

editorial license

AUTO JOURNALISTS LOVE TO CRITICIZE CARMAKERS' WARES. HERE'S WHAT THEY CAME UP WITH THEMSELVES.



ENVISION THIS:

You're the editor of *Motor Trend*. And, naturally, you have lots of friends in automotive journalism. You see them at industry events, major auto shows, and press launches of important new vehicles, typically at exotic locations here in the U.S. and overseas. Now imagine inviting those friends to a bar after the first day of the New York auto show in April with these words: "Let's design a dream car." You'll build a driveable version in less than six months, in time to be unveiled on a turntable in Los Angeles in November.

Sound improbable? Of course. But, believe it or not, this scenario transpired 45 years ago. Instead of New York, it was in London, England. The publication was The Daily Telegraph Magazine, and the editor was John Anstey. The car was a collaboration among auto journalists, Anstey, Jaguar, and the design house of Bertone, and was known as the 1967 Jaguar Bertone Pirana Coupe. This is that car's improbable story.

The Daily Telegraph Magazine was a newcomer in the competitive U.K. weekend magazine scene. The Daily Telegraph newspaper already had a reputation for doing things in a big way. In its coverage of the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill in 1965, it scooped its competitors in the predigital era by delivering complete color magazine coverage just a day after Churchill's burial. To do so, Anstey had film flown to West Germany, where millions of copies could be printed—because it promised the best quality—and had the finished



product flown back to the U.K. just in time to be inserted into Sunday's edition, a week ahead of his national competitors.

In March 1967, the increasingly powerful Anstey cooked up another wild scheme to promote his weekend magazine, gathering a group of motoring writers at that year's Geneva motor show and asking them, in effect, "If you could build your dream car, what would it be?" The group of motoring scribes examined what was then the state-of-the-art in automotive design, culling elements from Aston Martin, Ferrari, Jaguar, Lamborghini, Lotus, and Maserati to come up with their ideal 2+2 Grand Touring coupe. But this was no mere pipe dream. After pushing the magazine's senior management, Anstey actually obtained the budget to push the "dream coupe" vision forward. What's more, he had the audacity to promise delivery of an actual car in just six months.

Armed with an unbelievable budget of 20,000 GBP (nearly \$371,000 in today's dollars) provided by The Daily Telegraph's bean counters, Anstey formed an internal design group—himself, picture editor Alexander Low, and art director Geoffrey Axbey—to refine the auto writers' broad strokes. Less than a month later, in mid-April, the trio had finalized the design. The brief for what would be known as the Telegraph Car depicted a luxury Grand Touring two-seat coupe. It would be built mostly with off-the-shelf components that were available or would be in the near future, and it would be fully driveable. According to Anstey, this was, "a fast and comfortable coupe with plenty of leg-, head-, and elbowroom and a modern heating and air-conditioning system of such advanced design and proven efficiency that we could cruise quietly at 100 mph or more—on Continental motorways of course—with the windows closed."



Caption Caption

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ASK THE MAN WHO OWNS ONE

ED SUPERFON has had a lifelong love affair with cars. Growing up in Michigan, he started drag racing his 335-hp 1959 Chevy Impala coupe around the streets of Detroit in 1960. “One day, I went along with a friend to get his Jaguar E-Type serviced across the river in Canada at Windsor Motors. They were taking delivery of a 1969 Lotus Europa when we arrived. I fell in love, bought it, and thus began my affair with odd and exotic cars.” Other stops along the way included Phoenix, Arizona, where in 1972 he hooked up with the 20-something Harley Cluxton as he opened a new Ferrari dealership called Grand Touring Cars.

WHY I LIKE IT “Tktktk tktk tkt kt kt kt kt tk tk tk tktktkt tk tk tk tkt kt tk tk tk tk tktktkt tk tk tktktkt tk kt kt tkt t tktktktkt tktkt tktkt tktkt.”

