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## 328 & MONDIAL

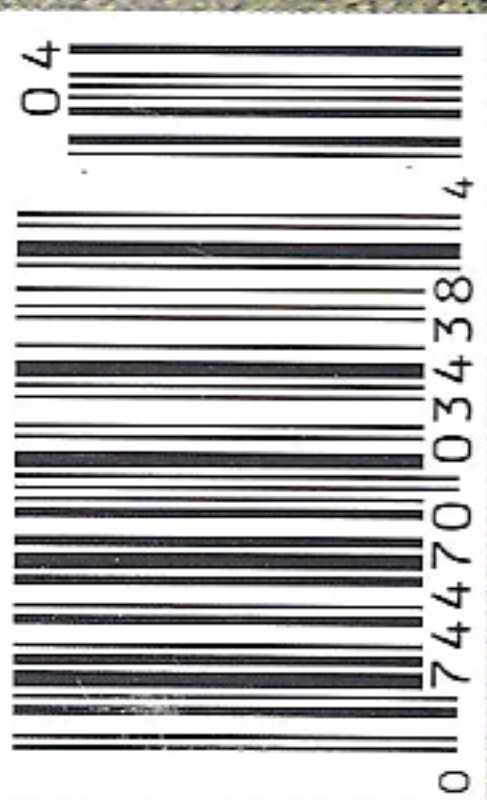
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# Sibling Rivalry

In the 1980s, Ferrari offered its customers a choice of two-seat or 2+2 V8 models. ZACHARY MAYNE compares the 3.2-liter 328 and Mondial.

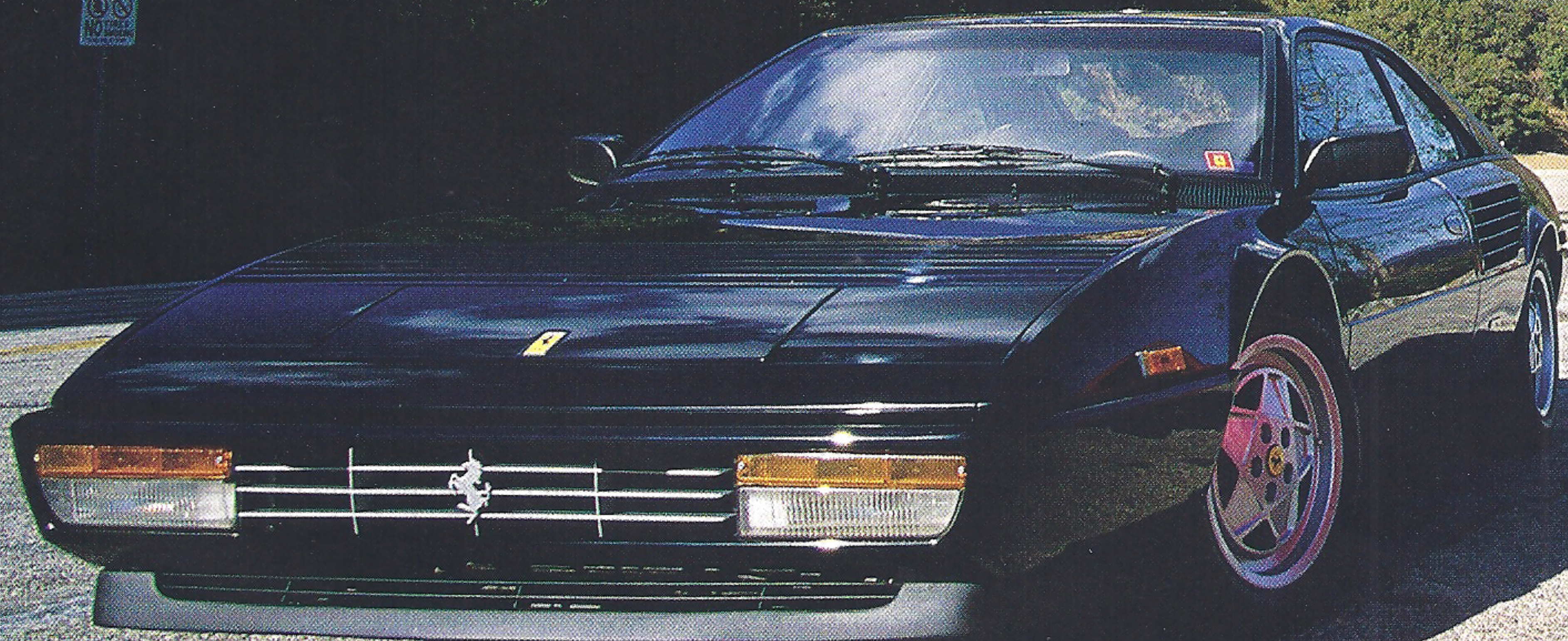
**P**arked at a scenic overlook on Mulholland Drive, the Ferrari 328 GTB and Mondial complement each other perfectly. The 328 is the extrovert of the two, all blood-red paint and sexy curves to the Mondial's restrained and standoffish air of subtle elegance, an

