

KING OF THE ROAD

Kingsley Wallman, 42, a corporate lawyer turned gemologist, is happiest when racing his 1967 Alpha Romeo convertible.

“For the most incredible adrenalin rush nothing beats racing full throttle down a mountain pass in the Alps with the roof of your convertible down. But then I have always had a thing for fast cars. My parents are partly to blame because they had a succession of big, fast cars and my mother raced them in her teens.

I joined my first car club while studying law in Sydney so I could go racing and rallying. My car back then was a Datsun 1600, a model favoured by just about every petrolhead because it was easily modified to go fast. After university, however, all my time and energy went into establishing a career in corporate law and the racing fell by the wayside.

Later I relocated to London, where I managed to do without a car for three years until something clicked and I bought not one but three vintage cars: a 1967 Alpha Romeo Duetto convertible; a 1970 Alpha Romeo GT 1300 Junior, which I used for zipping around; and a 1965 Alpha Romeo Giulia Sprint GT race car.

The convertible is my favourite. I bought it so I could take part in rallies and because it is such a work of art. Some people delight in reminding me that it's one of the most unreliable cars but I reckon she oozes personality. Admittedly, she has quirks. You can hear and feel everything mechanical when you're on the road but that's because she's been modified to go faster. It took me two years to develop her into a rally car.

As vintage car racing is such a huge sport in Europe there'd be a race event somewhere on the Continent every month. It was a great way for me and my wife Genevieve to travel through Europe. We loved Italy the best because the Italians would go absolutely berserk whenever

they saw us. Not only are they a nation of petrolheads but they recognise our convertible as a very famous mid-'60s Italian-designed car.

Yet if I were to single out the best European rally we ever competed in, it would have to be the Alpine Rally, which started in Geneva and finished on the Italian Riviera. We spent a week winding up and down old mountain passes in the Alps, including the famous Stelvio, which has something like 50 hairpin bends.

Competing in rallies is as much about how you look as how you're going and we always win the prize for the best-looking crew. Genevieve and I make a point of always being colour co-

ordinated and in races we wear identical black kit. It looks fantastic in a white convertible.

Sadly, our little car has been rather neglected since our return to Australia two years ago. By then I'd had enough of working for multi-national corporations and was keen to try something different so we set up our Venerari jewellery business in Sydney. On top of that we also have two young children, which

means less free time to take part in rallies.

But we did compete in last year's Classic Adelaide, Australia's premier international tarmac rally for classic sporting vehicles. A massive event, it attracts entrants from all over the world. It's like the circus coming to town: 250 old cars rolling up for lunch. At the risk of sounding boastful, I reckon we drew a lot of attention in our Alpha. But then we have a car designed to make you look beautiful driving down a town's main street.

Liz van den Nieuwenhof

For more information, visit www.hsrca.org.au and www.classicadelaide.com.au.



NICK CURRIN

