

Alfa Romeo To Make U.S. Comeback With New Car

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DETROIT (AP) — After a 30-year absence, Italy's storied Alfa Romeo brand will return to the United States later this year with a new two-seat compact sports car.

Italian automaker Fiat SpA said Tuesday that the long-delayed Alfa 4C will go on sale during the second half of the year. Fiat owns Alfa and controls the Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge and Ram brands in the U.S.

The 4C will officially debut at the Geneva International Motor Show next month. The low-sitting car with flared fenders is based on Alfa's history of racing. It has a turbocharged 1.75-liter aluminum four-cylinder engine with 200-plus horsepower. The chassis is made of lightweight and expensive carbon fiber.

The rear-wheel-drive car will cost around \$60,000 in the U.S. and be sold at U.S. Fiat dealers. The company plans to make about 1,500 per year at a Maserati factory in Modena, Italy. Half the cars will be sent to the U.S.

Fiat has promised the 4C would lead Alfa's return to the U.S. ever since a concept prototype was put on display in Geneva in 2011.

"This is the first car," Fiat spokesman Richard Gadeselli said. "In the next year, you'll see another."

Chrysler's U.S. business plan has five more Alfa Romeos coming to the U.S. by 2016. That includes an Alfa Romeo SUV, the Giulia sedan and a station wagon. Alfa also has plans for a large sedan in the U.S. market.

The Alfa debut in the U.S. is good news for Fiat dealers, who have invested in dealerships but have had few models to sell. Fiat returned to the U.S. in late 2010 with only one model, the 500 mini-car. The company has since added electric and four-door versions of the 500.

Sales started slow but more than doubled last year to almost 44,000. Still, the number is below Fiat's main competitor, BMW's Mini brand. BMW sold more than 66,000 Minis in the U.S. last year.

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