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FERRARI MONDIAL

Maranello's innovative mid-engined four-seater makes a surprisingly practical classic purchase as long as you're careful, says **Malcolm McKay**

PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



Four-seater mid-engined coupés are rare enough, but there has only ever been one production four-seater soft-top middle. So don't grumble about the rear-seat space in the Mondial, because it's unique – in convertible form at least.

The original 1980 Pininfarina-styled Mondial 8 appears in lists of the world's worst cars, due to its poor (for a Ferrari) power-to-weight ratio and complex, unreliable electronics. Some US road tests barely bettered 10 secs for 0-60mph, and the best recorded 8.2 secs. European-spec cars were a bit livelier. It did improve, though, and quickly: the quattrovalvole of '82 shot to 60mph in 6.4 secs. Plus, the 8 had many strengths – not least its ability as a mile-eating motorway cruiser.

At the launch, Ferrari stated that the Mondial was intended to combine the features of a sports car with a comfortable GT. Built alongside the 308-348 ranges, it was always going to be overshadowed in performance terms. But that wasn't the point. The Mondial was a practical and usable Ferrari, which was made progressively lighter with each iteration, weight only creeping back up on the t model. For the first time, the transverse engine, transmission and rear suspension

were mounted in a single subframe, relatively easily removed for major servicing. All Mondials have electric windows and air-con, which needs regular maintenance so check that it works well.

Ironically, when it was substantially revised in Mondial t form in 1989 – starting a new line of Ferraris with F1-style longitudinal mid engines – it also became considerably more complex and costly to maintain. The t (for transverse gearbox) requires the complete engine subframe to be dropped to swap the timing belt, which could be done *in situ* on earlier models, although clutch replacement is easier. The t also boasts power steering and electronically controlled dampers.

A full history is critical: avoid cars without it, unless you (and an expert) are convinced that there are no lurking problems. If possible, talk to the specialist that has serviced the car. Original books and tools are also desirable and indicate a cherished example. Parts availability is good and second-hand spares are fairly readily available.

Structural rot should not be a problem, but cosmetic rust can be found – notably on earlier cars. The body is steel (with glassfibre floors), but aluminium was used for the undertray and boot/bonnet lids on the 8 and qv. Lids were steel on the 3.2/t, with GRP lower front and rear panels.



Mondial 8 and quattrovalvole (shown) had black bumpers



Integrated lamps on later, colour-coded nose (as this 3.2)



Rot spots

- 1 Front wheelarches
- 2 Door bottoms
- 3 Sills
- 4 Roof under black strip on early coupés (8 and qv)
- 5 Rear wheelarches



Check **hood** fit and operation, and for presence of cover (often lost). Catches are fragile and the material can get damaged by careless folding/erecting



Hoses can fray around clips; correct levels of inhibitor are vital and any sign of overheating needs instant attention. Beware expansion tank corrosion



Leather (sometimes with cloth inserts) will show wear on cars with more than 50,000 miles; localised damage can be rectified but a full retrim is expensive



Look for excessive smoke when starting the **engine** from cold, meaning bore wear or piston-ring issues. Camshaft oil seals are prone to leak; cambelts must be replaced (and tensioner bearings checked) every three years. Odd oil pressure/temp readings are likely to be electrical faults. Exhausts rot quickly on infrequently used cars



Tired dampers and **suspension** bushes will ruin the handling, but are relatively cheap to fix; split driveshaft gaiters are common and time-consuming to replace



Electrical issues can be the norm, in particular on early and irregularly driven cars: insist on checking everything and adjust the price if it doesn't all work



The **gearbox** is sharp and precise, but second is usually baulky when cold. The clutch should be light and strong, but can wear in 30,000 miles; check for slip



Tyres for metric wheels (to late 3.2) are pricey: some cars may have dangerously old rubber. A swap to 16in rims (£894 for four) is easy; spare was optional on t

Early cars lacked pace, but late-model t is supercar-quick. It handles precisely and has an excellent ride



On the road

A Ferrari V8 is a sophisticated engine that should be treated gently until thoroughly warmed up; let the owner drive first and see how the car is handled. If well looked after, they are unbreakable and have no significant flaws. A working life of 70-80,000 miles is normal for an 8's motor, but quattrovalvoles and ts are more durable, with 150,000-plus miles not unknown without major attention. If a rebuild is needed, fitting a second-hand engine is the only cost-effective answer.