attitude reinforced by its moody black hue.

Underneath the dissimilar sheetmetal, however, these Maranello stablemates are very closely related. They share a mid-mounted 3.2-liter V8 paired with a five-speed transaxle, as well as the same

basic tubular steel chassis, independent suspension and four-wheel disc brakes.

These mechanical similarities led us to wonder just how different the 328 and the Mondial really are. Luckily, we had lined up a day of back-to-back driving in the two Ferraris.





Introduced in 1985, the 328 brought out the full potential intrinsic in the 308 series. Though the lines of the new car were still pure 308, minor changes to the body and bumpers, as well as some additional air intakes, succeeded at bringing the '70s sports car strikingly up to date. But the most significant improvement was to the transversely mounted motor, which now claimed 3,185cc of displacement for 260 bhp at 7,000 rpm and 214 lb-ft of torque at 5,500 rpm—increases of 258cc, 30 hp and 26 lb-ft over the final iteration of the 308.

Our featured 328 is a 1988.5 GTB (s/n 77394) owned by Larry O'Rourke III. (The 1988.5s received the suspension upgrades of the 1989 model, though not that car's anti-lock brakes.) "I specifically like the GTB version of the 328," explains O'Rourke. "It's much better-looking than the GTS, and it handles better, too." The GTB is also a rarer beast than the GTS: O'Rourke and some fellow Ferrari Owners Club members estimate there are only 125-150 328 GTBs in the U.S., compared to more than 3,000 GTSs.



**Left, top:** Mondial's interior is spacious and comfortable. **Left, middle:** Front "trunk" is filled with spare tire, mechanicals. **Right:** Though intended for touring, the Mondial carves corners with precision.





O'Rourke's Ferrari is in incredibly original condition, with just 12,500 miles on the clock. He acquired the car in June 2004 after an 18-month search for the perfect 328. "I am never going to get rid of it," he says. He has tweaked the distributor to European specifications and is planning to add a Tubi exhaust system, but otherwise the car will stay stock.

The Mondial first appeared in 1980, replacing the 308 GT4. The new 2+2 shared the 308 GTB/GTS's engine, and received the upgraded Quattrovalve powerplant at the same time as its two-seat siblings. Thus, it was only natural that the Mondial receive an upgrade to 3.2-liter power when the 328 debuted.

Our test Mondial (s/n 70617) is owned by Melvin Greenspan. The car is in stunning shape; it won a Platinum Award at the 2004 Concorso

Italiano. "I also won the GT 2+2 Award, which they give to cars that score well in the concours and are actually driven regularly on the street," says Greenspan.

