



# ELEGANCE IN MOTION

*Stepping out in style*

BY TONY SWAN  
PHOTOS BY JOHN LAMM

**I**N THE COURSE of monitoring the slow but positive evolution of the Ferrari Mondial over the past seven years, we've found ourselves moved by twinges of sympathy for Nuccio Bertone more than once.

Yes, the Mondial is and has been a Pininfarina project since its inception.

However, the unenviable job of creating the *first* mid-engine 2+2 GT for Ferrari was assigned to Signor Bertone and staff, not Pininfarina. It was the first time since 1953 that a production Ferrari product (as distinct from a production Ferrari—the Bertone-designed car came to market initially as an extension of the Dino series) appeared wearing something other than the Pininfarina badge.

Why this occurred is still a subject for debate among *Ferraristi* sipping *grappa* at the end of a long evening. Some say it was pressure from Fiat, some say Pininfarina was booked.

In any case, presented with a well-nigh impossible set of parameters, Bertone and Co strove mightily and achieved much. Starting with a slightly widened and elongated 246 Dino chassis—emphasis on the slightly—the Bertone car emerged as a striking, aggressive little wedge that was, to some, a welcome contemporary break from the traditional curves and fluidity of the Pininfarina shapes.

In addition to the accommodation, however temporary, of four passengers, Bertone's challenge also included finding space for a new 4-cam 3.0-liter 90-degree V-8 engine. The result was the Dino 308GT4, a designation later grudgingly changed to include the word Ferrari in an attempt to stimulate sluggish U.S. sales.

Introduced at the Paris show in 1973, the new 2+2 was an able road performer, had enough horsepower (250 at

7700 rpm) to provide good acceleration . . . and drew fire from critics from the moment it was unveiled. It was said that Enzo Ferrari disliked it from the first, a dislike that certainly must have hardened into permanence when sales were soft. It was also said that Mr Ferrari swore he'd never contract for another design from Bertone, and to date this has been the case.

Although the 308GT4 soldiered on for nearly seven years, with more than 3000 cars produced, it was an orphan all the way. Thus, when Pininfarina was called in for the next generation 2+2, the job took on the coloration of a rescue mission, and a virtual no-lose situation in the bargain. It's hard to conceive of the Pininfarina stylists having a better client climate.

As a result, when the GT4's replacement bowed at Geneva in 1980, it was hailed as an elegant and intelligent solution to the 2+2 problem. Pininfarina was allowed to stretch the wheelbase 100 mm and raise the roof 4 mm, and there's no question that this created more occupant space. However, if the GT4's use as a 2+2 required rear-seat passengers who were *very* close friends and the Mondial's rear seating required only that those same two passengers be merely congenial, *both* cars required that those passengers would be best accommodated if they had the basic dimensions of children aged 12 years or less.

While the Mondial 8 rationalized the 2+2's styling with the rest of the all-Pininfarina 308 series, "cheese-grater" side vents notwithstanding, it was nevertheless a disappointment in terms of performance. Handling, abetted by trademark Ferrari virtues like high chassis rigidity and sturdy double A-arms at all four corners, was excellent. This

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was also due in some measure to the stretch in wheelbase. But 0-60-mph acceleration was quite another matter. With a curb weight that was almost 400 lb higher than the 308 and engine output regulated down to a U.S. output of 205 bhp, the Mondial tested by *Road & Track* in November of 1981 took 9.4 seconds to hit 60 mph and 17-plus seconds for the quarter mile.

The way this translated in real-world terms was that the average supermarket bagboy with a 1967 Camaro could ab-

olutely *smoke* your \$70,000 exotic. Although the Ferrari product planners had hoped that buyers interested in a 2+2 wouldn't be quite so keen on neck-snapping acceleration, this was clearly unacceptable. Our 1971 road test drew parallels with the Type 44 Bugatti, often referred to as the "Molsheim Buick," and editors wondered if this would be "the Modena Olds."

Such comments quickly galvanized Ferrari into remedial activity, which manifested itself as more valves—eight more intake, eight more exhaust—more power (230 at 6800 rpm) and, miracle of miracles, almost 100 lb *less* curb weight. Although the Mondial still scaled in 375 lb heavier than the 308, 0-60 tumbled to a thoroughly acceptable 7.6 sec, and the quarter mile was a matter of 16 sec flat.

