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Mondial*



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Finally. See the USA in your new Ferrari Mondial



"What the hayull izzat, anyway?" The Arizona Highway Patrol officer didn't know it, but he was asking the first question in what I had come to think of as the Mondial Catechism. Minutes earlier, in true Western peace officer style, he'd beaten me to the draw, his hand-held K-band radar gun against my Escort radar detector, the first lawman to get the drop on the Escort in over 3,200 miles. And without putting too fine a point on it, many of those miles blazed by at speeds the NHTSA regards as Certain Death.

It seemed like a good idea to keep my firsthand knowledge of the car's speed potential to myself, particularly since I already knew what the officer's next question would be.

"How fast'll this thang go?"

He didn't read me my rights—I'd managed to get in a good lick of brakes when the Escort beeped, so with only 64 mph on

by Tony Swan

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY SWAN
AND BOB D'OLIVO



the radar gun I wasn't looking like Public Enemy Number One—but it seemed like a good idea to avoid self-incrimination.

"The European factory literature says top speed is over 140, but the European magazines say 140 is absolute tops. I'd be surprised if U.S. models will do that much."

In fact, the most I'd seen was just a tad over 130, achieved on a long, straight stretch that I shared only with an armadillo or two. This speed represented about 6,500 rpm on the tach, and it took a good long run to get there. Although the engine seemed willing to do more, I ran out of straight before I could find out.

The officer digested the top speed info with raised eyebrows, then went on to question No. 3.

"Well, what's it cost?"

"About \$70,000," I said, which ended the conversation.

In the course of a three-and-a-half day, 3,600-mile trip that started in New Jersey,



swung down through the Gulf Coast states, across Texas and along the Rio Grande, then back up through New Mexico and Arizona to L.A., those three questions were repeated virtually every time I stopped.

Whut issit?

Whut'll it do?

Whut's it cost?

There was something charming about this guileless innocence, especially in contrast to the jaded denizens of Sunset Boulevard; about the only double takes we drew in Hollywood were from drivers of other Ferraris, who weren't quite sure what they were looking at, but knew it didn't look to be a 308. In every other port of call on this cross-country voyage, however, I became an instant one-man parade.

The Car

Debuted at the 1980 Geneva show, this is the first Ferrari conceived and executed under the Fiat aegis, designed in the Pininfarina studios as a replacement for the seven-year-old 308 GT4. The latter, a wedge-shaped creation from Bertone, was the only production Ferrari designed outside Pininfarina in almost 30 years. Even though the GT4 sold well and got good marks as a driver's car, it was never really accepted by true cloth *Ferraristi* inside the organization or out.

At first glance, the Mondial appears to be a 308 GT with a few appearance changes and enough extra interior volume to accommodate a couple of extra seats. However, while it's true the car shares the general look that's distinguished this series since the advent of the Dino back in 1966, and there is extensive mechanical commonality, the Mondial does represent a



fresh sheet of paper. It's got about a foot more wheelbase and around 3 inches more width, and is about 5 inches taller—not to mention about 150 pounds heavier. It's also bigger than the GT4—3.9 inches in the wheelbase, 3.2 inches across the beam and 1.6 inches from top to ground, which adds up to 55 pounds heavier on the scales.

The most readily visible evidence of all this expansion is the rather tall greenhouse, although Pininfarina has done an excellent job of keeping the proportions right. And virtually all the dimensional increases have been passed along directly to the consumer, which makes for outstanding front seat legroom and a back seat area that could actually accommodate a couple of smallish adult people (provided they don't mind traveling in full fetal position), or maybe two full-size inflatable dolls at half-pressure. The 2+2 concept is, after all, always a compromise. But we can say that this particular execution of the concept is a substantial improvement over the preceding effort.

Pininfarina's good work is also evident in the cockpit furnishings. The Connolly-clad leather buckets are remarkably comfortable for extended voyaging, although their side bolsters don't offer much in the way of lateral support. The big leather-wrapped steering wheel is adjustable for rake, and the instrumentation has also been given some attention—new graphics, cowlings and layout as compared to the 308 GT or the GT4. About the only complaints in the area of interior design, fit and finish are the awkward radio location (Ferrari continues its practice of leaving radio installation up to its dealers), and the door handles. The latter are of poor design, affording insufficient leverage, plenty of confusion and far too many rattles. The left-side mirror on our car was inoperative, but I suspect this was due to the hasty radio installation.