WHY IT’S COLLECTIBLE: One-off Bertone design, penned by Gandini, Lamborghini’s transition car from the concept Marzal to the production Espada—need we say more? **RESTORING/MAINTAINING:** The Jaguar drivetrain is robust and parts are generally available. The air-conditioning system is as one-off as the car it’s installed in. Bodywork is bespoke, so it’s not advisable to get in a fender-bender, but, like anything, it can be fixed. **BEWARE:** As in any purchase of any collector car, pay attention to the paperwork. In this case, the car has been extensively documented, with a clear paperwork trail. And there’s no doubt this is the one and only Earls Court idea show car commissioned by John Anstey at The Daily Telegram. After all, what would be the sense of cloning a car that most people have never heard of?

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The next step was to select an engine and chassis, and the three-man Telegraph team (the original journalists by now had scattered to the wind) agreed the logical choice was the Jaguar E-Type because of its well-documented performance and well-demonstrated reliability. But Anstey wanted more, and specified the use of wide-rim racing wheels—reported to have come from two different Jaguar D-Type race cars in the U.S. and Australia—that would extend the front and rear track. To ensure a spacious cockpit, the team opted for the E-Type’s 2+2 version along with the 4.2-liter straight six. And surprisingly, Jaguar co-founder Sir William Lyons enthusiastically backed the project, agreeing to sell Anstey an E-Type 2+2 chassis.

Who would build the car, and build it fast enough so that it could be unveiled at the Earls Court Motor Show in October? Anstey approached Nuccio Bertone of Carrozzeria Bertone in Turin, Italy. Like Lyons, Bertone got on board the train, and after the exchange of just two letters each way between London and Turin, an agreement was reached to build the car. Bertone took it upon himself to name the car Piranha, and, indeed, that’s what appears on the fender script. The spelling was later changed to Pirana because Piranha was already in use.

If the car looks familiar, it might be because its stylist, Marcello Gandini, already well known for his work on the Lamborghini Miura, was also responsible for the Lamborghini Marzal concept car that had just been introduced at the 1967 Geneva auto show. The Marzal, besides being an inspiration for the Pirana, would serve as a precursor for the bodywork on the Lamborghini Espada 2+2, which would be introduced the following year and enjoy a 10-year production run over three series. (The Espada itself spawned a one-off, a four-door version called the Faena, at the 1978 Turin auto show, which was styled by Pietro Frua.)

The Earls Court show was now just five months away, and Carrozzeria Bertone went to work to turn the idea car into a reality. With the overall package determined, the process moved forward with a clay model, which led to a set of full-size drawings from which a full-sized mock-up was constructed in wood and clay to refine critical surface details. From this buck, the craftsmen at Carrozzeria Bertone hammered out a monocoque by hand, fashioned from a combination of steel and alloy panels. What would become the Pirana took shape in mere weeks.

Anstey made several trips to Turin to personally supervise the project. These meetings included Bertone, Gandini, Bertone’s commercial manager Enzo Prearo, Jaguar’s Bob Berry, and Brian Bishop from Smiths Industries. Bishop, assistant chief engineer for special products at Smiths, also made several trips to Turin to supervise the project. Smiths was responsible for the development of the heating and air-conditioning system, in which all air enters the cabin through vents behind the rear windows and is cooled and dehumidified. If warm air is needed, the air travels through a heater box behind the rear seat, then flows forward along ducts built into the doorsills. If cool air is desired, it flows through a perforated distributor mounted in the cockpit roof.

The system’s condenser and compressor are mounted up front in the engine compartment, with evaporators in the rear. At the time of the Pirana’s construction, Bishop said, “This is a new idea. Warm air comes up from the bottom, and cold air comes down from the roof.” It never caught on.

In addition to the gauges, a Smiths specialty, the company contributed the Pirana’s multimedia system. The Pirana features an in-dash AM/FM radio with a cassette player/recorder in the center console between the seats. At a time when Steve Jobs was a boy growing up in Silicon Valley, this was state-of-the-art, in-car multimedia, and it was one of the first mobile applications of the then-new Philips cassette. The rest of the interior design, given its Bertone origins, is much more Italian than British, a clear upgrade from the Pirana’s E-Type origins. In the driver’s seat, looking over the instrumentation, you’d think you were in a Ferrari 330GTC or Lamborghini 400 GT 2+2. Compared with an Aston Martin DB6 or the then-new DBS, the Pirana’s cockpit is far more luxurious.

