

1964 Griffith Series 200

The original Griffiths have an awe-inspiring or frightening power-to-weight ratio, depending on how you view it, and their looks are described as attractive, or quirky. Powered by a small-block 289-ci Ford engine, these tiny monsters weighed in at 500 lb less than a 289 Cobra, which was Jack Griffith's target.

With a miniscule 85.5-inch wheelbase, you needed to make certain of two things before you stuffed yourself into one: Don't do anything stupid behind the wheel, and have your life insurance paid up in case you do.

Good things come in small packages. That saying holds true for two 1:43-scale gems from Automodello, a new model manufacturer based in the U.S. The models were engineered and designed Stateside as well, though the actual pieces are produced in Asia. The two shown here are brand-new pre-production samples. Production models should be available by late March. The Griffith 200 is the first in the new range, and I'd say the company is off to a great start; I'm looking forward to the next release.

Although a few other companies have made models of the Griffith 200 before, none were terribly accurate. But the powers that be at Automodello have put a great deal of thought and effort into their Griffith models. They are something that both Jack and Automodello can be proud of. This model also happens to be the first and only replica officially endorsed by Jack Griffith.

Spend a little time with one of these models and you'll appreciate what's gone into it. Body shape perfectly captures the feel of the real auto, and numerous photo-etched details are applied, including two features I'm especially pleased with.

The wire wheels are oh-so delicate and look just right. The comprehensively detailed light tan interior has a correct three-spoke steering wheel with an expertly scaled thin rim. The dash is fully detailed, as are the door panels with separate door handles and window cranks which are slightly oversized, though you'd have to stare hard to realize it. Looking up at the hand-painted headliner you'll see two sun visors. The color choices are refreshing and perfectly suited to the body shape.

Each model comes mounted in a display case, along with a description card about the real car. These are limited-edition, hand-built models, though not extraordinarily so. The standard edition in Regal Red has a run of 262 pieces priced at \$95, and the Opalescent Silver Blue model is from the "Founders Edition," limited to 192 numbered pieces, each accompanied by a certificate personally signed by Jack Griffith. Those are priced at \$195. And by the way, 192 is the exact number of Griffith Series 200 cars Jack produced....

Available from Automodello: 847.274.9645.

Model Details

Production Date:

2010

Quantity:

454 combined, in two editions

SCM Five-Star Rating:

Overall Quality: ★★★★★

Authenticity: ★★★★★

Overall Value: ★★★★★

Web: www.automodello.com



Alfa Romeo Montreal: The Dream Car That Came True

By Bruce Taylor, Veloce, 208 pages, \$50.37, Amazon

There used to be an entire quarter-long seminar in the UCLA film school on "Citizen Kane." It was a classic dissected, with detailed looks at the many groundbreaking achievements in Orson Welles's masterpiece, from story structure to the use of ceilings on sets, to Gregg Toland's cinematographic innovations.

Last month I reviewed the motorbook equivalent to that seminar, Colin Comer's equally detailed and loving look at the cars from Carroll Shelby.

This month, I have to say, before us is the motorbook equivalent of a seminar on "Porky's II: The Next Day."

Now there is no denying author Bruce Taylor's love for the Alfa Romeo Montreal, that Miura wannabe showcased first at Expo '67 in Montreal and finally in production from 1971 to '75.

There isn't even a quibble that the Montreal, loathed by one and all at introduction, has gone through a bit of Jimmy Carter-like reappraisal. Some in the motoring press have even come to like it.

But an entire book? On the Montreal?

The author compares the Montreal to the Lamborghini Miura, also designed at the same time at Bertone by 27-year-old Marcello Gandini. Only someone blinded by love would link the real beauty with her aesthetically challenged ugly sister. Oddly proportioned, sitting too high and louvered like a New Orleans bordello, the Montreal is also ill-handling and reportedly prone to bursting into flames (thanks to Spica fuel injection).

Since there isn't much to say about the car, the book is mostly photographs. Lots of photographs. Of the Montreal. There are Montreals of every color, Montreals with every background, Montreals draped with all manner of crumpet, dressed and barely dressed. It's like sitting through a slideshow of your friend's vacation in New Jersey.

And in the end, it's too much of a good thing, or in this case, a resoundingly mediocre thing.

Provenance: ★★★★★

Bruce Taylor, a retired CERN engineer, certainly has learned all there is to learn about Montreals, from concept to production to living with one, and has turned his hobby into a mini-empire, complete with a technical book on the car and a web site (www.alfamontreal.info).

Fit and finish: ★★★★★

Despite my overall disdain, the book is quite well done technically, with well reproduced images, readable typography, and unassuming design.

Drivability: ★

Like any narrowly focused book, the audience is small and probably devoted to the topic. My bleating aside, they probably won't be disappointed. But if someone isn't blinded by love of the Montreal, and I know you are out there, this is nearly automotive porn, or at least the notebook of a stalker.

