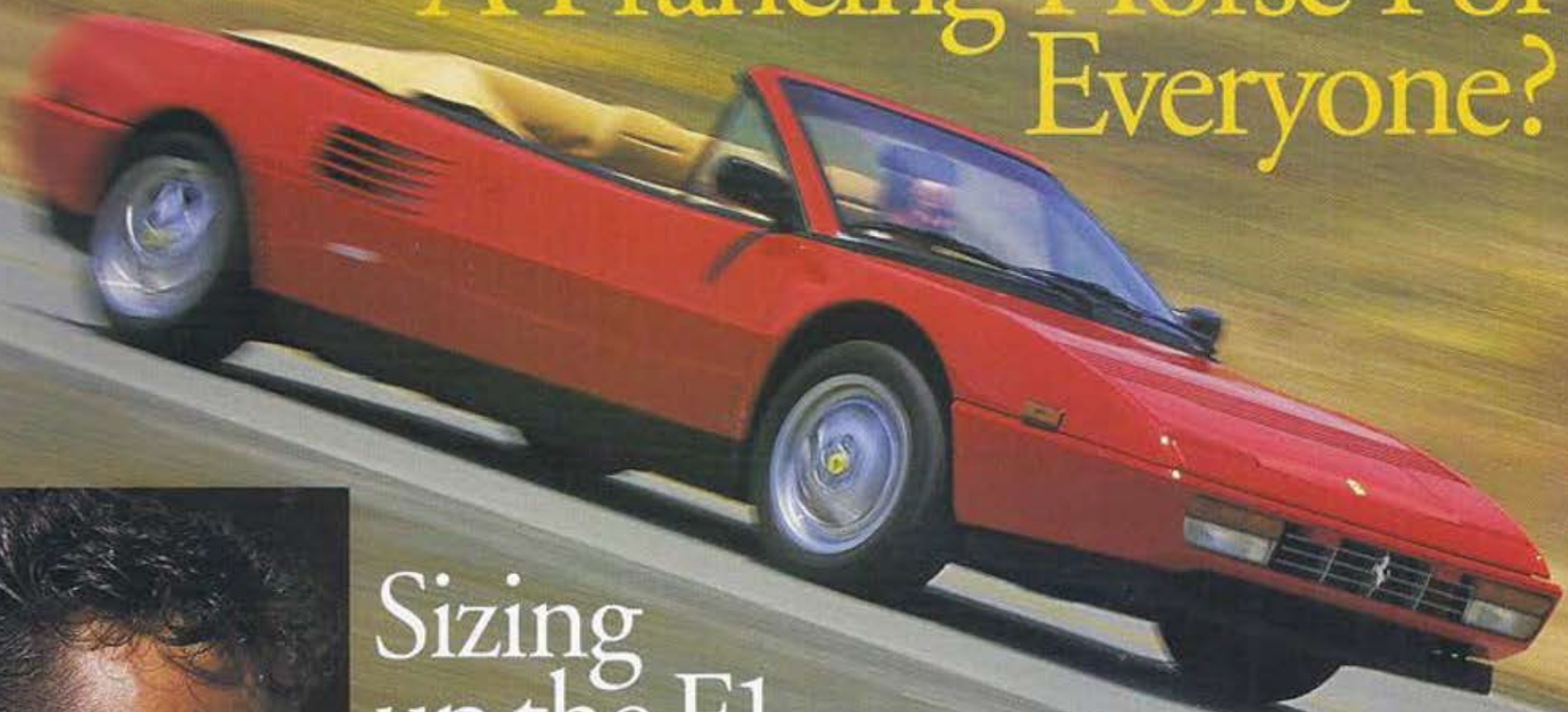


FORZA

Ferrari Mondial Buyer's Guide
A Prancing Horse For
Everyone?



Sizing
up the F1
Season

One-of-a-Kind
Ferrari GT
Classic!