Aside from an LED clock/stopwatch combination that seemed to defy most efforts at adjustment and/or general use, the dashboard is mercifully free of the digital dementia that seems to be sweeping much of autodom. However, this Ferrari does possess an on-board self-diagnostics system that looks to be rich with potential for electronic hysteria, its oil warning provisions in particular. More on this later.

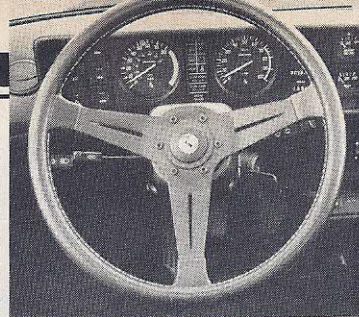
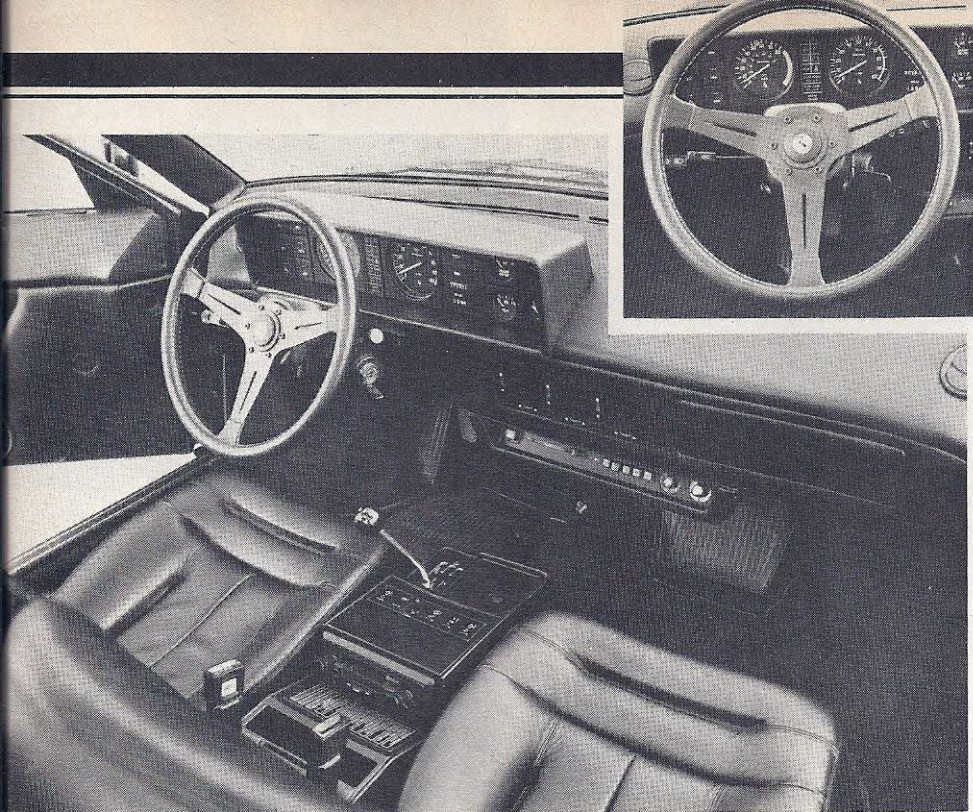
Below the skin there's a tube steel frame, with fully independent double A-arm suspension and vented disc brakes at all four corners—very much like the 308 GT, and all of it mainstream Ferrari chassis practice. There is, however, a major distinction, one that's sure to score with mechanics. The rear portion of the frame, complete with engine and drivetrain, is designed for easy removal as a complete unit, which will cut major maintenance time in half.

Aesthetically, the car has drawn some flak for its cheese-slicer side scoops, particularly in Europe where the scoop grille-work is painted black. The going-away view has an unfinished feeling to it, created in part by the utilitarian look of the muffler cowlings. But even if the overall shape does give something away to its 2-seat counterpart, there's absolutely no way you could justify calling it homely. And it *definitely* looks like a Ferrari.

The Powertrain

The Mondial's aluminum 3-liter 4-cam V-8 has been around since 1975, and is a proven, reliable performer. Ferrari replaced the original quartet of Weber 40DCNF 2-throat carburetors with Bosch K-Jetronic injection last year, a change that whittled a little bit off peak horsepower but made overall response much smoother and easier to live with. Ignition is now Marelli's electronic Digiplex unit, which is capable of handling eight different spark curves and is maintenance-free, con-





tributing to the 7,500-mile service interval.

