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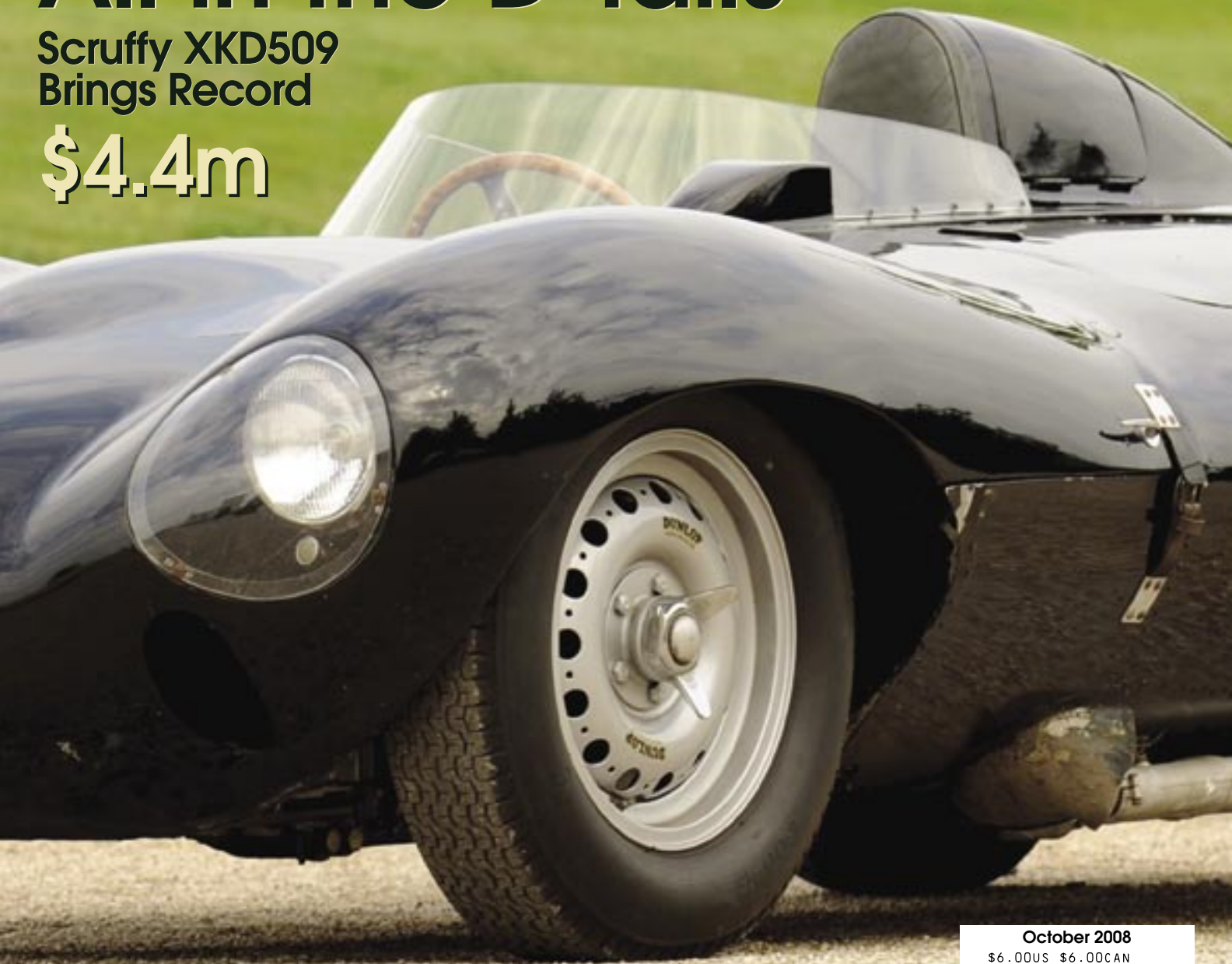
# Keith Martin's Sports Car Market

The Insider's Guide to Collecting, Investing, Values, and Trends

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- ▶ Salt Flats Record-Holder Cracks \$660k
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**JAY FITZHUGH** has been a muscle, hot rod, and custom guy since Hot Wheels first hit the shelves in 1968. He has since owned a succession of Shelby Mustangs, a Pontiac GTO Judge, and various flathead-powered early Fords. Currently, his garage holds a 1932 Ford 3-window coupe and a 1956 DeSoto Hardtop. For over a decade, Fitzhugh has been a Senior Contributing Writer for *The Rodder's Journal*, where he has published well over 20 story chapters on the evolution of hot rodding from the late 1940s through the '60s. He has received both Gold and Silver Moto Awards for his writing and photography from the International Automotive Media Competition and is a member of the Motor Press Guild. This month he makes his SCM debut, and you'll find his profile of the Chrisman Bonneville on p. 44.



