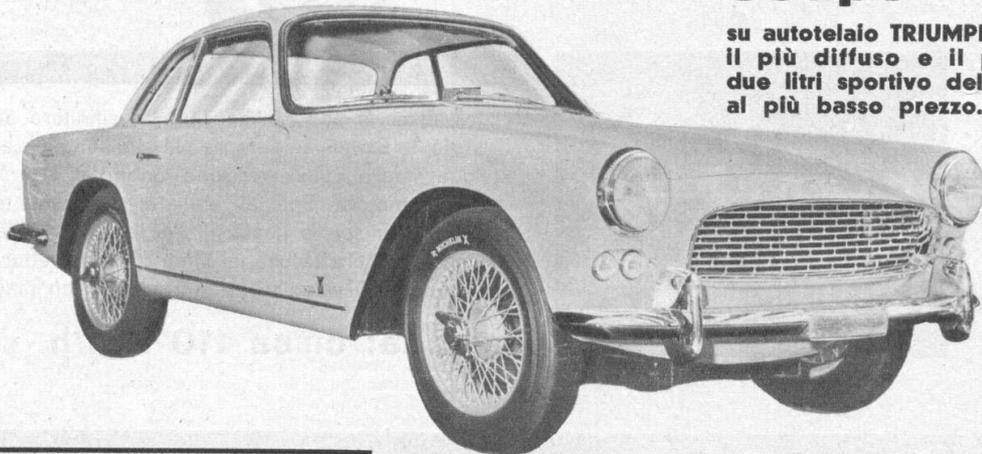


*Un gioiello della collaborazione  
industriale italo-britannica*

## ITALIA 2000 coupé

su autotelaio TRIUMPH TR3, è  
il più diffuso e il più bel  
due litri sportivo del mondo  
al più basso prezzo.

1991 cc.  
100 HP a 5000 giri  
200 Km/h.  
freni a disco  
costruita in Italia  
consumo: 9/10 l.  
per 100 Km.  
L. 2.500.000  
franco Torino



Continuano con successo le vendite degli altri modelli:  
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STANDARD VANGUARD III - berlina e giardiniera  
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*Il gioiello della collaborazione  
industriale Italo-Inglese*

*Il coupé*

## ITALIA 2000

*.....nel mondo!*



1991 cc. - 100 HP a 5000 giri - 200 Amp. - Freni a disco - Costruita  
in Italia - Consumo: 9/10 l. per 100 km. - L. 2.500.000 franco Torino

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sio, 10
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Flavia, 3
- TORINO - Autosalone Rubeo - Via  
P. Giuria, 54
- GENOVA - Automar s.r.l. - Piazza  
Merani, 1
- BOLOGNA - Autofiduciaria SAS -  
Via Malcontenti, 5
- VICENZA - CESAC S.p.A. - Viale  
della Pace, 108
- MESSINA - Siracusano & De Pasquale  
- Via Ugo Bassi, 44

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Italian artistry and British craftsmanship

# \* Italia 2000

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**\$3995<sup>00</sup>** includes all forwarding charges



Un gioiello della collaborazione industriale italo-britannica



## TRIUMPH ITALIA COUPÉ

L'ARTE DELLA CARROZZERIA ITALIANA AL SERVIZIO DELLA TECNICA SPORTIVA INGLESE

CONTINUANO CON SUCCESSO LE VENDITE DEGLI ALTRI MODELLI:  
 TRIUMPH TR5/A - SPIDER - TRIUMPH HERALD - BERLINA E COUPE'  
 STANDARD VANGUARD III - BERLINA E GIARDINIERA  
 STANDARD ENSIGN - BERLINA  
 STANDARD TEN COMPANION - GIARDINIERA  
 VEICOLI INDUSTRIALI ATLAS - CAMIONCINI E FURGONI

1991 cc.  
 100 HP a 5000 giri  
 190 Km/h.  
 freni a disco  
 costruita e montata in Italia  
 consumo: 9/10 litri per 100 Km.  
 L. 2.500.000 franco Torino  
 Agenti - Ricambi e assistenza in tutta Italia

CONCESSIONARIA ESCLUSIVA PER L'ITALIA: CESAC S.P.A. - Napoli - Calata Capodichino, 108



The launch of TR4 in July 1961 created additional difficulties. The new roadster was a competitor in the same brand, being cheaper, mechanically more modern and, differently from the *Italia 2000*, directly supported by the British brand. Having lost the support of the brand, and with the competition of the TR4, the dream of the *Italia 2000* came to an end.

The production of the Ruffino "Gran Turismo" continued for a few months, coming to a definitive stop in 1962, with many cars being still unsold. The original project to build 1000 cars vanished, and Triumph lost the finest Coupé ever wearing the Triumph badge.