NUMBER 19
October 1999
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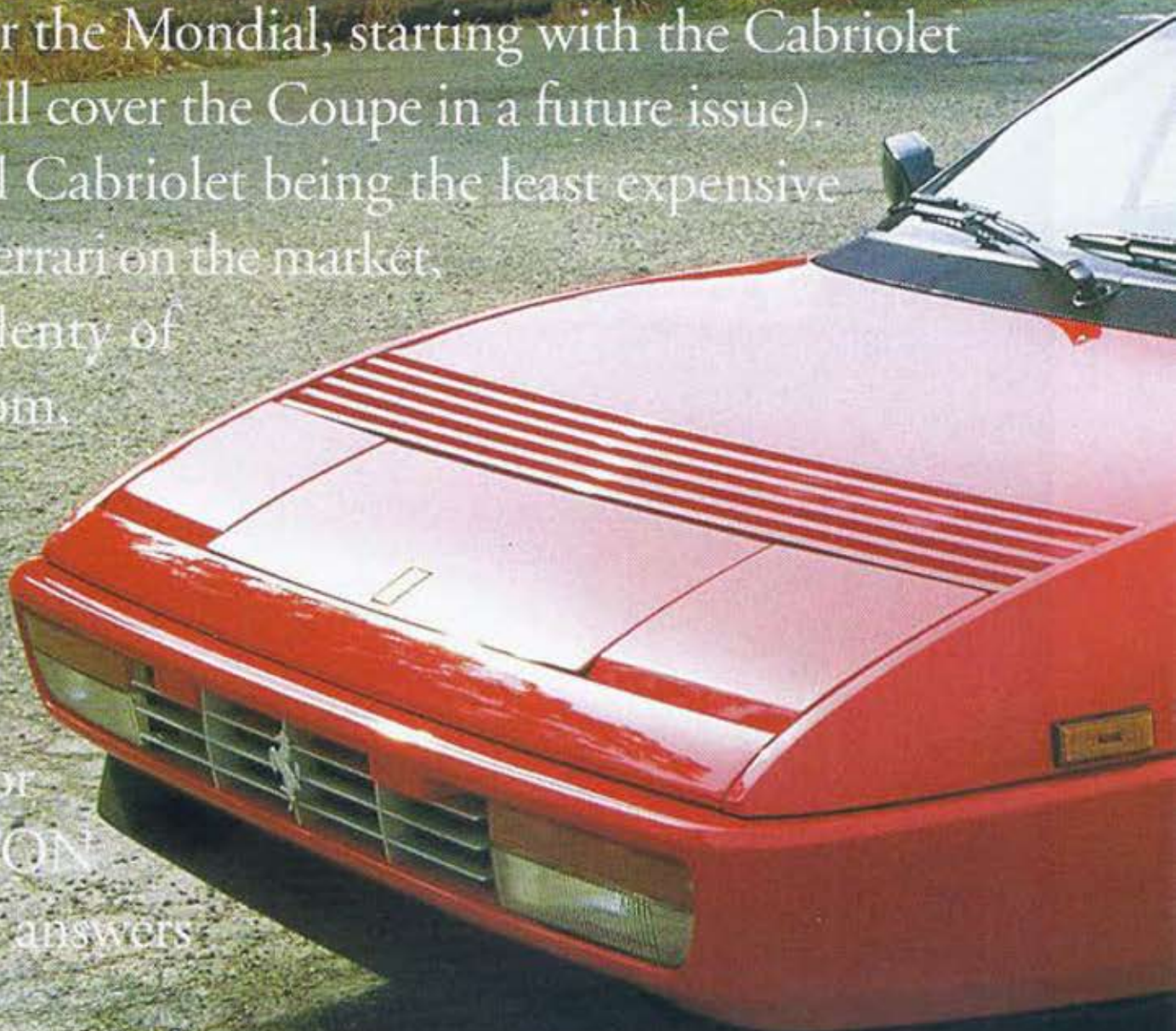
Mondial Cabriolet: A Ferrari For Everyone?

In response to numerous requests, we have put together a Buyer's Guide for the Mondial, starting with the Cabriolet in this issue (we will cover the Coupe in a future issue).

With the Mondial Cabriolet being the least expensive wind-in-the-hair Ferrari on the market, and there being plenty of them to choose from,

the interest in this special breed of Prancing Horse is understandable.

But is it a Ferrari for everyone? WINSTON GOODFELLOW answers the question.



Buying a Mondial Cabriolet is the easiest way to get your hands on an open-air Ferrari. Produced in large numbers, relatively speaking, they are considerably less costly than Maranello's other spyders. They also allow you to enjoy the wind-in-the-hair option on a daily basis by utilizing modern components and more practical features than their contemporary, two-seat brethren.