**ED MILICH** is a writer, musician, motorcycle road racer, and mechanical engineer living *la vida meccanica* in Los Angeles. He edits the motorcycle web sites [www.guzzitech.com](http://www.guzzitech.com), [www.bimotacagiva.com](http://www.bimotacagiva.com), and [www.motobastard.com](http://www.motobastard.com), as well as his blog, [www.guzzitech.blogspot.com](http://www.guzzitech.blogspot.com). He and wife Alice's fleet of fully operational race and street bikes includes around ten Ducatis, including Brian Catterson's former 650 Alazzurra racer, a multiple Daytona race-winning 650 SS, and an NCR Pantah-framed 650 racer. He usually spends his Saturdays covered in grease at Moto Guzzi Classics, an old-timey Moto Guzzi shop in Long Beach. This month, SCM pried him away from his bikes long enough to write about one, and you'll find his piece on the Cagiva Alazzurra on p. 102.



**ROB SASS** was pre-ordained to accumulate strange collector cars. His first-ever car ride, on the way home from the hospital, was in the back seat of his dad's 1959 Hillman Minx. Sass served as Assistant Attorney General for the state of Missouri and then as a partner in a St. Louis law firm before deciding his billable hours requirement terminally interfered with his old car affliction. His stable of affordable classics has included a TVR 280i, a Triumph TR250, an early Porsche 911S, and a Daimler SP250. He currently owns a 1967 E-type convertible and a 1967 Maserati Mistral coupe. He has written for *Business Week* and the *New York Times*, and has been SCM's "Affordable Classics" columnist for two years. This month, he dives into the Citroën DS on p. 24, and you'll find his profile of a Mercedes McLaren SLR on p. 40.



**MICHAEL SHEEHAN** ran one of the largest independent Ferrari service centers in Southern California for 30 years. Currently, he is a Ferrari historian and broker. Sheehan has appeared in several automotive television documentaries, including shows on the History Channel. He has a passion for racing both current and vintage machinery and has competed in the Mazda Pro Series, Trans-Am, IMSA GTO, and IMSA Camel Lite, and has three drives in the 24 Hours of Daytona and 12 Hours of Sebring. He currently races Legend cars with his daughter and is getting his pilot's license with his son. His regular column, "Sheehan Speaks," has been a part of SCM since 1993, and this month he tackles the subject of diminished value on p. 32.



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# Biggest Bang for the Duck

The hearty roar of an unrestricted Conti exhaust on a \$1,500 Alazzurra is indistinguishable from a \$15,000 late-model Ducati

by Ed Milich

**T**he Cagiva Alazzurra (“Blue Bird”) 650 may be the most undervalued 2-valve, belt-driven Ducati. Allys, as they are called, are old enough to be overlooked by admirers of modern Ducatis, but young enough to deflect the gaze of most vintage motorcycle connoisseurs.

The Alazzurra, along with the 750 Sport, F1, and Paso, was produced in one of Ducati’s transitional periods starting in the mid-1980s. Originally badge-engineered by the Castiglioni brothers, (the “Ca” in Cagiva), who owned Ducati at that time, the Alazzurra was intended as a mild sport/sport-touring machine.

Production records on the 650 Alazzurra (350-cc variants are rare in the U.S.) indicate less than 5,000 were built between 1984 to 1987. The prominent “Cagiva” (instead of Ducati) on the tank is one reason why Alazzurras are the most inexpensive Ducatis on the secondary market.

But Alazzurras are able race bikes for vintage and modern classes, due to their efficient design, relatively light weight (300–350 lb in race trim), low cost, and large potential for chassis and engine tuning.

## Pantah frames are much less likely to crack

The 650 Alazzurra uses a version of the twin-shock frame that first appeared on the 500-cc 1979 500SL (commonly referred to as the “Pantah”). While not as light or stiff as any modern Ducati trellis chassis, Alazzurra/Pantah frames have much less propensity to crack at the steering head or other frame welds compared to newer Ducatis.