## LA TRIUMPH "ITALIA 2000"

Motore 1991 cc.  
 100 HP a 5000 giri  
 Velocità 200 Km/h con Ovd.  
 Freni a disco  
 Costruita in Italia  
 Consumo 9/10 l. per 100 Km.  
 L. 2.500.000 franco Torino



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The monetary loss for Ruffino was huge, estimated in more than 1 billion Italian Lira (an enormous amount at the time). Salvatore however honoured all his commitments and never regret all his decisions; by character, Ruffino was not attached to material goods but to his ideas, even if sometimes they proved to be too advanced for the times.

*In this shot, taken after winter 1962, behind Alfredo Vignale resting on a Maserati Sebring, two unsold Italia 2000 still protected by wax can be glimpsed.*



Ruffino often mentioned that his close friend Mattei, to which he presented as a gift the second *Italia 2000* produced, discouraged him to enter into this business. Mattei considered Ruffino a person that always proved to have vision and good intuitions, and maybe in discouraging him from starting the “Progetto Italia” played a



role his concern to lose a valuable co-worker. Mattei, as many others, however missed the point that the “Progetto Italia” was not born from a rational business evaluation, but only from the heart of Ruffino.

In 1962 the adventure of *Italia 2000* ended, and also ended the idea to build a new car using the Herald chassis. Ruffino also decided to abandon the activity of Triumph import, as a consequence of the loss of trust in the relations with the new managers of Leyland that took immediately the opportunity to contact, in July 1962, Ducati Meccanica. Giuseppe Montano, head of Ducati and pragmatic and valuable manager, asked Ruffino to maintain the distributorship in Milano and Naples to ensure continuity to the business. In the same months, following the death of Enrico Mattei in a air crash (that was believed by many, included Ruffino to be a sabotage following an Italian political/economical plot) he left also Agip. In total 329 *Italia* were probably built, a small number compared with the 1000 envisaged in the original plan. Unfortunately there is no evidence to confirm the number of cars built. Research done at British Motor Industry Heritage

Trust Museum indicates that 297 chassis were exported to Italy as “rolling chassis”. It is certain that following the launch of the TR4, Triumph supplied a stock of TR3B chassis cleared through customs in Naples, however the number of these last chassis is not known, nor there is certainty that all of them were actually used to build the last examples of *Italia 2000*.



“Captains courageous”: Salvatore Ruffino and his *Italia*

Salvatore Ruffino was heading towards his fifties, ready to show once again his multifaceted nature. He had a unique personality, full of resources and with a strong temperament, able not to lose heart even in the most difficult moments, as for example when his *Italia* exported to the USA were blocked in the New York harbour for months, exposed to the weather, because they were not taken by the USA importer and could not be imported back to Italy. His passion for cars had not faded, and in mid sixties Ruffino accepted the proposal of the Italian importer of Mercedes, Autostar, to take charge of the Mercedes dealership in Campania (the Region of Naples). This activity went on until 1970, when he moved to Rome to start a collaboration in the real estate field with a Canadian company. Ruffino was a well respected and esteemed person, he was for years Chairman of the Campania section of the Order of the Holy Shrine, with the degree of "Cavaliere di Gran Croce", and in this role he had the honor to appoint, together with the Grand Master cardinal Eugène Tisserant, king Baldovino of Belgium as "Commendatore" of the Order.

This extraordinary person had not the satisfaction to see his project being so appreciated, at distance of years. He passed away in February 1994 but his creature, this car with a British heart and an Italian soul, makes his memory alive today not only among the car enthusiasts, but among all persons capable to appreciate the beauty.



## CREDITS

Thanks shall be given first of all to Dario Ruffino, son of Salvatore, that provided, with great openness and friendly attitude, information, memories and anecdotes. Without his help I would never have been able to write this story, that in its own small way wants to remember this great man that with his capacity, passion and tameless obstinacy had given us a real artwork.