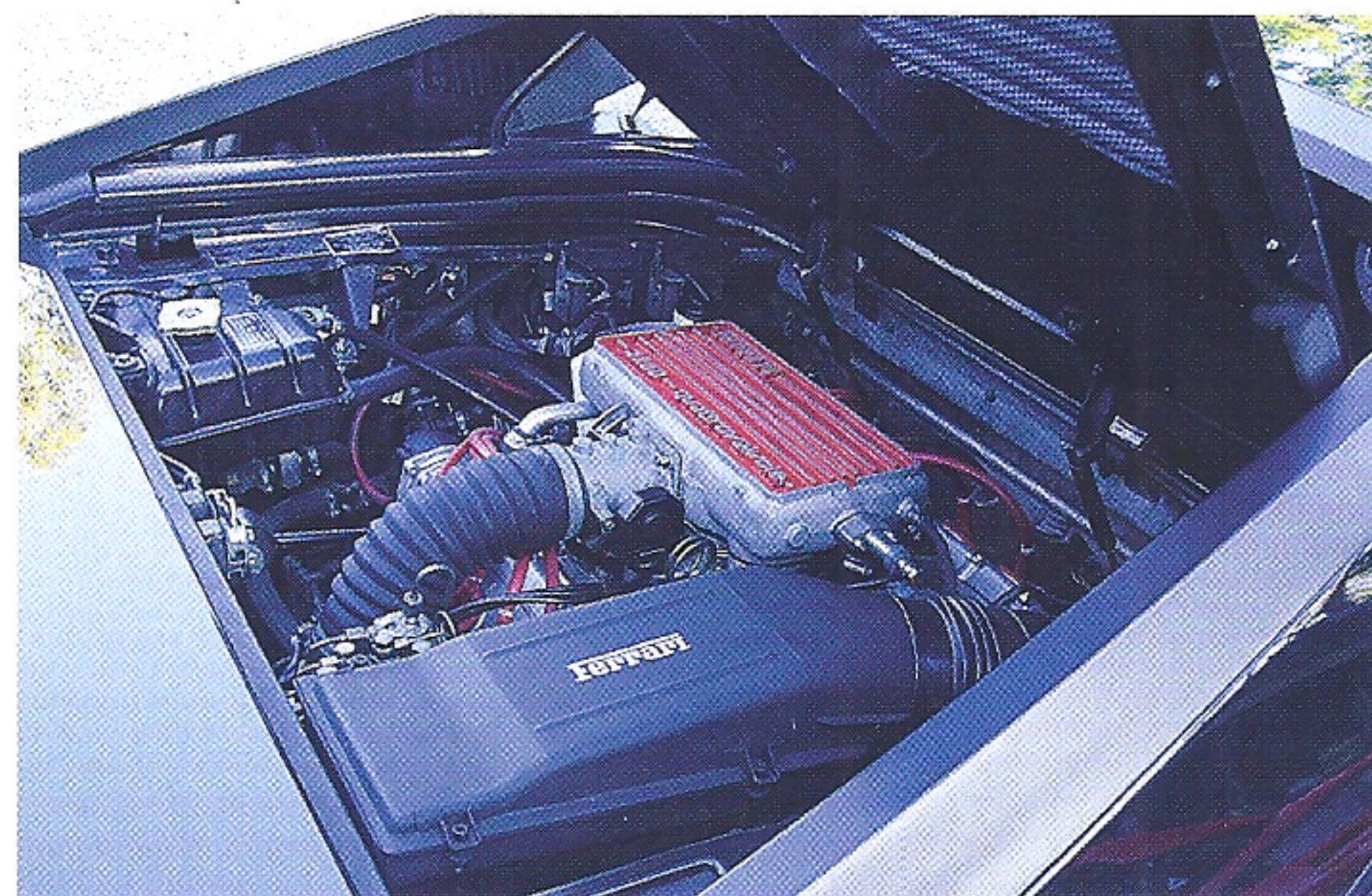
This car really is regularly driven: It has racked up 105,000 miles so far. "I bought it four years ago, and have put about 35,000 miles on it," the owner says. "I used to track it, but stopped due to the high mileage."

The Mondial's basic mechanicals have never been rebuilt, but the cosmetics were recently redone, a process that included a full respray in the original color. If there is a perfect color for the Mondial, it has got to be black, a sentiment echoed by the 328 owner.

