

# On the Button

Ian Lamming falls for the passions of an Italian great

SINCE the humble key has been replaced by an electronic fob and starter button it can be a bit of a struggle to find how to turn on the car ignition.

Buttons can be on the transmission tunnel, on the dash, often obscured by the steering wheel and controls.

You find yourself bobbing, ducking and weaving like a seasoned boxer in the ring.

Other times you are left scratching your head and reaching for the handbook, which is a bit embarrassing.

One notable disguised the starter button as a squared-off knob which you had to turn to ignite the engine; who'd have thought?

Seems obvious but so far the only manufacturer to have actually done the obvious is Alfa Romeo, bless it, on the new Giulia. Right in front of you, in plain sight, on the steering wheel, is a button that is embossed with the simple instruction start/stop. Thank you, at last, a designer who is not afraid to do the obvious.

Foot on the brake, dab the button and the refined 2.2 litre diesel bursts into life. Flick the stubby gear lever into Drive and you are off. Simple.

What isn't simple is the depth of design. Giulia is simply stunning with a body blessed with intricate and sensual curves. It is a poor man's Maserati, and I mean that as the biggest possible compliment, but then it is from the same family, so why am I surprised?

Giulia is so good looking it makes you wonder why other cars in the same sector are so plain.

Very few even come close in the beauty stakes, particularly from the front.

My boy approves too, and he comments very little on test cars. "I love the bright red leather and the fact the badge has a snake on it," he says. Me too on both counts.

Daddy also approves of the glorious way this sports saloon drives. Its ride and handling, grip and steering are simply glorious. This is a driver's car that can not be bettered for dynamics.

It is great on the motorways because it is relaxed, economical, smooth and quiet. It eats miles. But, more often than not, if you can take the twisty way home you will because Giulia loves curves like no other.

A 2.2 litre diesel may not seem the obvious choice for something so sporty yet it does a brilliant job thanks to accessible power that makes it super-quick. It pulls like a train from low down the rev range and is fantastic for overtaking and climbing hills.

Inside, the Giulia has flair and charm thanks to typical Italian design genius. It is such a lovely place to be. The leather is eye-catching, the dash is superb marrying retro clocks with the latest in hi-tech infotainment. Sports seats are stupendous, sporty but extremely comfortable and supportive.

When you think about what you need in a car, so many vehicles fall short of the full shopping list. Giulia doesn't; it looks stunning, is a joy to drive and a pleasure in which to ride. When it comes to the perfect motoring experience it certainly knows which buttons to press.



## Fact File

- Alfa Romeo Giulia
- Engine: 2.2 diesel
- Power: 180HP
- 0-62mph: 7.1 secs
- Top speed: 143mph
- Combined MPG: 67.3
- Transmission: Eight-speed auto
- CO2 g/km: 109