Like the 308 GT, the Mondial's engine is mounted athwartships, just behind the passenger compartment. It has the typical mid-engine problem of noise, but not as much of it as you'd expect, at least at legal highway speeds. The louvers that punctuate the rear deck help keep the engine compartment relatively cool, although it still generates enough heat into the coach work to give your luggage—stowed in the surprisingly generous trunk—a thorough baking. Keep your cameras and film in the main cabin.

The engine's cooling system holds a whopping 25.4 quarts, and this, coupled with the oil radiator, keeps operating temperatures well within normal limits even in prolonged stop-and-go city combat.

As noted, the oil warning system gets a unanimous raspberry from the *MT* staff. The sending unit is attached to the oil dipstick, which means you've got to unhook it to check the oil level. The idea is to drive along until the warning light comes on, then add oil. This may be fine for those drivers whose idea of maintenance is filling the gas tank, but leaves much to be desired for anyone who really cares about his car. When it comes to the presence of oil in the sump, we want to know more than yes or no; we want to know how much.

Like the engine, the Mondial's drivetrain is lifted directly from the 308, including the internal ratios of the 5-speed gearbox. The gearbox has its own little oil pump, to make sure everything inside stays nice and slurpy. Shift action is precise but stiff, although the process can be augmented by heel-to-toe. The foot controls are nicely designed for this activity, as they should be.

Performance

With more mass, more frontal area, slightly fatter and taller tires (effectively raising final drive and rolling resistance),

it's not surprising that the Mondial is a wink or two slower than the 308. The 2-seater will turn sub-16-second quarter miles, the Mondial low 16s; terminal speeds for that distance favor the 308 by about 2 mph. It's not an easy car to get out of the blocks in a hurry, and there are obviously cars around that'll out-quick it. Thanks to its downhill gearing, the Mondial will generate an impressive top speed, but this, too, requires a certain amount of patience to achieve. Then again, how many cars today can top 125 mph in *any* distance? The Mondial is no rival to the Boxer, but it is nevertheless a member of a select performance fraternity.

When it comes to getting around corners, the Mondial inspires confidence. The extra foot of wheelbase makes the car feel a good deal more stable than the shorter 308 in practically any operating situation—straight ahead at high speed, caning it around fast sweepers or scrambling into decreasing-radius sphincter-tighteners. Once you've established a rapport, the car lets you get away with all kinds of bad habits, like lifting in mid-turn. The nose tucks in a little (but not enough to be called oversteer), and its general behavior could be called neutral—surprising, considering the rearward weight bias. While there isn't enough power to indulge in a lot of wild, tail-out power slides, the car seems well suited to making a fast entry and holding a respectable speed all the way to the exit with little more body roll than the 308.

The Mondial's rack-and-pinion steering requires healthy effort at low speed but is very responsive once you're rolling, and naturally contributes a lot to the feeling of stability. And the popular TRX Michelins do even more. They're remarkably sticky on dry pavement, provide better-than-average stability in the wet, don't make noise and undoubtedly offer a better ride than low-profile numbers like the Pirelli P7.

For a machine sporting a moderately firm racing-style suspension system, the Mondial performs very well in the ride department. The Koni shocks have a habit of simply ignoring small, sharp bumps, which is irritating, especially when the bumps begin contributing to the steering. However, aside from this harshness, the car deals well with other surface irregularities. Again, the extra wheelbase helps out here.

Braking is superb. There's plenty of power in the system, and excellent control to go with it. Like the car's forgiving cornering qualities, the brakes are designed to inspire confidence.

Fuel economy isn't much of a concern to the people who will buy these cars (about 60% of them are in North America), but the Mondial does reasonably well on this score. The car has EPA ratings of 10 city, 18 highway, and as usual we were able to exceed the highway number for legal cruising, scoring as high as 21 mpg. For the whole 3,622-mile trip the average was 18.7 mpg, a thoroughly impressive number considering some of the cruising speeds involved. On the *MT* 73-mile gas loop, the Mondial recorded 17.1 mpg.