In contrast to US criticism, European road-testers loved the Mondial, complimenting its blend of supple ride with fine handling, road-noise suppression and superb brakes. The long wheelbase gives the car a feeling of stability, plus it is comfortable and easy to drive, with good visibility for a middle. Worn suspension and steering bushes, plus tired dampers, seized calipers and ageing tyres, mean that many do not feel so taut now, but all can be sorted at a price. Check CV boots for splits: replacement is laborious. The steering is heavy at parking speeds (on all bar the t), but lightens appreciably at speed.

It's vital to check the electrics thoroughly, because early cars were prone to faults and they suffer with sparing use, particularly if stored in less than ideal conditions. Headlights, indicator switches, locks, windows (notably Cabrio rears; all are slow) and aerial are regular glitches. Most switches are unavailable new. On the 8 to 3.2, the centre console houses a warning panel – if it works, it's a bonus: senders tend to fail and many lamps may have been disconnected, but that needn't be a reason to reject a potential purchase.



Cabin superbly finished but may have electrical gremlins

OWNER'S VIEW Ray Ferguson



"It's a brilliant road car, especially being a four-seater," remarks Ferguson. "I've been a Ferrari nut since 1989 and have had three 348s.

"I bought the Mondial t for a Ferrari Owners' Club race series and it's competitive with modified 328s. The 348 engine is bombproof and in three seasons the only failure I've had was the alternator. The engine's out now for a cambelt change plus discs and pads. I bought the best car that I could find and look after it: the last thing you want after taking it all the way to Spa or the Nürburgring is for it to break down.

"I ran the Mondial for six months as a family car before starting to race it; now I have an F430 as my road car – but I do enjoy racing the Mondial, it's absolutely fantastic."

The knowledge

WHAT TO PAY

Show Cabrio qv/t	£27,500/30,000
Show coupé 8/qv/3.2/t	£15k/18k/21k/24k
Average Cabrio qv/3.2/t	£22k/23.5k/25k
Average 8/qv/3.2/t	£9k/12.5k/15k/19k

PARTS PRICES

Rebuilt engine, 8 (t)	£10,000-plus (£20k)
Cambelt change, 8-3.2 (t)	£420 (£1320)
Exhaust silencer (stainless, pattern)	c£800
Brake master cylinder (8)	£324
Headlight motor (t)	£430
Fuseboard	£1200
Michelin TRX 240/55 VR 390 tyre	£400
Cabriolet hood	£738

CLUBS

Ferrari Owners' Club 01327 855430;
www.ferrariownersclub.co.uk

BOOKS

Ferrari 308 328 Mondial Geoff Willoughby, Osprey
Ferrari 328 348 & Mondial 1986-94
Ultimate Portfolio Brooklands
Original Ferrari V8 Keith Bluemel, Motorbooks

SPECIALISTS

Rosneath Engineering 01892 770032
Rardley Motors 01428 606606
Superformance 01992 445300
Maranello 01784 436222
Foskers 01474 874555
DK 01923 287687
Simon Furlonger 01233 646328
Forza 288 01425 273682
The Ferrari Centre 01622 759599

TIMELINE

1980 Mar: Mondial 8 replaces 308GT4, with fuel injection, 214bhp (205bhp in US spec)
1982 Aug: quattrivalvole supersedes 8 (703 built); 32-valve, 240bhp (230 US), 147mph top speed, improved switchgear/controls
1983 Sep: Cabriolet added, narrower rear seat
1985 qv (1145 Coupé, 629 Cabriolet built) replaced by 3.2: 270bhp (260 US), body-coloured bumpers, integrated lights, upgraded interior
1987 ABS optional (standard from 1988)
1989 3.2 (987 Coupé, 810 Cabriolet built) discontinued for 3.4, 300bhp (295 US) t: redesigned air intakes, new doorhandles, complex dry-sump, longitudinally mounted engine, new interior, rectangular headlamps
1993 t build ends (858 coupé, 1017 Cabrio made)