Its cabin is trimmed in bespoke materials, including leather from Connolly Brothers. Other suppliers included Triplex, which supplied the special Sundym



1967 JAGUAR
BERTONE PIRANA

SPECIFICATIONS

Engine 257.5 -cu-in/4235cc DOHC I-6, 3x1-bbl SU HD8 carburetor **Power and torque** (SAE gross) 265 hp @ 5400 rpm, 284 lb-ft @ 4000 rpm **Drivetrain** 3-speed automatic, RWD **Suspension** front: control arms, torsion bars, anti-roll bar; rear: control arm and half-shaft, coil springs, anti-roll bar **Brakes** front: vented disc, rear: inboard vented disc **Dimensions** L: 183.6 in, W: 104.7 in, H: 48.0 in **Weight** 6056 lb **Performance** 0-60 mph 8.0 sec, quarter-mile 15.8 sec @ 93 mph **Price when new** 20,000 GBP (about \$55,000; \$371,000 adjusted for inflation)

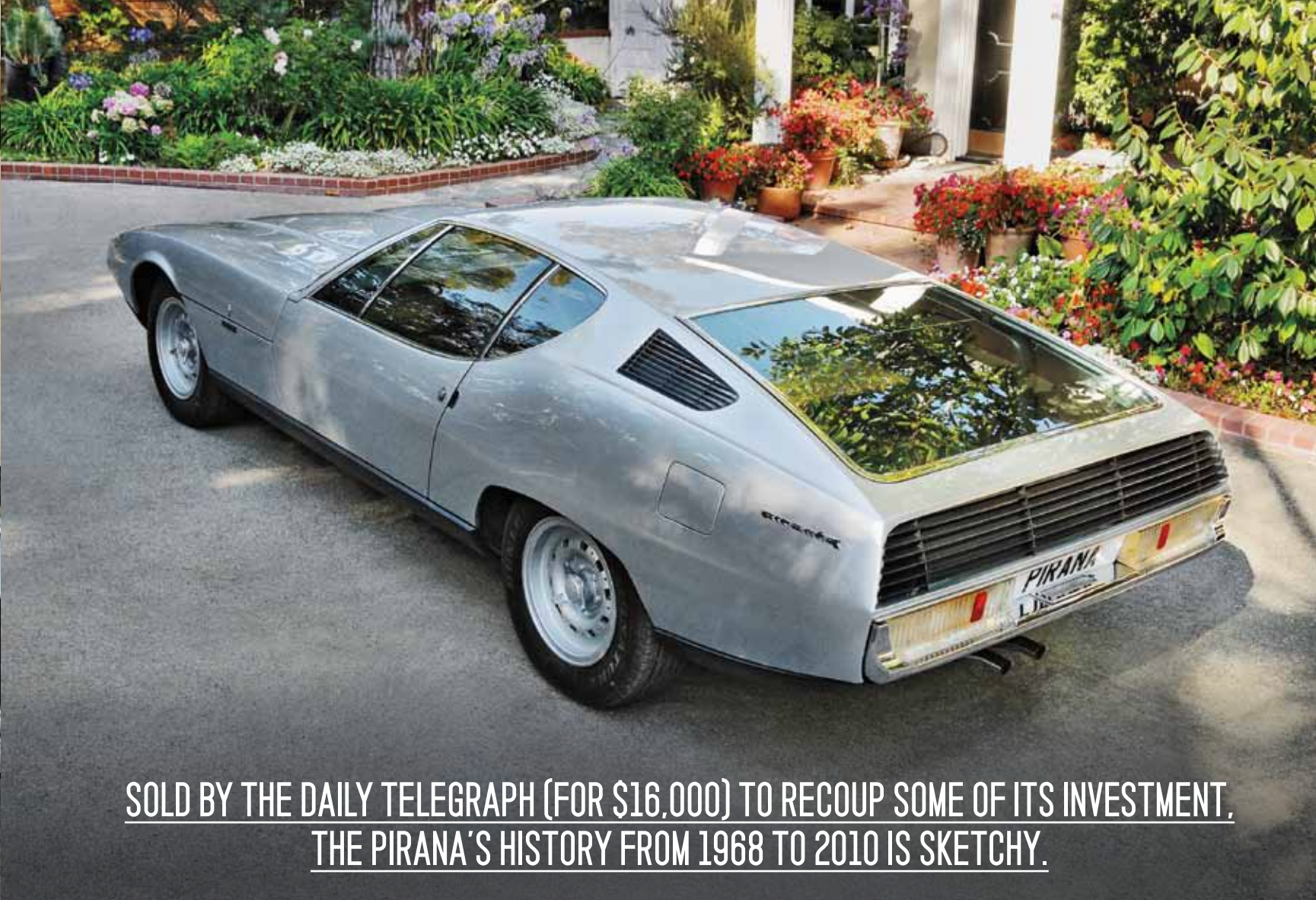


EXPECT TO PAY: Given its one-off status, this one is hard to peg. Obviously the \$1.7 million price that the Lamborghini Marzal sold for at 2011's RM Villa d'Este event is the starting point for any negotiations. **JOIN THE CLUB:** Superfon's own website dedicated to the car (jaguarpirana.com) and whether you'll be welcomed with open arms by the the Jaguar E-Type Club (e-typeclub.com) is open to question.

OUR TAKE

NOW: Tktktk tktk tkk tkt kt kt ktk tk tk tk ktktktk tk tk tk ktktk tk tk tk ktktktk tk kt kt tkk t tkttktktk tktkt ktktk ktktktkk tkt tk ktktktk ktktk ktktk tktkt tkttktktktktk ktk tkttktktktk tktk tkt k tktk. **THEN:** Tktktk tktk tkk tkt kt kt ktk tk tk tk ktktktk tk tk ktktk tk tk tk tkttktk tk kt kt tkk t tkttktktk tktkt ktktk ktktktkk tkt tk ktktktk ktktk ktktk ktktk tktkt tkttktktktktk ktk ktktktktktk tktk tkt k tktk tktk tk t ktktk tkt kt kt t k tktk tktk.

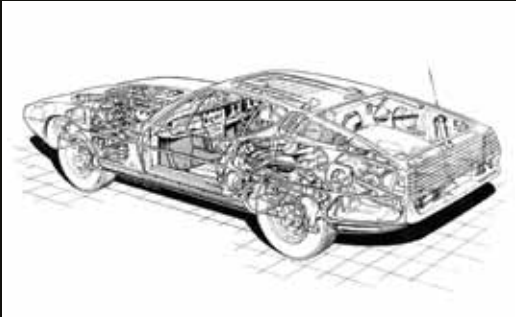