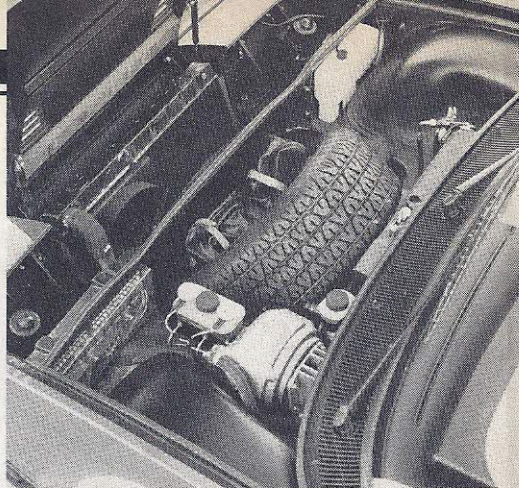
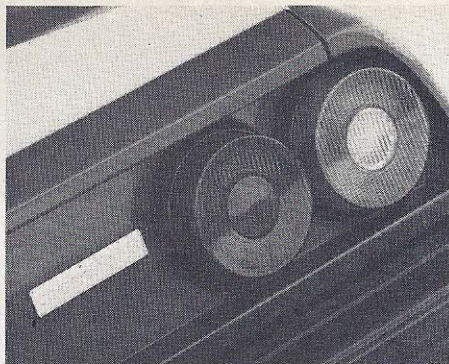
The car went through just a tad under 2 quarts of oil over the cross-continent haul, which, according to the Ferrari folks, is also remarkable.

The Experience

While attending the University of Minnesota a couple of lifetimes ago, I managed to scrape together enough money to buy a sweet little Porsche 356 coupe, already well into middle age by the time it came to me, but in excellent condition. I found that it immediately altered the structure of my days, because I'd wake up as soon as there



Ferrari Mondial



was enough light to see more than 10 feet and look at it from my bedroom window. I found that, even during perilous times like final exams, the Porsche was able to make each day's prospect considerably brighter.

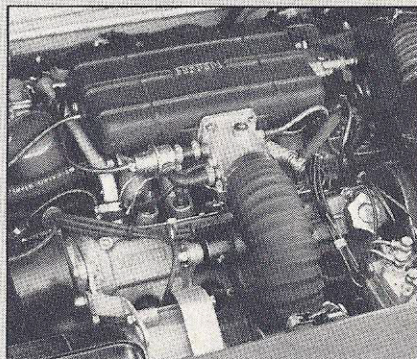
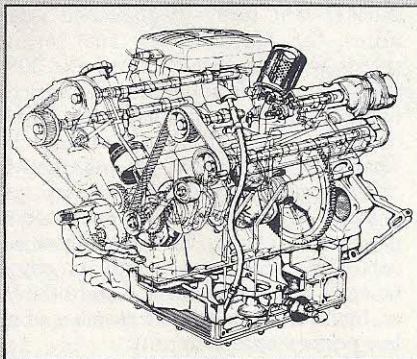
A great quantity of machinery, two-wheeled and four, has come and gone since those days. But I found that this Ferrari was one of the few cars able to rekindle those old passions. As the crew at Fiat headquarters in New Jersey put the finishing touches on the car's prep—including installation of the Pioneer AM/FM/cassette unit—I caught myself looking at the car from the office window and experiencing *deja vu* hot flashes.

Basically, the prospect of settling into a new Ferrari for a trans-continent shuttle makes the whole country look like one gigantic dessert. The world's best highway system, even though it's wrapped in the chains of the lowest common denominator, suddenly gets a massive jolt of magic. This, of course, has been the Ferrari stock in trade since the beginning, in 1940. And it seems quite reasonable to me to assume that anyone who takes delivery of a new Ferrari can feel the élan of all those races, on all those tracks, over all those years. As you settle into the leather command seat, you're sharing a bond with men like Alberto Ascari, Phil Hill, Wolfgang von Trips, Fangio, Jody Scheckter—the list is long and distinguished.

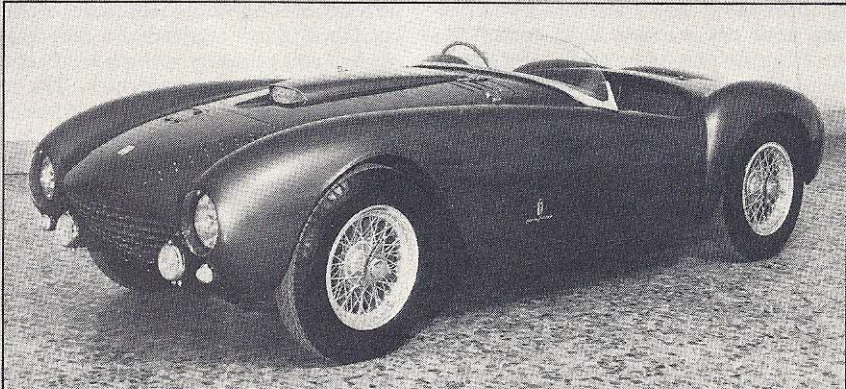
Your hand closes on the key, pausing at the portal of this fresh adventure, then brings the beautifully orchestrated machinery to life (no throttle required). The famous Weber induction noise is gone, but there's still a sound that conjures up vi-