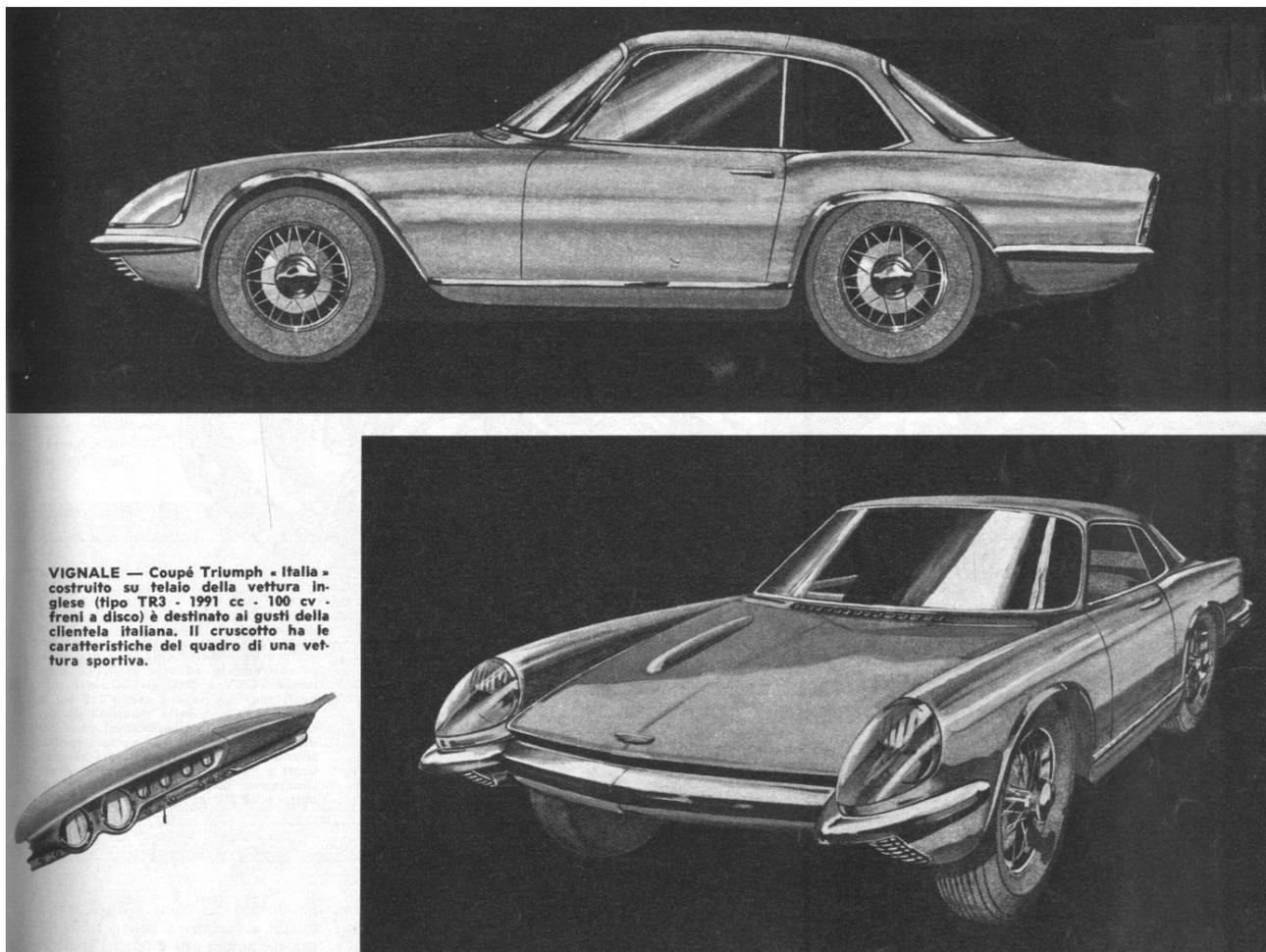
Thanks are also due to Alfredo Zanellato, nephew of Alfredo Vignale, for his help in identifying and dating some of the pictures.



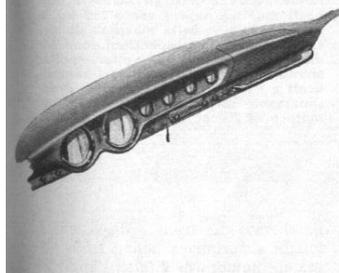
*Dario Ruffino and his Triumph TR3*

AUTO ITALIANA, OCTOBER 30<sup>TH</sup>, 1958

The preview of the prototype



VIGNALE — Coupé Triumph « Italia » costruito su telaio della vettura inglese (tipo TR3 - 1991 cc - 100 cv - freni a disco) è destinato ai gusti della clientela italiana. Il cruscotto ha le caratteristiche del quadro di una vettura sportiva.



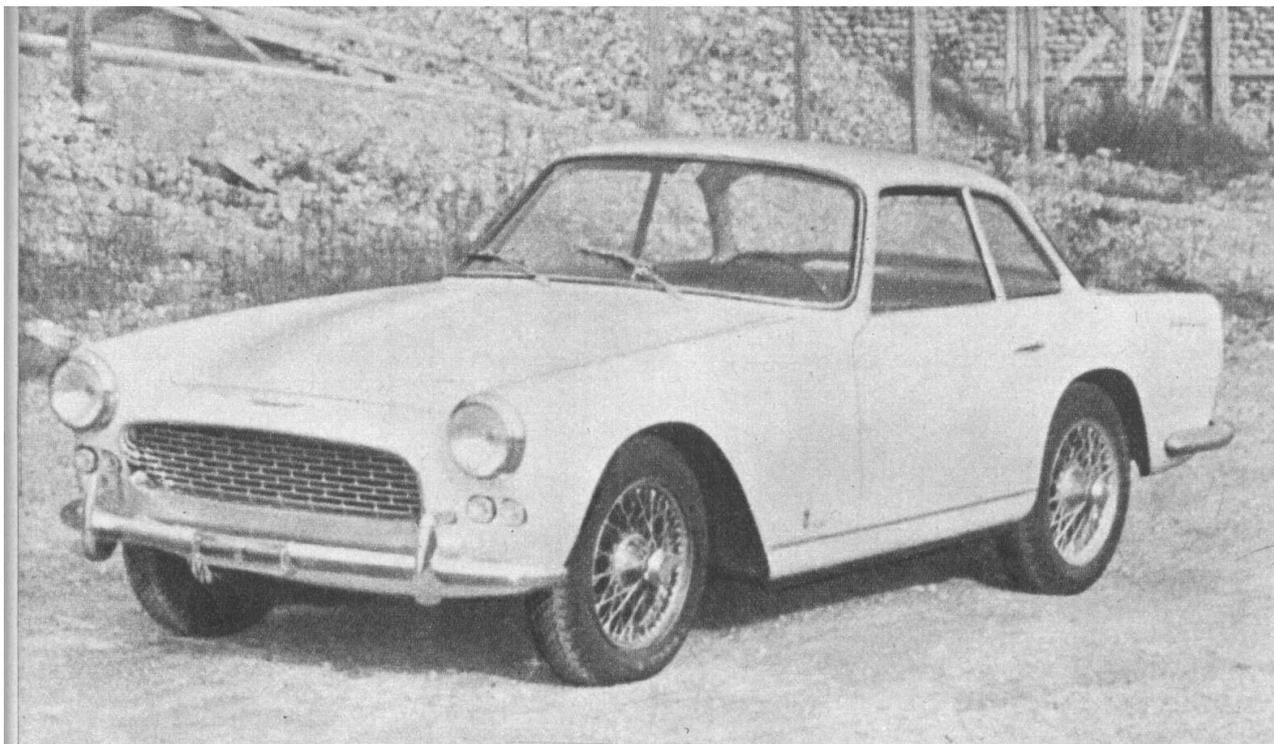
AUTO ITALIANA NOVEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>, 1958

