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FERRARI MONDIAL t 25,000-MILE REPORT

Big thrills and massive bills are two sides of the same coin when you use a Ferrari as family transport, says Iain Robertson

Crunch time. No, not a shunt, or an unplanned excursion through roadside vegetation – although either one of those could prove just as costly. I'm talking about routine maintenance, Ferrari style.

When my 1992 Mondial t arrived last September, I reckoned I'd found the ultimate everyday exotic. A family-friendly 300bhp supercar, with the finest pedigree in the motoring world, for less than the cost of a BMW M3.

I even predicted that, with low depreciation to counter its high running costs, the Ferrari would prove cheaper to own over



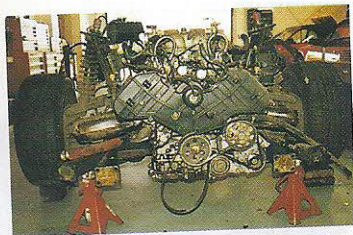
Foskers is a Ferrari fan's heaven

two years than a brand new Ford Mondeo.

Up until now, I've had no cause to doubt my original reasoning. Since twice leaving me stranded early in our relationship, the Mondial has been virtually impossible to fault. However, the service record says my car is now overdue for its two-yearly cambelt service and – as every Ferrari owner and dealer knows only too well – that means either major surgery and a hefty bill or sleepless nights and mechanical catastrophe.

Under normal circumstances, when a service manager confronts you with the news that your car will be out of commission for at least two weeks, that the entire drivetrain will have to be removed and that the bill will top £3500, you'd probably be grateful to have walked away from the wreck unscathed.

These, however, are not normal circumstances. This car is a Ferrari and £3525 is the very least that supplying ↓



Removed for work, V8 looks huge

FERRARI MONDIAL t

Car run for Indefinitely

Introduced in UK March 1989

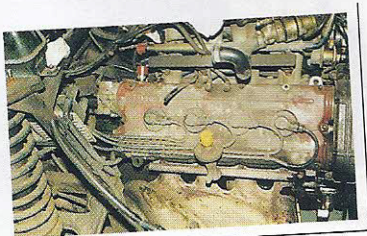
Changes since then None. Production ceased 1994

What makes it special?

Genuine supercar looks, performance, handling and pedigree plus two-plus-two practicality for the price of a new mass-produced coupe

Previous reports 10.12.97, 15.4.98

Pulling power and smoothness have been boosted and Mondial even sounds better after its service



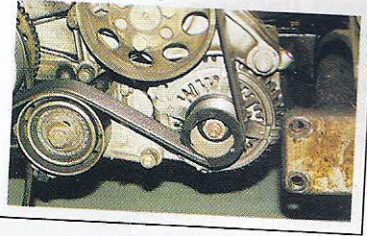
Servicing the 3.4-litre V8 engine...



...plus repairing undertray and...



...damaged alternator as well as...



...replacing cambelt cost a fortune

◆ dealer Maranello Sales Ltd will charge for a routine 25,000-mile/two-year service.

Fortunately, several independent Ferrari specialists are also equipped to carry out this work at significantly reduced cost. Foskers (Brands Hatch) Ltd is such an outfit and comes recommended by both the Ferrari Owners Club and a friend who has entrusted them with the maintenance of his Mondial for several years.

Run by Jeff Fosker and his brother Colin, Foskers was established by their father and has been in the business of looking after Italy's finest for 26 years. The operation is professional and well equipped

but relatively small with just six full-time employees. This can lead to a lengthy queue for service work, but their low overheads mean Foskers' labour costs are reasonably low at £41.12 per hour.

Jeff's estimate of £1500 for the Mondial's cambelt service, although not cheap by conventional standards, looked like a bargain. He got the work.

The first task, and the main reason for the expense, is the removal of the rear portion of the chassis, upon which is mounted the V8 engine, gearbox, rear suspension and exhaust system, which must all come out.

This involves undoing about



Matching leather seat for junior

20 bolts, disconnecting all the electrics, draining all the fluids and literally lifting the car out of the way. In my Mondial's case it also revealed a few unforeseen defects.

The front of the engine was spattered with baked-on oil which had leaked from a defective camshaft oil seal. The chassis was showing signs of corrosion and would require Waxoyl treatment. A grounding incident had destroyed the engine bay undertray and knocked a huge chunk out of the low-slung alternator pulley. The red cam cover paint had flaked off. And the main air



Visiting workshops offers rare chance to see Ferraris from unusual angles

conditioning hose was kinked and split near the compressor. I had suspected something along those lines, having noticed a gradual decline in the air con's performance.

To make matters worse, Jeff informed me that the Mondial's tyres were so worn that they would not pass an MoT.