Alazzurras employ relatively heavy cast Oscan 18-inch wheels, with 35 mm front forks and twin remote-reservoir shocks by Marzocchi. The stock suspension is sprung softly, yet the handling is predictable. The stock brake system, often described as “vague,” employs Brembo twin piston front and single rear calipers with triple 260-mm cast-iron rotors. Upgrades are recommended.

The engine is an oversquare 650-cc (82 mm bore x 61.5 mm stroke) variant of Taglioni’s Pantah engine, which originally appeared in the 500SL and later 600SL and 650SL variants. It features two-valve hemi heads with overhead desmodromic valve actuation driven by Kevlar-reinforced belts, which bridge the top and bottom ends.

This engine formed the basis for all modern Ducati 2- and 4-valve twin-cylinder engines that followed. Evolved versions of the Alazzurra 650’s engine are still in production at Ducati, as the current Ducati M620 (Monster) powerplant. The Alazzurra is one of the last Ducati twins to feature a vertical cylinder head with an intake at its rear and exhaust at the front. Claimed power for the 650-cc Alazzurra motor is about 56 hp and 40 ft-lb, though my experience indicates these numbers are 5%–10% optimistic. Racing motors can produce 67 hp–70 hp with stock displacement and a radical increase in cam timing, compression, and flow.

One of the characteristics of the Alazzurra (like

most “real” Ducatis) is its desmodromic valve actuation. This system uses an extra, inverted cam lobe and a closing rocker arm to eliminate valve springs, the result of which is an extremely rigid connection between engine top and bottom end. Like the earlier Pantahs, Alazzurras require removal of upper rocker arms for valve adjustment every few thousand miles, and later-style rocker arms with retainer clips can halve the time.

## Asian influence in the body

A lazzurra bodywork has more Asian influence than the Pantah—surely one of the reasons for its relatively low cost. Even so, the Ally’s form has a pleasant and unique combination of angles and curves.

Though sometimes branded as unreliable, the Ally’s Bosch ignition system is fairly robust, on a component level. The weak link, however, is the four wires that connect the twin pickups inside the left engine cover to the control boxes underneath the fuel tank. The stock wires are surrounded by insulation that invariably fails, an issue aggravated by the wire’s submersion in hot engine oil. Once the insulation disintegrates, two pairs of bare copper wires intermittently come into contact, causing ignition hiccups.

The fix is easy—replace these four wires with modern oil-resistant versions. Also check that the swingarm isn’t loose in the engine case pivot by means of a firm sideways push to the swingarm with the bike on its center stand. This need not mean a swing arm pivot rebore; proper shimming can take out the lash.

As with all modern Ducatis, belts (\$70 a set) should be inspected regularly for wear and tightness, and replaced at least every two to three years—a two-hour job. Correct belt tension is important for cam timing and for bearing life. The expensive factory belt tensiometer can be ignored in favor of measuring belt clearance with a 5-mm allen key, a work-around that will produce the specified tension. Over-tightening the chain final drive can cause output shaft bearing failure, requiring a full teardown and engine case splitting, a process that points out the scarcity of critical sundries like engine case gaskets.

Complete running Alazzurras have sold for as little as \$500, and asking prices over \$2,000 for Allys are wishful at best. The later “650 SS” version is most desirable, as it features a dry clutch, larger Brembo F08 brake calipers, ten degrees more cam timing, and a half-inch wider rear wheel, which allows for a larger 130 section rear tire.

Ultimately, the best part of Alazzurra ownership is that the hearty roar of an unrestricted Conti exhaust on a \$1,500 Ally from half a block away is largely indistinguishable from the exhaust note of a \$15,000 late-model Ducati. ♦



Izaak Berezovsky

### Perfect Ally owner:

**Too cheap or too weird**  
for a 750 Monster.

Rating (★★★★★ is best):

Fun to ride: ★★★★★

Ease of maintenance: ★★★★★

Appreciation potential: ★

Attention getter: ★★★★★

Number produced: Less than 5,000

Original list price: \$3,743 in 1985

SCM Valuation: \$500–\$2500

Tune-up: Under \$200 DIY

Engine: 649 cc, 4-stroke V-twin, Desmodromic valve actuation

Transmission: 5-speed

Weight: 421 lb

Engine #: On engine case behind rear cylinder

Frame #: On headstock

Colors: Red, gray/pearl, white

Clubs: Pantahheads; Yahoo Alazzurra Group

More: [www.pantahheads.com](http://www.pantahheads.com)

SCM Investment Grade: D