Turin International Motor Show, 1958, the prototype at Stand of Vignale



“Captains courageous”: Salvatore Ruffino and his *Italia*

ROAD TEST FROM "QUATTORRUOTE", JANUARY 1960



La Triumph «Italia» ha un aspetto decisamente semplice e piacevole, secondo i canoni della migliore scuola dei carrozzieri italiani.

## LA TRIUMPH "ITALIA,,

Il conosciuto spider britannico Triumph «TR3» è stato carrozzato in Italia da Vignale che ne curerà la costruzione di una serie di circa mille esemplari. Per questa ragione ci interessava in modo particolare provarlo. Volevamo anche controllare se la nuova carrozzeria avesse alterato la distribuzione dei pesi e quindi il comportamento su strada: un breve giro sul circuito del Salone di Torino e sui rettifili intorno a Stupinigi soddisfece la nostra curiosità.

Piacevole l'estetica di questa vettura: rientra nei noti schemi della linea italiana. Buona l'abitabilità ai posti anteriori, benché lo sportello sacrifichi il movimento del braccio sinistro del pilota.

I posti di fortuna sono del tutto teorici: in effetti l'eventuale terzo passeggero che può sistemarsi dietro solo disponendosi trasversalmente, viene ad essere quasi schiacciato dal tetto, così da non poter resistere in quella posizione che per un breve tratto: quindi posteriormente è meglio sistemare il bagaglio, dato che il vano a ciò destinato è insufficiente.

La spalliera è orientabile con il vecchio sistema delle viti, regolabili, con notevole perdita di tempo, e solo da fermo: in simile vettura sarebbe stata opportuna la spalliera regolabile con comando diretto.

La guida è nel complesso agevole e comoda, specie per quanto riguarda la manovra del cambio.

I freni, a disco sulle ruote anteriori, e a tamburo sulle posteriori, sono ottimi e piacevolmente duri.

Variata completamente la tenuta di strada rispetto all'originale TR. 3. Qui si ha una tendenza sovrasterzante (non c'era nella versione inglese), che è comunque limitata e facilmente controllabile. Abbiamo voluto esasperare questo comportamento per controllare se esso intralciasse sensibilmente la guida, e questo inconveniente non si è verificato; tuttavia è bene assuefarsi alla vettura prima di richiederle le massime prestazioni.

Buona la visibilità, che i montanti, abbastanza arretrati, consentono su un largo settore.

Secondo noi un piccolo spostamento del pedale dell'acceleratore faciliterebbe la manovra del punta-tacco; e ancora osserviamo che il piede sinistro non ha un comodo e solido appoggio, perché nel punto che corrisponde alla posizione per esso fisiologicamente migliore incontra il deviatore luci.

Una caratteristica interessante di questa vettura consiste nel permettere, nonostante la sua tendenza sportiva, la ripresa anche con il motore a basso regime di giri. In IV è possibile viaggiare e riprendere, senza sussulti, dalla velocità di 30 km/h, corrispondente a circa 1000 giri di motore. Buona anche la ripresa: il chilometro da fermo è stato percorso in 33"5/10 di secondo e quello in presa diretta con partenza da 30 km/h, in 37 secondi.

Nel complesso, quindi, è una vettura di buone prestazioni, esteticamente riuscita. Poiché la vettura provata si può considerare ancora un prototipo, c'è da augurarsi che, nella versione definitiva, i lievi inconvenienti riscontrati vengano eliminati.