More important, from a marketing point of view, was another development that would make the Mondial quicker off the showroom floor as well as at the test track: the first production cabrio issued by Ferrari since the Seventies. The beautifully executed cabriolet gave the Mondial a special identity it had needed all along.

What could make the Mondial even more interesting? Well, a little more horsepower never seems to hurt, so when Ferrari used a displacement increase as one of the springboards for the new 328 last year, the Mondial came along for the ride. By expanding both bore (by 2.0 mm) and stroke (by 2.6 mm), and raising the compression ratio (from 8.6:1 to 9.2:1), the 4-cam aluminum V-8 gained a healthy 30 bhp. This works out to 1 horsepower for each additional



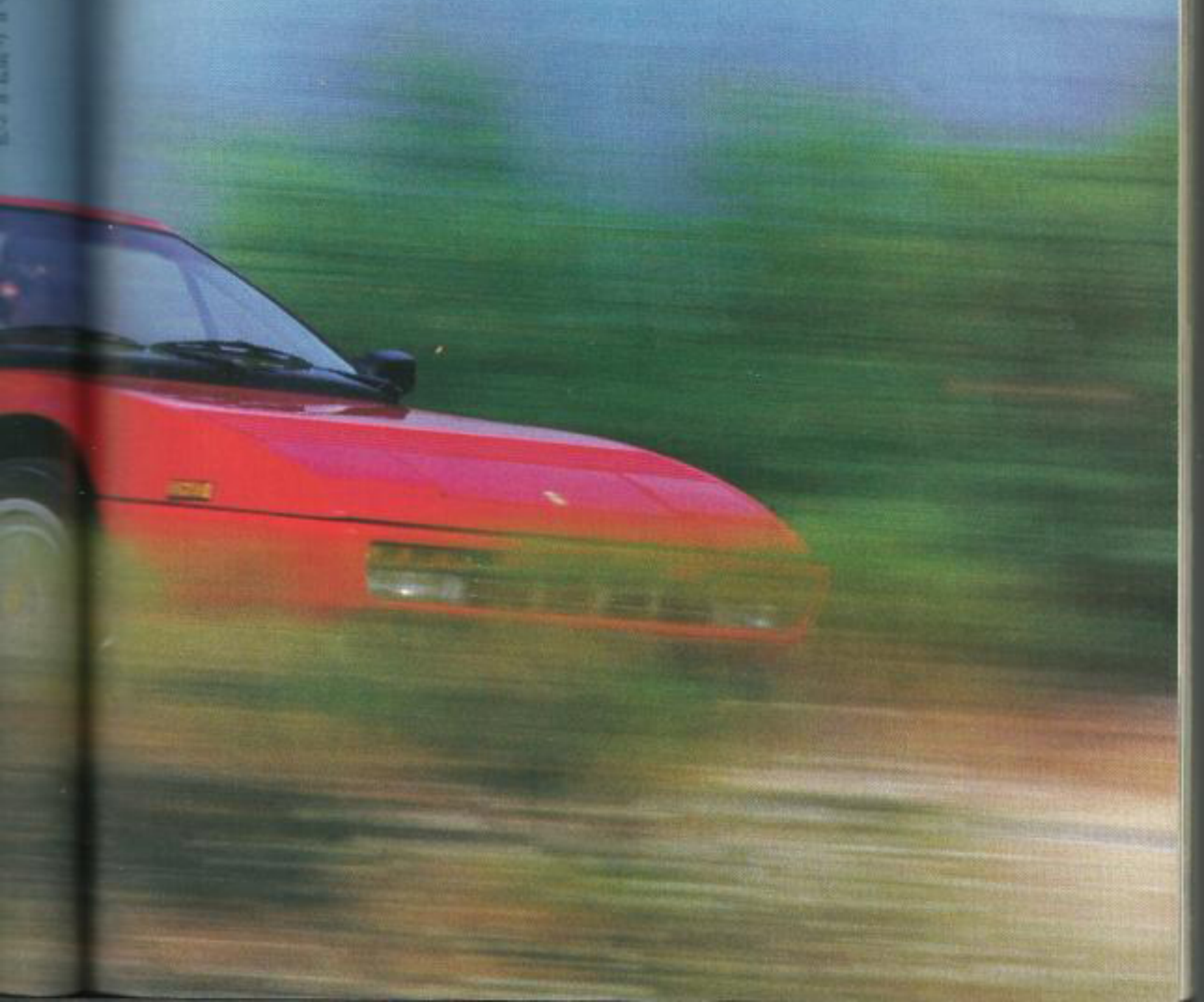
8.6 cc of displacement, which is certainly an enviable level of volumetric efficiency. And as the data panel indicates, it also works out to a Mondial that's even more fun to put through its paces.