"The Mondial has great styling, and the lines of the coupe are phenomenal," offers O'Rourke, as we admire the car in the mid-morning light. "The black really shows off the details."

First up for driving impressions is the Mondial. Tug on the delicate, oval-shaped metal door handle, swing open the door and slide inside; first impressions are of a relatively spacious cabin with controls that are all within easy reach. The steering wheel cants away at a noticeable angle, while the footwell is a little cramped in

the typical Italian style. The gauges are classic-looking white on black, and even the thin-rimmed steering wheel has a classic look and feel to it. The seats are a little flat and underbolstered, and quickly date the car's origins in the early '80s, but once you get comfortable, the Mondial's cockpit is a fine place to be.





Twist the key, and after a brief whir from the starter motor, the V8 burbles to life. It's a bit quieter than we expected; credit that primarily to the Mondial's 2+2 seating configuration, which puts distance and extra upholstery between the driver and the engine bay.

Slot the gear lever into the dog-leg first gear, let out the medium-weighted clutch and we're off. The shifter is positive, but initially it takes a bit of focus to slide the lever cleanly through its metal gate. The steering is heavy at parking-lot speeds,

so it's an effort to maneuver the car at first.

Once out on the open road, however, the steering lightens significantly. There's plenty of feedback through the wheel, and we can feel minor variations in the road, enriching the overall experience. The Mondial's long wheelbase—about 12 inches longer than the 328's—gives it a very supple ride; the car soaks up bumps, dips and surface irregularities very nicely. It's readily apparent that freeway jaunts would be a relaxing experience.

Acceleration from the 260-bhp V8 is strong, with a relatively linear power delivery that keeps building as it approaches redline. Still, you have to keep the revs high to get the most from the motor. In typical Ferrari fashion, the engine revs

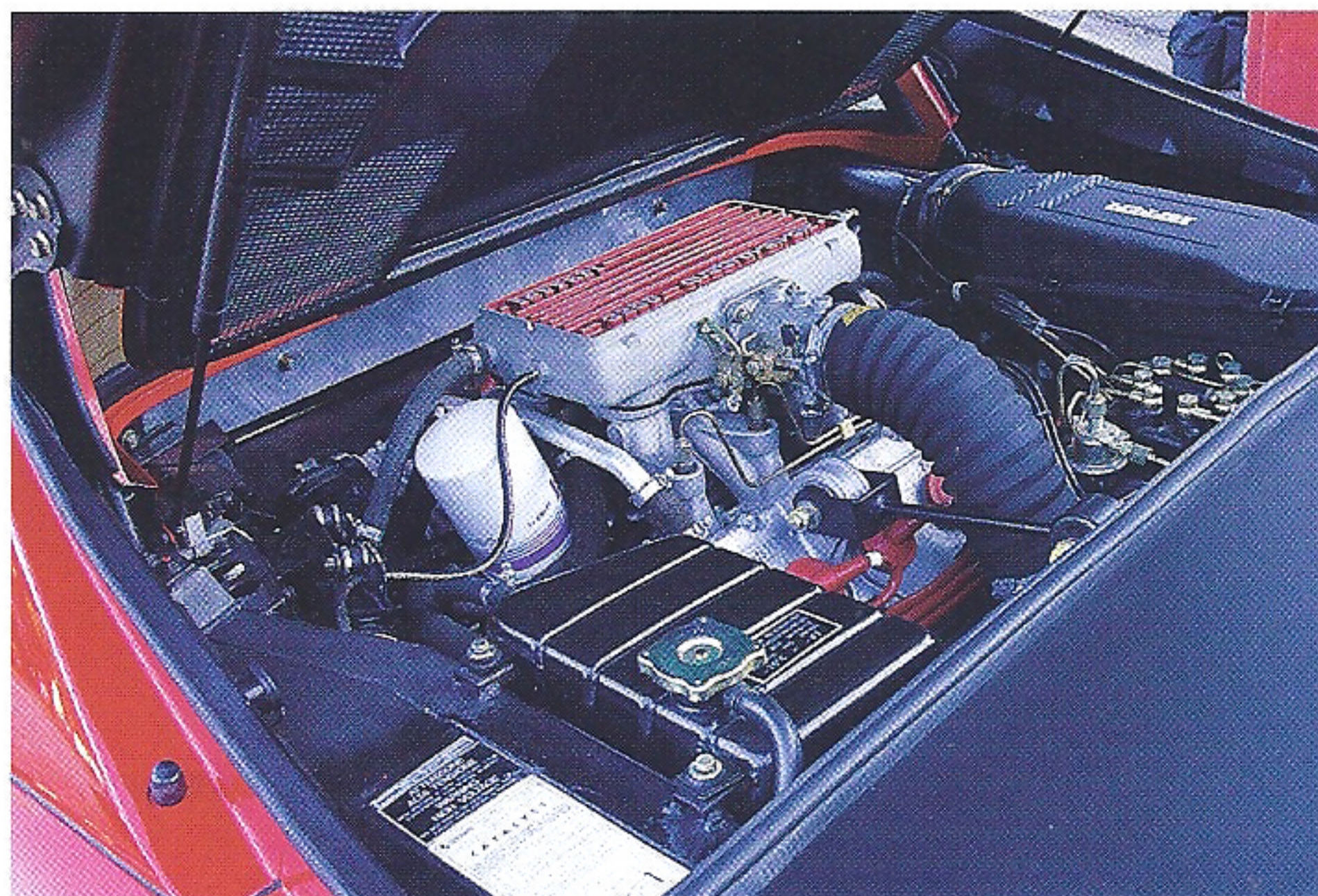
very willingly, probably even more than most in this high-mileage example.