sions of hurtling down the Mulsanne Straight in some misty dawn, of rocketing half-blind into the tunnel at Monaco, of attacking the giddy, off-camber downhill drift that makes up Turn 1 at Brands Hatch. Illusions, to be sure, and not the sorts of things you'd care to offer up to explain to the patrolman why you were doing 120 down that dead-end street. But how many of today's motor vehicles include on-board fantasy-fulfillment generators at no extra cost?

There is one down side to the experience. This car, and presumably any Ferrari, is an absolute top-drawer, double throwdown jerk magnet. Just as the sight of a jogger will send every dog in a neighborhood into instant frenzy, the sight of a Ferrari sorting out the traffic will inspire certain drivers to strange rites of manhood. The Ferrari driver regularly finds himself being pursued and/or overtaken by cars that moments before had been going 10 or 20 mph slower. Better yet, the Ferrari will



Ferrari's 2,926cc 90° aluminum V-8 entered production in 1975 with four 2-throat Weber carburetors and a rating of 255 horsepower. Bosch K-Jetronic injection replaced the Webers last year, and tightened emissions regulations have reduced horsepower in current U.S. models to 205. (European editions are rated at 214.) Fired by Marelli electronic Digiplex ignition, the engine employs toothed belts to drive its quartet of overhead camshafts. The crank turns in five main bearings, with a conventional 8-quart oil system plus an oil cooler. Ferrari uses the 3-liter V-8 in both the new Mondial and 308 GT.



The original Ferrari Mondial appeared in 1954. Inside the sleek Pininfarina-designed, Scaglietti-built bodywork was a streetified version of the 2-liter 4-cylinder engine that had been virtually unbeatable in the two previous seasons of World Championship racing. This roadster, known as the 500 Mondial, also saw some racing service, mostly in the hands of privateers. Although it was not conspicuously successful in competition, it did finish second overall and first in class in a Mille Miglia. Generally overshadowed in racing by contemporary 2-liter Maseratis, the 500 Mondial soon gave way to the famous Testa Rossa.





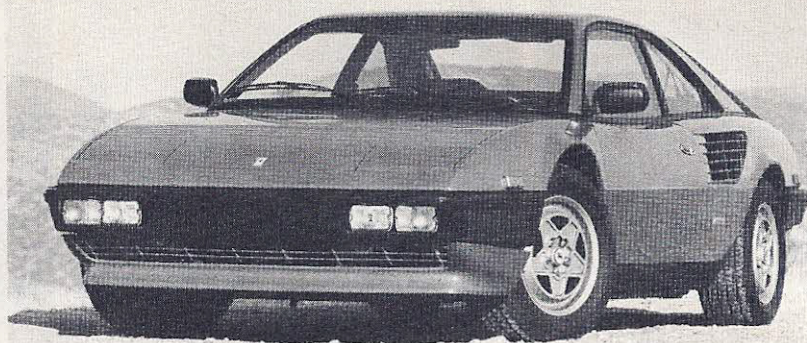
pull out to pass on a two-lane highway and find the car he's passing suddenly leaping forward under full acceleration. Interestingly enough, most of this sociopathic driving isn't displayed by other sports or GT car drivers. It seems to be much more prevalent among drivers of older American cars. And the bottom line here is that you occasionally find yourself taking chances to get past some guy in a '65 Ford who's kicked it up from 60 to 90 or so when he saw you coming, his car shedding anonymous little pieces as it wallows down the highway. The 55-mph limit is clearly too fast for these people.

I encountered plenty of these cretins going across America—an experience that I'm certain is in no way unique—but they couldn't really scotch the joy of the going. The Mondial is not the greatest Ferrari ever issued by Maranello, but it is by no means the least. It is a long-legged, high-gloss profile piece designed for the buyer who wants to pack as much class into a cross-continent trip as possible, and it achieves this goal in ways the 308 cannot.