Driver gratification has always been the *raison d'être* for any Ferrari, and even the original Mondial 8 performed on this score with handling that was thoroughly competent and free of nasty surprises. However, additional power can be a wonderful ally in handling, particularly in a chassis as well executed as this one. (Perhaps the most telling testimony to this execution is the handling of the Mondial Cabriolet, which is virtually indistinguishable from the hardtop.) Although the car's skidpad numbers aren't spectacular in an age of 0.95g Corvettes, they're in the ballpark for contemporary performance machinery, something that can also be said for the Mondial's slalom performance. Moreover, though the general suspension tuning is firm, as befits a proper GT automobile, it is also supple where it counts, which means the Mondial can sustain high cornering rates and sharp transitions without being upset by small bumps

or other pavement irregularities. And this in turn means that ride quality is good for a GT, a particularly important consideration for a car designed to carry four passengers, however briefly.

As with past editions, the Mondial's prevailing trait is manageable understeer, made more manageable in this iteration by the bump in power—the throttle can now be employed to supplement the precise rack-and-pinion steering, something that could not be said of the original version. Ferrari has decreased the size of the front footprint, from 240 to 220, which reduces the previously isometric steering effort without compromising overall adhesion or braking.

Braking is another aspect of the Mondial's performance that has been right from the start and thus remains unchanged. The 11.4-in. vented discs, 0.7 in. larger than the 328 to handle the Mondial's extra weight, do an excellent job of hauling the car down to a standstill and require much more savage use than anyone's likely to give them on public roads to exhibit even the slightest hint of fade. Ferrari continues to resist the use of ABS (except in the non-U.S. 412



model), but we're willing to bet this resistance will end before long, if not as an admission of the efficacy of anti-lock braking then surely as a response to widespread ABS applications among competitors.

Inside, the Mondial presents a by-now familiar aspect, including the solid thunk that goes with closing the door. However, not all this familiarity is quite so endearing. The intrusion of the front wheel wells into passenger foot space, for example, continues to be irritating, particularly on longer drives, although it doesn't interfere with function in any way; the king-size pedals are perfectly laid out for the fun of heel-and-toeing, something that's been true of virtually every Ferrari in our experience.

The sturdy shifter, jutting up from the chrome-plated jaws of the customary Ferrari gate, is well located and engagement is positive, but the action continues to be a bit more of a wrestling match than we enjoy. Although the car still generates good acceleration numbers despite this resistance to quick shifts, there's no reason for the action to be as deliberate as it is.

We've commented on the rather random placement of the Mondial's various control switches in the past, and so we'll confine ourselves here to observing that there's no reason the glovebox couldn't have a manual release, as well as the current remote. *Prego? Grazie!* The combination of the dash cowling shape and gauge placement obscures the upper portions of the major instruments, which is critical in the case of the tach. And those graceful flying C-pillars still penalize the driver's view to the rear quarters, particularly in the cabrio.

On the other hand, there were other Mondial interior traits we were only too glad to revisit. The leather-clad seating not only provides comfort and support in equal measure, but also lends a marvelous olfactory reinforcement to the sense of self-indulgence that goes with driving this car. Similarly, the thick section of the leather-wrapped Momo steering wheel provides just the right tactile sensation, a sense of contact with something that is considerably more than a conveyance for looking smart at the country club.

Finally, there's the sound of all that well organized ma-



## Driving Impressions: III

**I** REMEMBER RACING a Ferrari Mondial only once, and that was at Torrey Pines, California in 1955. These were the 2.0-liter 4-cylinder sports cars, the little brothers to the Monzas, which I raced many times. The Mondials and Monzas were nice enough cars, and the engine they used had quite a heritage in the successful 2.0-liter 4-cylinder Ferraris that Alberto Ascari used to win the World Driving Championship in 1952 and 1953.