AUTOVETTURA		MECCANICA					NUMERO POSTI	PRESTAZIONI		PREZZI		VARIE			
MARCA E TIPO		N. cilindri	Cilindrata totale in cmc.	Potenza massima CV	Regime di potenza massima: giri/minuto	(1) Posizione motore		(1) Trazione	Velocità massima km/ora	Consumo per 100 km/lt.	Listino	Su strada	Termini medi di consegna: giorni	Potenza fiscale in Italia CV	Importo tassa di circolazione annuale lire
<b>TRIUMPH</b>															
« Italia » coupé (1) . . . . .		4	1991	100	5000	A	P	2 + 2	190	2.500.000	2.590.000	60-90	20	62.210	Con freni a disco
« TR 3 A » spider . . . . .		4	1991	100	5000	A	P	2 + 2	190	1.980.000	2.054.400	15	20	62.210	—
« Herald » berlina . . . . .		4	948	39	4500	A	P	4	120	1.535.000	1.596.050	15	12	17.500	—
« Herald » coupé . . . . .		4	948	51	6000	A	P	2 + 2	140	1.635.000	1.699.050	15	12	17.500	—

(1) Supplemento per « overdrive » L. 150.000.

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**STANDARD**



**TRIUMPH**

*presenta*

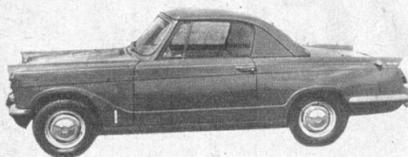
La sua produzione: Triumph TR 3/A - Triumph Herald berlina - Triumph Herald coupé - Triumph Herald convertible - Vanguard Saloon - Vanguard estate car - Ensign saloon - Standard ten estate car - Atlas Pick - up - Atlas van



Triumph TR 3/A



Triumph Herald berlina



Triumph Herald coupé



Triumph Herald convertible

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SERVIZIO ASSISTENZA  
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**RUFFINO s.p.a.**