But more than that, it is a Ferrari. It looks like a Ferrari, it smells like a Ferrari, and it sounds like a Ferrari. And knowing there's a Ferrari waiting in the carport, with an open road just beyond, makes any day seem too short.

MT

ROAD TEST DATA



Ferrari Mondial

SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Vehicle type	Mid-engine, rear-drive, 2 plus 2 coupe
Base price	\$70,000 (est.)
Options on test car	Electric sunroof, remote-control right-hand mirror, AM/FM/cassette

ENGINE

Type	V-8, water cooled, aluminum alloy block and heads, 5 main bearings
Bore & stroke	3.18 x 2.80 in. (81 x 71 mm)
Displacement	178.5 cu. in. (2,926 cc)
Compression ratio	8.8:1
Fuel system	Bosch K-Jetronic injection
Recommended fuel	91 unleaded
Emission control	3-way catalyst, EGR, air injection
Valve gear	Dual overhead cams, belt-driven
Horsepower (SAE, net)	205 at 6,600 rpm
Torque (lb.-ft., SAE net)	180 at 5,000 rpm
Power-to-weight ratio	17.75 lb./hp

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	5-speed manual
Final drive ratio	4.06:1

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	104.3 in.
Track, F/R	58.9/59.7 in.
Length	180.3 in.
Width	70.5 in.
Height	49.2 in.
Ground clearance	4.9 in.

Curb weight	3,460 lb.
Weight distribution, F/R	41.5/58.5%

CAPACITIES

Fuel	22.2 gals., incl. 4.75-gal. reserve
Crankcase	9.5 qts.
Cooling system	25.4 qts.
Trunk	10.6 cu. ft.

SUSPENSION

Front	Independent, unequal-length A-arms, coil springs, telescopic shocks, anti-roll bar
Rear	Independent, unequal-length A-arms, coil springs, telescopic shocks, anti-roll bar

STEERING

Type	Rack and pinion
Turns lock-to-lock	3.5
Turning circle, curb-to-curb	39.4 ft.

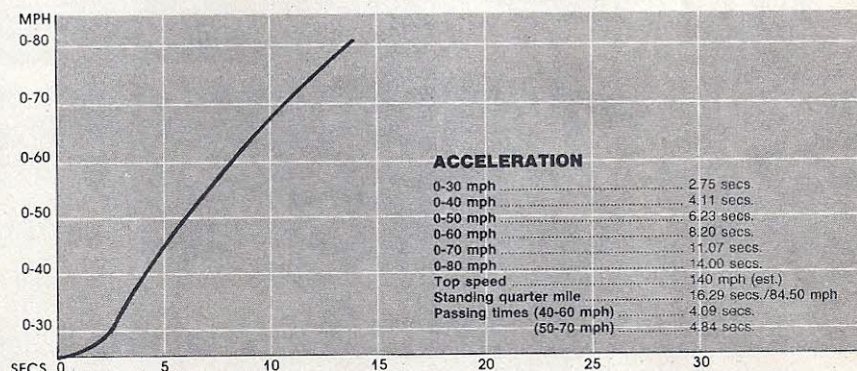
BRAKES

Front	11.1-in. vented discs
Rear	11.7-in. vented discs

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size	7.08 x 15.35 in. (180 x 390 mm)
Wheel type	Cast alloy
Tire make and size	Michelin TRX 240/55 VR 390
Tire type	Steel-belted radial
Recommended pressure (psi), F/R	33/33

TEST RESULTS



SPEEDOMETER

Indicated	30	40	50	60
Actual mph	27	37	48	59

BRAKING

MPH	FEET
30-0	39 ft.
60-0	164 ft.
	0 25 50 75 100 125 150 175 200



One fast lap at Maranello



The basic source of Ferrari magic has always been the melting pot in the foundry. This vat of molten aluminum (above left) will ultimately become a rough engine casting, like the stack of V-8s (above right) awaiting machine work. One of the factory's most significant recent improvements is its ultramodern assembly and paint shops (below), providing Ferrari with much tighter corrosion and quality control than in years past.



Racing and prototype Ferraris are developed at the company's Fiorano test track, not far from the factory and racing shops. It's one of the few circuits in the world where there is quite literally no place to hide, thanks to comprehensive instrumentation and an unwinking bank of TV monitors. Gilded prancing horse (below) adorns Enzo Ferrari's personal offices at the track.

PISTA DI FIORANO