The Mondial's weight—3,395 pounds, compared to the 328 GTB's 3,134—does take a toll on acceleration. The zero-to-60 dash comes in at around 6.4 seconds, about a half second slower than the 328.

The brakes have a nice solid feel, and slow the car with plenty of authority. Hard on the brakes, blip the throttle, guide the chrome lever through its gate for a downshift and turn the wheel. The Mondial delivers crisp turn-in with minimal body lean, while the responsive steering allows the car to be placed accurately. Push too hard into a turn and excessive understeer rears its head, but lifting off the throttle tucks the nose in nicely.



**Left: 328 thrives in the twisties, with quick turn-in and rock-solid stability. Bottom, left: 328's interior is tighter and more sporting than the Mondial's. Right, middle: Mid-mounted 3.2-liter V8 is much louder in the two-seater than in the 2+2.**



Plant the gas pedal after the apex and the back end steps out very progressively—this chassis can be perfectly balanced with the throttle. When pushed to the limit, the Mondial remains composed.

In the end, the Mondial excels exactly as the factory intended. It's a comfortable, quiet GT that will happily carry two adults up front plus two kids in the back, or four adults in a pinch. With its spacious interior and relatively large rear trunk, the Mondial could easily be taken on a long road trip.

But there's a serious driver's car underneath that conservative GT suit. After a drive in the Mondial, 328 owner O'Rourke agrees that, despite the Mondial's luxury flavor, it's still a fun drive. "It's definitely not as tight as the 328, but it handles and turns very nicely, and feels very sporty," he says.

Stepping into the 328 after the Mondial, we're immediately aware of this two-seater's sporting intentions. For example, the 328's seats have better bolstering, and the seating position is more laid-back. The cozy 328 cockpit also lacks the airy feel of the Mondial's, and the fact that this is a Berlinetta rather than a Spyder—okay, a targa—adds to the intimacy.

We're also much more aware of the 328's front end. From the driver's seat, the front of the Mondial smoothly drops away; in the 328, the left fender slants up and out, partially obstructing our line of sight. But it also offers a visual evolution of the rounder 246 Dino's fender, and contributes greatly to a feeling of really being tucked into the car.

The 328's thick, anatomically designed steering wheel is more purposeful than the Mondial's. Twist the key, and after that same brief whir from the starter, the engine booms to life with a *lot* more authority than in the Mondial.