**"L'ITALIA 2000 COUPÉ"... NEL MONDO**

Motore e telaio  
Triumph TR 3



1991 cc. - 100 HP a 5000 giri -  
200 Km/h con O.v.d. - Freni a disco

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BROCHURES

Brochure (in italian) of *Italia 2000*

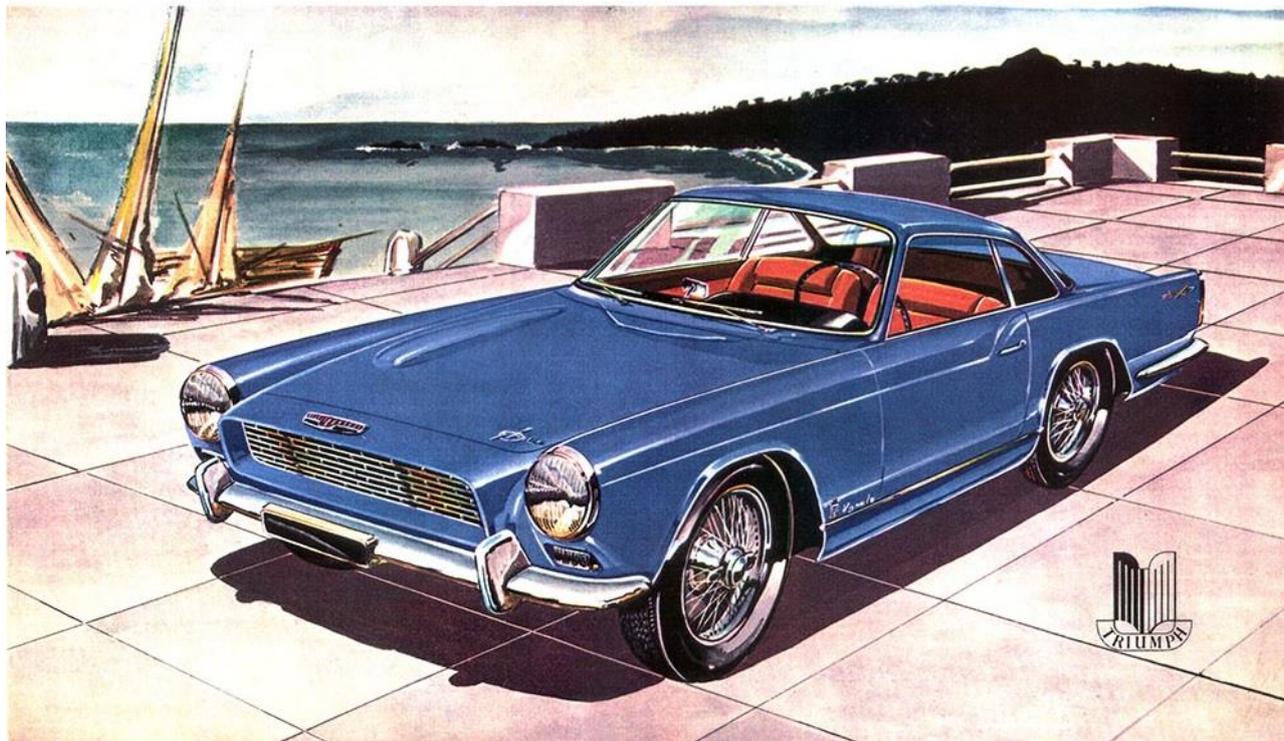
L'arte  
della carrozzeria  
italiana



la tecnica  
sportiva inglese

TRIUMPH

Italia 2000



## distinta eleganza della carrozzeria italiana

Il « TRIUMPH ITALIA » Coupé è la nuova vettura di Gran Turismo di classe internazionale. Vettura dalla robusta e collaudata meccanica del ben noto motore e telaio sportivo inglese TRIUMPH TR. 3. Vettura dalla distinta eleganza della carrozzeria italiana creata dallo stilista Giovanni Michelotti, a cui si debbono anche le vetture TRIUMPH HERALD nelle versioni coupé e berlina, e realizzata dalla Carrozzeria A. Vignale & C.

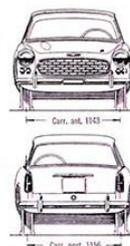
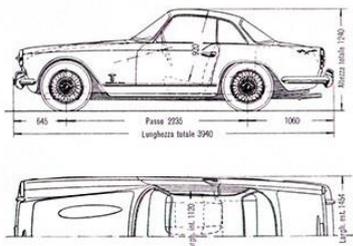
**Posti:** 2 persone + 2 occasionali.

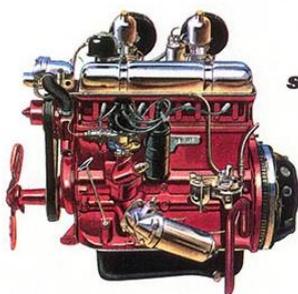
**Scocca:** in acciaio. Porte con cristalli scendenti a comando rapido. Lunotti laterali apribili assicurando una gradevole aerazione. Serrature silenziose. Modanature, paraurti e maniglie cromate.

**Interno vettura:** rivestimento in finta pelle (pelle a richiesta). Sedili individuali, avvolgenti, regolabili. Visiera para-sole tinteggiata, in perspex. Griglia autoparlante sul piano posteriore.

**Vettura climatizzata:** ventilazione e riscaldamento.

**Strumentazione sportiva:** tachimetro e contagiri di fronte al guidatore. Cruscotto completo di termometro acqua, manometro olio, amperometro, indicatore livello benzina, tutti con quadranti graduati a lettura diretta a scala numerica. Illuminazione indiretta degli strumenti. Spie: accensione, indicatore di direzione ed abbaglianti. Chiave d'accensione. Pomelli d'avviamento: starter, fari, illuminazione cruscotto, tergilcristallo, aerazione interno vettura. Lavacrystallo a spruzzo.





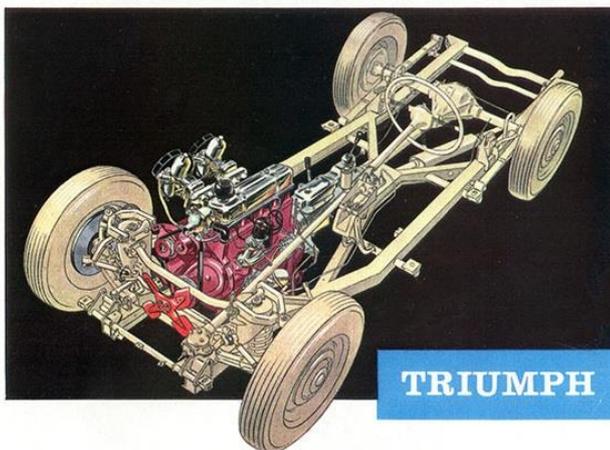
su **rigido e robusto** telaio inglese

**Potente ma sobrio motore:**

4 cilindri con distribuzione a valvole in testa. Cilindrata: 1991 cmc. Rapporto di compressione: 8,5. Potenza: 100 CV effettivi a 5000 giri/min. Alesaggio: 83 mm. Corsa: 92 mm. Canne cilindri riporate in umido nel monoblocco. Albero a gomiti su 3 supporti ed albero a camme a 4 supporti.

	Pres. diretta	3 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>a</sup>	1 <sup>a</sup>	Retromarcia
<b>Rapporti cambio</b>	1,00	1,325	2,00	3,38	4,35
Totale	3,7	4,9	7,4	12,5	16,1
<b>Moltiplicatore (a richiesta)</b>	3,03	4,02	6,07		