Personally, however, I was never too excited by any of the Ferrari 4-cylin-

der race cars. As I said, they were nice machines, but they didn't have that one component I felt was so important for a Ferrari in the mid-Fifties: a V-12 engine.

Today's touring Mondials don't have 12 cylinders either, but they do share the 3.2-liter V-8 with the 328 sports car. I must say that in the earlier versions of these cars, the power was somewhat disappointing. Ferrari had given the engine an uncharacteristically broad torque band, and to me it simply wasn't a gratifying engine to use. With the increase to 3.2 liters, it feels as though Fer-

rari not only has kept the advantages of a broader torque curve, but also has done other things to give a more Ferrari-like character to the V-8. Now you can get the payoff one receives when really working with a Ferrari engine and gearbox. Read my comments on the Testarossa to understand the fun in using a Ferrari engine tuned in the same way as the flat-12.

One little thing that bothers me about the current Mondial's drivetrain is the gearbox. Ferrari transmissions have always been among the best, but the current 328/Mondial versions tend to be rather notchy when they are new or when first used in cold weather. Once warmed up, they improve considerably, but

they still require many miles before becoming thoroughly pleasant. As in the case of all the current models, they are operated through a lovely slotted gate that is as effective as it is good-looking.

I appreciate the many problems Pininfarina had trying to fit a *due più due* layout within a mid-engine layout, but I must admit I have trouble with the Mondial's appearance. Though all the elements that go into the design are obviously Ferrari, by the time they are spread out over the long wheelbase, the result looks somewhat contrived. For me it's the odd non-Ferrari proportions of the car, with its very short front and rear overhang, that are most bothersome.



And my feelings about this 2+2 might be different if it weren't for the presence of the 412i, which I think is terrific. On the other hand, you'd have to go to the gray market to get a 412i in the U.S., and you'd probably have to invest \$15,000 above the European purchase price before it was ready for the street here.

And we can't forget that the Mondial is available as a convertible. Californians appreciate what it means to be able to drop the lid of a nice automobile on a warm day and take the family for a drive along the beach or through the canyons.

It would be a smooth ride, especially for a machine that's both red and Italian. That ride comfort is

perhaps the most pleasant thing about the Mondial, but second has to be the way it drives. It's a very smooth machine, comfortable on road or track.

Handling of the Mondial is excellent, though not the sort one describes in the same terms as that of the Testarossa or GTO. It's not that type of automobile. Granted, there is some evident roll, and some drivers might even think it un-Ferrari-like. That isn't necessarily true at all. As in the past, even race cars from Maranello have been known to have a considerable amount of roll. They might have been stiff in the way they reacted to bumps, but they leaned in turns. With modern design and development, cars like the

Mondial prove comfortable not only in roll, but also in their reaction to road imperfections.

It would be fun to compare an original Mondial race car—two seats, no comforts—with a current Mondial—four seats, air conditioning, stereo—as a means of measuring progress. I'm not certain how relevant the test would be, but driving a couple of open Ferraris is always a good excuse to have fun.

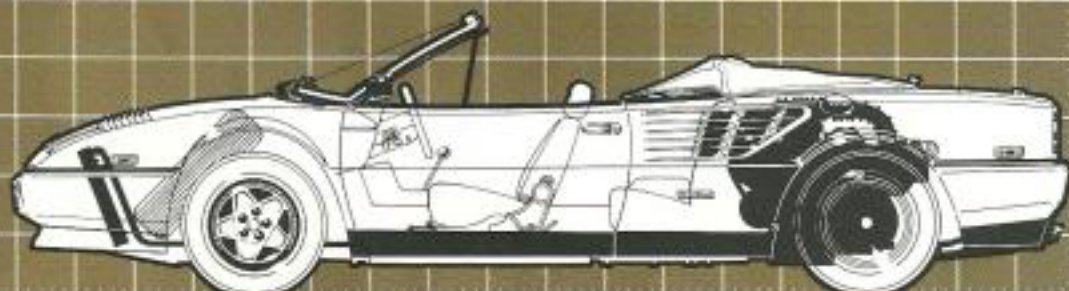
Thinking about that theoretical test, the one word I'm certain would continue to return in describing the

Mondial is "pleasant." Not a very fiery word for a Ferrari, perhaps, but not everyone who wants to own one these days has the compulsion to drive it as hard as some of us do. Nothing wrong with that.