FACTFILE

Sold/number built 1980-'93/6149
Construction tubular steel chassis, welded-on Scaglietti-built steel, aluminium and GRP body
Engine transverse (longitudinal on t) all-alloy, dohc, 16/32-valve 2926/3185/3405cc V8, with Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection (Motronic on t); 214bhp @ 6600rpm-300bhp @ 7200rpm; 179lb ft @ 4600rpm-238lb ft @ 4200rpm
Transmission five-speed ZF manual, optional Valeo ECU-controlled electric clutch on late t only, driving rear wheels via limited-slip diff
Suspension double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers (with three-position electronic control on t), anti-roll bar f/r
Steering rack-and-pinion, 3½ turns lock-to-lock; power assisted and 3 turns on t
Brakes 11in discs front, 11¾in rear, with servo
Length 14ft 10in-15ft (4535-4580mm)
Width 5ft 10½in-6ft 1¼in (1790-1810mm)
Height 4ft ½in-4ft 3in (1235-1290mm)
Wheelbase 8ft 8¼in (2650mm)
Weight 3108-3315lb (coupé 1410-1504kg)/3086-3386lb (Cabriolet, 1400-1536kg)
0-60mph 8.2-5.4 secs **Top speed** 138-154mph
Mpg 15-24 **Price new** £65,999 (t Cabrio, 1990)

INSURANCE

£294 for a Londoner, 30, full no-claims/clean licence on a '90 t Cabriolet as a garaged 2nd car, value £25k, 5000 ltd miles. RH: 01277 206911.

THE ALTERNATIVES



ALPINE GTA/A610

Great performance from turbo 2.5-3-litre PRV V6 combined with light weight and

superb aerodynamics to give the Alpine Ferrari-baiting performance. Sales never matched its potential but it's now a canny buy, and huge fun.
Sold/no built 1986-'95/7291 **Mpg** 16-25
0-60mph 8-5.6 secs **Top speed** 146-161mph
New £37,980 (A610, '92) **Now** £6000



PORSCHE 911

With 204bhp 3-litre SC engine (from '81), a cabriolet in '82, the 3.2 Carrera from '84,

then 3.6 in '89, the 911 was the Mondial's key rival, but it was a case of efficiency versus flair. Capable of long reliable service, but pricey to fix.
Sold/no built 1978-'89/135,387 **Mpg** 16-25
0-60mph 6.1-5.6 secs **Top speed** 140-153mph
New £43,009 (3.2 Sport Cab, '89) **Now** £15,000

One to buy £11,950

Year of registration 1985 **Recorded mileage** 64,141 **Vendor** Julian Becker, Friern Barnet, London; tel: 07949 916447 **For** a tidy, usable car at a keen price **Against** electrical gremlins to be rectified

Vendor Becker bought this late qv from a friend in 2009 on the proviso that he kept it for at least six months. He loves the attention the car gets, but has decided that he doesn't use it enough. It had a new cambelt at 62,000 miles, plus a starter, gear linkage, interior refurb and electrical work.

The paintwork is good apart from a few chips, a tiny area of orange-peel on the bootlid and a little surface rust at the lower edge of both front wheelarches (treated on the nearside). The alloys are smart, bar a minor blemish on each. They're shod with Dunlop SP Sport 230/55 VR 390s, all with lots of tread. These are slightly undersized but much cheaper than the equivalent TRX.

The exhaust seems tidy, likewise the suspension components, although the bushes don't look recent. There are no obvious leaks around the motor, which has plenty of coolant and cleanish oil. There's some rust on the expansion tank, which appears to be where the paint has flaked.

The V8 fires instantly with no smoke, settling to a busy idle and about 85psi oil pressure (c60psi warm) but quickly leans itself off. Second gear was a little baulky but soon eased on a short drive: barely enough to get the water temperature to move. The wipers and speedo were due to be fixed after our visit, though the windows, mirrors and glovebox lid do work – but not the air-con.

It comes with the original manuals (in the factory wallet), plus a sheaf of old MoTs and bills.



Rosso paint is still vivid; qv has tax to June, MoT until July



Crema hide with cloth nice bar the odd mark; carpets, too



Engine needs a clean (and new lid struts) but feels strong



Superb t Cabriolet is for sale at Woodside Cars: call 020 8445 5353 for more info

Our verdict

The Mondial is a highly usable, underrated Ferrari with good parts availability, though spares prices can be eye-watering. Beware neglected examples: there are many, and they can bite you with faults so costly it's cheaper to scrap them. Look for a full history and evidence of fastidious care, and you should have a reliable, long-lived family sports car.

FOR

- Practical; easy to drive
- Amazing value for money
- Superb handling and performance, from qv
- World's only four-seat, mid-engined soft-top

AGAINST

- Late models are still depreciating
- Repair costs can easily exceed a car's value
- Fragility, especially from electrical problems, can be frustrating to remedy