

The Ford Focus RS really is that much in demand.

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Look out,
Bugatti, the
R50's coming.

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Land Rover plans a replacement for the LR4.

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Fall's still a busy
time for
classic wheels.

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Racy Italian

2016 Alfa Romeo 4C Spider

Two-seaters are a small segment with a wide range. At one end of the spectrum are cars like the Mercedes-Benz SL (tested here last week). It's a two-seat Grand Touring car; a luxury convertible that's also (almost incidentally) a fine performer. In the middle would be cars like the Mazda Miata and Fiat 124 Spider: small, agile, two-place convertibles in the traditional sports car mold. At the far end are hard core cars like this week's tester — the Alfa Romeo 4C Spider.

Alfa is a company with deep, racing roots. No surprise, then, that the car leading the brand's reentry charge into the U.S. market is the elemental 4C.

MSRP: \$65,900 • As Tested: \$74,295

First arriving here as a coupe in 2014, it was followed a year later by a Targa-topped Spider model. The soft top carries over for 2016 with few changes. The 4C is a car of many extremes and few compromises. It suits best the driver who wants a second car that they can take to the track on weekends.

Beneath the skin, the 4C has a carbon fiber monocoque chassis, with aluminum subframes front and rear. Light weight and stiffness are design mantras, so the rolling weight of just 2,487 lb. for the Spider isn't surprising (and only 22 lb. more than the hardtop). A turbocharged 1.7-liter, four-cylinder engine provides the motivation, linked to a six-speed, dual-clutch



HARD CORE RACER. Leading Alfa Romeo's reentry into the U.S. market, the 2016 4C Spider reflects the Italian marque's racing roots: It's the choice for the driver who wants a second car that they can take to the track on weekends.



“manumatic” transmission. The engine is lively and free-revving, reaching maximum (237) horsepower at 6,000 rpm, while max torque (258 lb.-ft.) arrives at 2,200 rpm.

The motor's ragged idle smooths quickly as you apply throttle. Zero to sixty times are in the low four second range — rare air. The “DNA” selector offers drivers a choice of four driving modes: Dynamic, Natural, All-weather and Race; each with specific tweaks to throttle, transmission mapping, differential and stability control systems. The response time to paddle shift requests is enjoyably quick. In full automatic setting, shift points are stretched their widest in Dynamic and Race

The 4C is a car of many extremes and few compromises.

modes, with rev-matching downshifts.

The manual steering feels desirably stout at speed, and the race-tuned suspension (double wishbone front, MacPherson strut rear — part of the \$2,200 Spider Track Package) and staggered (18-inch/19-inch) tires offer good grip. The overall driving sense is that of a go cart. Flat handling, ultra-low, feel-every-bump suspension, ripping little engine.

The Track pack also includes a small diameter, flat bottom, leather/microfiber steering wheel, and another layer of cabin carbon fiber trim. Available Racing Leather/ Microfiber seats (\$500) have thick side

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