glass for the windscreen and rear glass. Sundym featured a thick vinyl interlayer in the laminated glass that increased flexibility and resistance to penetration. Heating element grids of thin wires were built into the interlayer of the windshield and rear glass to prevent condensation forming on the inside of the laminate. The rear window was hinged at the top to provide access to the luggage space. Think of Sundym as the '60s precursor of today's acoustic glass. Because the horizontal rear glass obstructed the view behind, Bertone installed a louvered rear panel, which he called a "viewing aperture." To provide ventilation to the cabin, the glass behind the panel could be lowered out of sight via an electric motor. The Pirana was fitted with Britax seatbelts with reminder lamps and audible warnings. There's also a speed-limit warning system with over-limit alarms. Being a prototype, the Pirana was 300 pounds heavier than the E-Type, which resulted in a small performance loss. Still, with its power-to-weight ratio, the Pirana would feature a top speed of 145 mph, competitive with existing 2+2s from Aston Martin, Ferrari, Lamborghini, and Maserati. The Pirana was completed on deadline and was a certifiable hit of the 1967 Earls Court Motor Show, documented by a British Pathe newsreel (youtube.com/watch?v=5gOfDXh9Eqk) and by the enthusiast motoring publications of the day. Following its successful unveiling at Earls Court, the Pirana appeared in Turin in 1967 and in New York and Montreal in 1968. After that, it virtually disappeared from view. Sold by The Daily Telegraph (for \$16,000) to recoup some of its investment, the Pirana's history from 1968 to 2010 is sketchy. It seems it was owned by a British national who had a second home in Palm Springs. Apparently around 1980, the car was painted a shade of British Racing Green, a color not well-suited to its angular lines. In fall 2010, the Pirana surfaced in an advertisement for sale on eBay with a starting price of \$150,000. This is where current owner Ed Superfon, co-founder of the VIP Toy Store in Los Angeles, bought the car. (He won't divulge the final sales price.)