**Ponte posteriore:** con coppia ipoidale di riduzione 10/37.  
**Albero di trasmissione:** albero Hardy-Spicer con giunti cardanici alle due estremità. Molto corto, esente da vibrazioni.  
**Sospensione anteriore:** Sistema di sospensione indipendente, a bassa frequenza di oscillazioni. Bracci oscillanti inferiori e superiori a triangolo. Siedi del montante brevettati con teste sferiche. Molle ad elica. Ammortizzatori telescopici.  
**Sospensione posteriore:** con balestre semi-ellittiche a foglie larghe. Ammortizzatori a pistone.  
**Solleveramento con martinetto:** nel punto mediano laterale.  
**Ruote:** a raggi, con copri-mozzo cromato. Cerchi tipo 4J x 15".  
**Freni:** idraulici Girling. Anteriori: tipo a disco. Posteriori: con ganasce svolgenti ed avvolgenti. Tamburi in ghisa legata. Freno a mano collocato in posizione centrale agente sulle ganasce dei freni delle ruote posteriori.  
**Telaio:** a struttura molto rigida con longheroni ad « U » in acciaio stampato collegati mediante crociera centrale e traverse. Completamente inossidabile.  
**Sterzo:** tipo a rullo e vite perpetua. Fortemente demoltiplicato.  
**Volante:** a tre raggi tipo elastico.  
**Impianto elettrico:** a 12 Volt, Batteria 51 Amp./ora, collocata sotto il cofano.



**TRIUMPH**

**TRIUMPH**

*Italia 2000*

**180** km/ora

**Dimensioni generali:** Passo 2235 mm. - Carreggiata: anteriore 1143 mm., posteriore 1156 mm. - Altezza da terra: 150 mm. - Raggio di volta: 5,3 m. - Dimensioni fuori tutto: lunghezza mm. 3940, larghezza mm. 1454, altezza (scarica) mm. 1240.

**Vano bagagli:** Dimensioni d'apertura: larghezza 1000 mm., lunghezza 500 mm.

**Gomme:** Michelin « X » od equivalenti - dimensioni: 155-15".

**Capacità:** serbatoio carburante: circa 52 litri, coppa motore: 6,25 litri, cambio di velocità: 0,85 litri - ponte posteriore: 0,85 litri, impianto raffreddamento: 7,5 litri.

**Prestazioni:** Motore: Potenza massima 100 CV effettivi a 5.000 giri/1'. Coppia massima: 16,24 Kgm a 3.000 giri/1'. (Equivalente ad una pressione media effettiva di 10,2 Kg/cm<sup>2</sup>) - Velocità stantuffo: 869 metri/1" a 4.800 giri/1'. (Equivalente ad una velocità di 180 Km. in presa diretta) - Velocità massima: in presa diretta, 180 Km/ora.

**Consumi:** (ad alta velocità su strada libera): Carburante 9-11 litri per 100 Km. - Olio 1 litro ogni 1.100 Km.

**Frenatura:** distanza d'arresto a 48 Km./ora: 9 metri.

**Accelerazione:** (con due persone a bordo): Presa diretta: 32-64 km/ora: 9 secondi - 48-80 km/ora: 9 secondi - Cambio marce: 0-80 km/ora: 8 secondi - 0-96 km/ora: 12 secondi - da fermo 0-400 metri: 18 secondi.

**Accessori a richiesta:** (Prezzo extra): Sterzo regolabile - Moltiplicatore (overdrive) - Interno pelle - Gomme fascie bianche - Gomme Dunlop ad alta velocità - Ammortizzatori posteriori per uso gara - Molle anteriori per uso gara - Coppia motore in alluminio - Radio.

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**STANDARD TRIUMPH ITALIANA**

SEDE: NAPOLI - CALATA CAPODICHINO 108 — AGENZIA: TORINO - CORSO FRANCIA 4<sup>bis</sup>

ma ....  
con freni a disco

Velocità e Sicurezza. Le ruote anteriori della Triumph Italia, come già quelle della Triumph TR, 3 sono provviste di freni a disco. Frenata sicura e potente, pulizia e regolazione automatica, rapidissima sostituzione degli elementi di frizione.

Il freno a disco è il freno che non teme più l'acqua. Guidate con sicurezza e ad alta velocità con la Triumph Italia!



FOTO: LEO TOMARONE - TORINO (S.M.P.)

## Brochure of the American Importer Stutz Plaisted Imports

**ITALIA 2000 coupé** **118 m. p. h.**  
with ovd.

The chassis of the ITALIA 2000 is the famous TR2/A sports model chassis, acclaimed as the finest in the world to-day.

The TRIUMPH engine, renowned for its exceptional power and performance has the following characteristics:

four cylinder overhead valve unit of 1991 cc. (121.5 cu.in.). The compression ratio is 8.5-1, producing 100 B.H.P. at 5000 R.P.M. Bore 83 mm. (3.268"), Stroke 92mm (3.622") Petrol consumption up to 32-35 M.P.G. 11.9 (litres per 100 Km.) under average road conditions. Cylinder sleeves replaceable and fitted in direct contact with cooling water. Three bearing crankshaft with four bearing hypoxine camshaft.

**Lockage boot:**  
Width: 3 ft. 2 inch.  
Length: 1 ft. 8 inch.  
Tyres: Size 155 - 15"  
Capacities: full tank 12 1/2 gals. engine sump, 11 pts.  
Oil sump 1 1/2 pts.  
Rear Axle 1 1/2 pts.  
Cooling system 13 pts.