While the motor sounds terrific, the increased decibels starkly illustrate one of the primary distinctions between

the two cars. The Mondial would be a pleasure to drive daily in stop-and-go traffic, while the 328—although still suitable—would be a more tiring ride.

Slotting the gear lever into first is the same dog-leg routine as in the Mondial, and both cars share the heavy low-speed steering that lightens up on the open road. But it's apparent before we reach the first corner that the two-seater, despite sharing the same basic DNA as the 2+2, is an entirely different proposition altogether.

The 328 is a lot stiffer, with very little rear squat under acceleration, and responds with an immediacy the Mondial lacks. On the other hand, the 328's shorter wheelbase means it doesn't soak up bumps and dips with the composure of the longer car.

Thanks to less weight, the 328 accelerates a little more quickly down the same straights. The barely muted rumbling and thrashing of the engine so close behind our heads really goads us on, and the soul-stirring shriek of the motor at the upper end of the rev range is only a pedal prod away. Grab a downshift, turn the wheel into a turn and the 328's true purpose comes to light. Turn-in is quick and absolutely rock solid; our overall impression is of a very bal-

anced chassis, one with higher limits than the Mondial's.

We do notice that, despite the shorter wheelbase, the 328 doesn't seem as keen to let the back tires step out, and that the chassis doesn't seem as willing to pivot on its axis. This could be a symptom of the different tires the two cars wear, or could even be down to tire pressures. The 328's chassis is also not as forgiving under trail braking, and gives the impression that it might oversteer in a slightly less predictable fashion than the Mondial once the limits are reached.

Ultimately, though, the 328 has more outright adhesion and we are able to attain higher speeds through the turns before oversteer appears. Get it right and it's hugely rewarding. Send the four-valve motor singing towards the upper end of the tach down the straights, haul on the brakes, guide the gear lever through its gate with that metallic *snick*—it's pure Ferrari. In fast sweepers, the 328 tracks very true and stable, whereas the extra weight of the Mondial takes its toll, resulting in more lean and slightly less grip.

We return from our drive in the 328 with our hearts pounding faster than from the Mondial—another barometer of the differences between the two cars.

After Greenspan samples the 328 on the same stretch of tarmac, his reaction is similar to ours. "The first thing I noticed was the placement of the pedals," he says. "They're more offset to the right than in the Mondial, so heel-and-toeing is a lot easier." He also notes that the fatter, smaller steering wheel gives different feedback than the Mondial's wheel, which he says feels a little more isolated. "In terms of power, I didn't notice much of a difference, but it sounds a lot different."

So is he ready to trade his more spacious and accommodating Mondial for a sportier 328? Not quite. "My car is really easy to drive," he says. "If I want to drive up to Monterey for the weekend, I just hop in and go. And it's a car you can really *use*, since you can throw stuff in the back seats."

At the end of the day, we come away impressed with these two Ferraris. The Mondial is a blast to drive and offers similar performance to the 328, but it's clearly the better daily driver of the two, with a quieter, more spacious cockpit and a smoother ride. For all its performance and versatility, the Mondial is also a bargain: 3.2 coupes regularly sell in the \$30,000 range.

Aesthetically, the Mondial's styling generally polarizes opinions into the love-it or hate-it camps. It's not an evolution of a line of Ferraris (like the 328) and it's certainly one of Pininfarina's subtler designs, but it's still a beautiful automobile with absolutely perfect proportions. It's the kind of car that people notice, though not necessarily as a Ferrari.

The 328's lines are quintessentially Ferrari; this stunning car turns heads wherever it goes. The two-seater offers a purer driving experience than the Mondial, with everything from the seating position to the exhaust noise ratcheting up the driver's adrenaline. The 328 has very few compromises beyond available space, though it does take a little more expertise to exploit its chassis fully. But in the end, it's the more rewarding driving experience. That extra performance does come at a cost, however: Excellent GTBs can sell for more than \$50,000.

We didn't set out to find the better car, and we didn't. Both the 328 and the Mondial excel at their respective tasks. Prospective owners need only consider their needs, and one of these Ferraris will definitely fit the bill. ●