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STYLING EVOLUTION OF THE JAGUAR BERTONE PIRANA COUPE

The first thing that comes to mind when seeing the Jaguar Bertone Pirana Coupe is, "I've seen that look before." The Pirana bears more than a passing resemblance to the 1968-1980 Lamborghini Espada, another car penned by Marcello Gandini. But if one looks at the Pirana in the context of its time, it's reality the transition step between two Gandini-designed Lamborghinis, the Espada and the Marzal, which premiered at the 1967 Geneva auto show. It was the Marzal that set in motion John Anstey's quest to design and build the Pirana as The Daily Telegraph Magazine's idea car. The Marzal's packaging was unique in that Gandini designed a 2+2 GT with half of the Miura's V-12 set transversely behind the back seat. The 2.0-liter, 175-hp inline-six makes a great deal of sense when you think about it (no bank of cylinders nestled up against the bulkhead separating the interior from the engine compartment), much more than any V-engine design.



As a concept, the most interesting design element was its gullwing doors, which featured almost 50 square feet of glass glazing. Strip away the doors and the unusual glazing scheme, and the proportions and especially the sheetmetal forward of the A-pillars clearly influenced both the Pirana and Espada that followed. A close look at the sheetmetal aft of the doors shows obvious Miura influences. Over the years, like the Pirana, the Marzal kept a relatively low profile. One appearance was soon after the 1967 Geneva show, when it served as the pace car for the 1967 Monaco Grand Prix, driven by Princess Grace and Prince Rainier. It next appeared at the 1996 Concorso Italiano, then returned to the Bertone Design Study Museum in Italy. In 2011, it, along with several other Bertone concepts, was offered for sale at the Villa d'Este by RM Auctions. The Marzal moved on to a new owner for 1.3 million Euros.



Lamborghinis, Espada (above) and glazed Marzal



MOTOR TREND ARCHIVE

Knowing the Pirana's provenance, Superfon had the BRG paint stripped and replaced in a shade of silver metallic that very closely approximates the 1967 Earls Court premiere hue. He replaced the front hides and refurbished all mechanical details—lights, wipers, switches, and the imaginative HVAC that cools down the cockpit as much as can be expected from a 45-year-old system. The Pirana was displayed publicly at the 2012 Concorso Italiano, the first time in almost 45 years. Superfon allowed me to drive the car after its return from Monterey. Driving it on secluded two-lane roads in the hills above Los Angeles, I appreciated the uniqueness of this historic one-off concept. The driving position is typically Italian, classic arms-out, as in a then-contemporary Ferrari or Lamborghini. The first surprise is the three-speed automatic, supplied by Borg-Warner and used on a wide variety of cars from the era. On twisty canyon roads, the Pirana is tight with few rattles, not all that surprising given that the Pirana's odometer registers just over 16,000 miles. Superfon assumes this to be correct based on his research of the car's history. Over the past 15 years, I've driven more than a dozen million-dollar manufacturer concept cars, starting in 1998 with the Jeep Jeepster. I can say without equivocation, the Jaguar Bertone Pirana Coupe drives as well as any and better than most. I'd have no hesitation in getting behind the wheel and driving it from coast to coast or, say, from London to Rome. That would be the kind of grand adventure John Anstey had in mind 45 years ago when he envisioned building this truly unique GT—and, of course, boosting his newspaper's reputation. ♦