**Engine:** Maximum b.h.p. 100 at 5000 r.p.m. Maximum torque 1410 lb.in. at 2000 r.p.m. Equivalent to 145 lb/ton in. S.M.S.P.  
**Piston Speed:** 2850 ft/min. at 4800 r.p.m. (This is equivalent to 100 m.p.h. in top gear.)  
**Maximum Speed (Touring trim):** Top gear, 118 m.p.h. 195 Km.p.h.  
**Consumption:** fuel (high speed touring) Up to 35 m.p.g. Oil: 3000 m.p.g.  
**Braking:** 39 m.p.h. Stopping distance 30 ft.

Optional items at extra cost. - Leather upholstery. Overdrive. Adjustable steering. Wire wheels. White wall tyres. All the above data are only indicative.

**Conditions of Sale:**  
The goods manufactured by RUFFINO S.p.A. are supplied with an express warranty which excludes all warranties, conditions and liabilities, whatsoever implied by Common Law, Statute and otherwise. Every precaution has been taken to ensure accuracy, but the Company accepts no liability for errors or omissions.

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GRAN TURISMO

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by STUTZ PLAISTED

**ITALIA 2000 coupé**



Ruffino S.p.A. presents the ITALIA 2000 COUPE', a new Gran Turismo car of international class.

Designed by Michelotti, one of the world's leading stylists and built by Alfredo Vignale an artist in his line, the ITALIA 2000 COUPE' incorporates the world famous chassis and engine of the TRIUMPH TR2/A.

From the moment of its appearance on the international scene, the expert, the sports car enthusiast and the general public have acclaimed this brilliant match between incomparability of line and outstanding performance. Italian artistry and British craftsmanship have come together and produced this new, superlative ITALIA 2000 COUPE'.

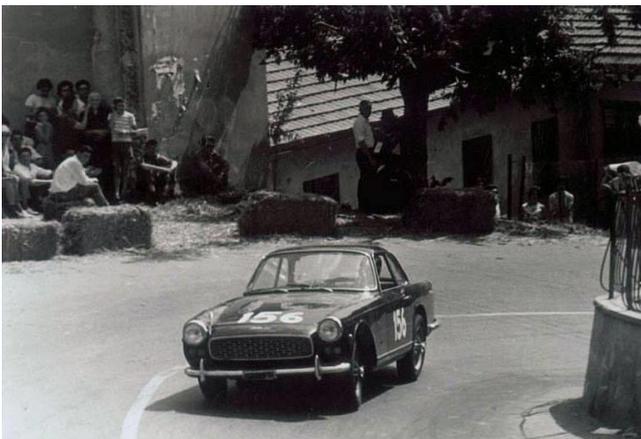
ITALIAN ARTISTRY



ITALIA 2000 GRAN TURISMO

## ITALIA AND RACING

*Italia* was a sport car, but firstly an elegant car: she was not born to race, this was not Ruffino's idea. *Italia* was a car aiming at the beauty, more to show up than to race. There are however exceptions, as this participation to the hill climb Sarezzo - Lumezzane on 3 September 1961: driver was Marsilio Bonomi that ended the race 38<sup>th</sup>.



## MODELS

Models of the *Italia 2000* are not many, but among those few, some are real masterpieces

### Raymond Daffaure *Italia 2000*

Raymond Daffaure was an artisan working in Marmande, in South-West France, and is considered to be probably one of the greatest model maker ever. All his fascinating models were totally hand-made starting from a single wood block. Daffaure was able to sculpture about 40 models per month, and his activity lasted for about 20 years. The model of Ferrari GTO is the one build in higher number, approx 200 examples, while the other models have been built in 2 – 3 copies each. If *Italia 2000* is today a rare car, the Daffaure model is even rarer!



Derrez Model *Italia 2000* (NL)

Max Derrez is a Dutch artisan specialised in 1/43 Triumph car models. Max started his activity 20 years ago, modifying and personalising existing models.

A turning point on his activity happened when a magazine published an article illustrating one of his modifications, representing a Triumph TS20.



This news was not missed to Jan Miedema, owner of Rialto, that proposed him a cooperation to produce a series of 1/43 resin Triumph models; since then, Max is in charge for choosing the models and their variations, designing and producing the moulds, painting and assembling. The final assembly is handmade and needs one full working days.

Not only Max decided to reproduce the *Italia 2000*, but he also decide to create a cabriolet version, never existed in the reality; this fine model confirms that should a cabriolet version had been produced, she would have been as much desirable as the closed roof version.

The quality of the models is very high, and the smallest details are perfectly replicated. It is also possible to ask Max a model personalised in the colour or plate number to fit each own Triumph. A visit to his web site is a pleasure for every car enthusiast, not only the Triumph ones.

<http://www.derrezmodels.nl/home.php>





## Matrix Mode *Italia 2000*

The Dutch firm Matrix Model produced a limited number of 1/43 *Italia 2000* resin model.

The part code is MX41902-011 and the model is available only in grey colour.