I do have to wonder about one thing: Now Ferrari has named production models after such famous racing cars as the Mondial, the Testa Rossa, the GTO and, soon, the LM. When will it again produce winning sports racing cars, so there will be new names to use on future production cars?—Phil Hill



# ROAD TEST FERRARI MONDIAL CABRIOLET 3.2



SCALE: 1/8 in. (25.4 mm) DIVISIONS  
DRAWING BY BILL DOBSON

## PRICE

List price, all POE	\$78,100
Price as tested	\$78,100
Price as tested includes std equip. (air cond, elect. window lifts, elect. adj. mirrors)	

## IMPORTER

Ferrari North America, 777 Terrace Ave, Hasbrouck Heights, N.J. 07604

## ENGINE

Type	dohc 32-valve V-8
Bore x stroke, in./mm	3.27 x 2.90/83.0 x 73.6
Displacement, cu in./cc	194/3185
Compression ratio	9.2:1
Bhp @ rpm, SAE net	260 @ 7000
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft	213 @ 5500
Fuel injection	Bosch K-Jetronic
Fuel requirement	unleaded, 91-pump oct
Exhaust-emission control equipment	3-way catalyst with oxygen sensor, air injection

## CHASSIS & BODY

Layout	transverse mid-engine/rear drive
Body/frame	steel/tubular steel
Brake system	11.4-in. vented discs front & rear; vacuum assisted
Wheels	cast alloy, 190 TR 390
Tires	Michelin TRX; 220/55VR-390 front, 240/55VR-390 rear
Steering type	rack & pinion
Overall ratio	na
Turns, lock-to-lock	3.5
Turning circle, ft	41.0
Front suspension	unequal-length A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension	unequal-length A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar

## GENERAL

Curb weight, lb	3545
Test weight	3695
Weight dist (with driver), %	44/56
Wheelbase, in.	104.3
Track, front/rear	59.6/60.4
Length	182.7
Width	70.5
Height	49.6
Ground clearance	4.6
Overhang, fr	39.7/38.7
Trunk space, cu ft	5.0
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal.	18.5

## DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	5-sp manual
Gear ratios: 5th (0.92)	3.74:1
4th (1.24)	5.03:1
3rd (1.69)	6.86:1
2nd (2.35)	9.54:1
1st (3.41)	13.84:1
Final drive ratio	4.06:1

## ACCOMMODATION

Seating capacity, persons	2+2
Head room, ft	38.5/33.5
Seat width, in	2 x 18.0/2 x 18.5
Seatback adjustment, deg	45

## INSTRUMENTATION

Instruments: 180-mph speedometer, 10,000-rpm tach, oil press., coolant temp, oil temp, fuel level

## CALCULATED DATA

Lbr/hp (test weight)	14.2
Mph/1000 rpm (5th gear)	19.4
Engine revs/mi (60 mph)	3100
Piston travel, ft/mi	1380
R&T steering index	1.44

## ROAD TEST RESULTS

### ACCELERATION

Time to distance, sec:	
0-100 ft	3.4
0-500 ft	8.5
0-1320 ft (1/4 mi)	15.2
Speed at end of 1/4 mi, mph	95.0
Time to speed, sec:	
0-30 mph	2.6
0-60 mph	7.0
0-80 mph	11.7
0-100 mph	17.2

### SPEEDS IN GEARS

Maximum engine speed, rpm	7700
5th gear (rpm) mph	(7550) 145
4th	(7700) 110
3rd	(7700) 83
2nd	(7700) 60
1st	(7700) 40

### FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving, mpg	16.0
Cruising range, mi (1-gal. res)	280

### HANDLING

Lateral accel, 100-ft radius, g	0.84
Speed thru 700-ft slalom, mph	60.0

### BRAKES

Minimum stopping distances, ft:	
From 60 mph	151
From 80 mph	250
Control in panic stop	good
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop, lb	24
Fade: percent increase in pedal effort to maintain 0.5g deceleration in 6 stops from 60 mph	nil
Overall brake rating	good

### INTERIOR NOISE

Idle in neutral, dBA	73
Maximum, 1st gear	87
Constant 30 mph	74
50 mph	76
70 mph	79
90 mph	81