My predicted ownership costs went from realistic to ridiculous in an instant. Well, not exactly an instant; more like a month, in fact. Difficulty obtaining replacements for the alternator pulley and undertray meant my car was off the road for four weeks. I ended up paying for a complete new alternator, as the Ferrari factory no longer supplies the correct pulley separately.

The damage was £2920 including all parts, labour and four new Goodyear Eagle F1s. Not Foskers' fault – their standard service work accounted for just £1557.22, as predicted – but frightening nevertheless.

Looking further ahead, however, these costs should be put into context. My car will not require this service again for two years or 25,000 miles,



New tyres have made big difference

cam covers black instead of red.

The most significant improvement, though, comes from the Goodyears, which are quieter, smoother riding, quicker steering and much grippier – particularly in the wet – than the old Eagles.

Am I still in love with my Ferrari? You bet. Expensive to run or not, I won't be parting with it in the near future. It is more practical and entertaining than I had hoped.



Mondial still looks stunning, apart from some stonechips on paintwork

whichever arrives first. The tyres should be good for at least 10,000 miles. And the intermediate services at 31,250 miles, 37,500 miles and 43,750 miles should cost just £350, £500 and £350 respectively.

I am also relieved to say that the Mondial has benefited significantly from my investment. The engine starts more cleanly, feels smoother, pulls like never before and even sounds rortier than pre-service.

Foskers also made a terrific job of cleaning up the engine bay, although they did manage to paint the

And it is genuinely family friendly. Indeed, we travel in the Mondial so often as a family that I even commissioned the Oxted Trimming Company to re-trim my young son's safety seat in cream hide. ☉



Pedigree offers key to car's appeal



LOGBOOK

TEST STARTED SEPT '97

Mileage at start	18,100
Mileage now	25,048

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Our test best	19.8mpg
Our test worst	15.4mpg
Our test average	18.1mpg

OPTIONS

Electric sunroof

PERFORMANCE

Road test 9.1.91

PRICES

List price new (Jan '92)	£69,310	
Used price (Sept '97)	£37,200	
Value now*		
Trade	Private	Retail
£30,000	£32,750	£35,495

*from The Book Used Car Price Guide

0-30mph	2.2sec
0-60mph	5.6sec
0-100mph	13.9sec
30-70mph	5.1sec
50-70mph	7.4sec
Standing	14.2sec/
qtr mile	101mph
Top speed	154mph

SERVICING AND TYRES

MILEAGE	COST (inc VAT)
25,000	Includes recommended bi-annual cambelt replacement £1557.22
31,250	£350.00
37,500	£500.00
43,750	£350
50,000	Includes recommended bi-annual cambelt replacement £1557.22
Labour rates (independent Ferrari specialist)	£41.12 per hour
Tyres Goodyear Eagle F1 205/55	£110.39
Goodyear Eagle F1 225/55	£125.67

FAULTS

Rev counter, alternator, engine management unit and heater fan switch failed	All replaced under warranty
Flaking paint on window frames	
Rust on lower edge of both doors	
Leaking camshaft oil seals	

COSTS OVER 7000 MILES

Fuel	£1176.00	Total running costs	£4106.79
Oil (non-service)	£10.00	Running costs	
Service and parts	£1557.22	per mile	59p
Tyres	£472.12	Cost per mile including	
Repairs	£891.45	depreciation	£1.17

INSURANCE

25-year-old man, single, two speeding fines, five years' no-claims bonus, living in reasonably high-risk Middlesex (£500 excess)	£1242.00
35-year-old man, married, clean licence, five years' no-claims bonus, in low-risk Swindon (£500 excess)	£508.56

All quotes from Rauch & Stallard (05001 05001)

WHAT WE LIKE

Fabulous flexibility, power, refinement and sound from the 300bhp 32-valve 3.4-litre V8 engine. The incredibly accomplished chassis combines crisp, responsive steering and powerful, tactile brakes with superb body control and excellent ride comfort, thanks to surprisingly effective three-position cockpit-adjustable damping. We're also impressed by the space, packaging/styling compromise, build quality, gorgeous toolkit and peerless pedigree.

WHAT WE DON'T LIKE

Temperamental gearchange, pathetic ground clearance, heavy fuel consumption, major service costs, impractical leather colour.

FINAL VIEW

Okay, running a used Ferrari on a regular basis may not be quite as cheap as we originally predicted, when we rashly claimed it could cost less to run than a Ford Mondeo. But it is practical, durable and thoroughly intoxicating to drive. If you are considering buying a used Mondial, take the plunge. So long as you take time to find a good one and are realistic about the running costs, you'll be glad you did. You can't have this one, though – it's not for sale.