So why do numerous die-hard *Ferraristi* continue to look down on the Mondial? Is such a viewpoint justified, or is it a result of preconceived prejudices rather than extended experience behind the wheel?

History

The Mondial initially appeared as a Pininfarina-designed 2+2 coupe at the 1980 Geneva Auto Show. The "Mondial" was derived from Ferrari's successful 2-liter, 4-cylinder race car of the mid-fifties.

Word of an open variant appeared in the US press in May 1983, when *Road & Track* magazine reported that "Ferrari's Mondial 8...will appear in a convertible version beginning this summer. Only a handful will be built, and the work will be done by an outside contractor."

The actual wait turned out to be several months longer, for the Mondial Cabriolet (likely s/n 47247) was not introduced until

January 1984 at the Brussels Auto Show. "Word is the first six months' production is slated for the US dealers," *Road & Track* magazine noted at the time, "taking advantage of the resurging interest in topless cars in America. The price has been pegged at \$65,000."

Though the Mondial Cabriolet carried a Pininfarina badge on its flanks, "...this car was designed in Modena, using berlinetta parts below the belt line," Angelo Tito Anselmi wrote, quoting "unofficial sources" in his authoritative book, *Le Ferrari di Pininfarina*. "Pininfarina's contribution consisted only of small corrections to the proposed line of the canvas top."



Besides being the first full convertible Ferrari since the seventies' Daytona Spyder, the Mondial Cabriolet was noted for its engine. Unlike the original Mondial 8 coupe, the Cabriolet and its V8 stablemates' *tipo F105A*, the 3-liter V8 now had four valves per cylinder. In US trim, quoted horsepower was 230 @ 6800 rpm, 25 more than the original coupe's 2-valve *tipo F106 B's* 205 @ 6600 rpm.

The engine's extra *oomph* immediately caught the testers' attention. "The 4-valve engine has answered those critics who found today's Ferraris a little slow on the uptake," Kevin Smith reported in *Motor Trend's* January 1984 issue, "and its 230 flexible *cavalli* move the Mondial with real spirit."

EXHILARATING PERFORMANCE AND WIND-IN-THE-HAIR PLEASURE: One of the major differences between the Mondial t Cabriolet and its predecessors is its 3.4-liter V8 engine (below): unlike the earlier cars, it was mounted longitudinally rather than transversally. Producing an even 300 hp, the t's powerplant makes it by far the best-performing among the various models in the Mondial series. The convertible top (bottom photograph) fits very snugly under its cover, yet even on the last of the Cabriolets produced, it remains cumbersome to operate. But all this seems to be forgiven when the top is down (photograph to the right).



Gray Market

● A handful of European Mondials were imported to America. Should you be considering a European-spec Mondial Cabriolet, or have one already and want to be sure it conforms to US requirements, the Department of Transportation's Dick Merritt encourages you to speak with him at 202-366-5300; fax is 202-493-2266. Be sure to have the car's five-digit chassis number available.



"If you are an affluent open-air driving enthusiast," *Road & Track* seconded in their May 1984 road test, addressing why someone should choose a Mondial over the more sporting GTBi and GTSi, "there is now a pretty good reason: a true folding soft-top version.... Add to this the *quattrovalvole* cylinder heads and some 25 more *cavalli* and you have a Mondial with some spirit."

Referring to the Cabriolet's character and styling, "Up, the black fabric top gives the Mondial a rakish line," *R&T* noted. "Down, it makes the car festive and inviting.

This is the car for the boulevardier, the Monte Carlo or Newport Beach sportsman hard at play."

On the road, they found "the 4-valve engine gives vastly improved performance off the line" by hitting 60 mph in 7.6 seconds. Top speed was 138 mph. These figures are quite impressive, considering that "the shifting...needs to be done with absolute assurance."

Although the steering had a "direct, positive feel," *R&T* felt that "some (drivers) might find it a little heavy. It's a bit slow

for low-speed maneuvering, and the turning circle is rather large, but for fast road work it really does the job."

Other on-road drawbacks were "the Cabriolet's structure...transmitting some flexing and shaking," and "the suspension is supple but noisy over sharp irregularities (producing)...noticeable bump-steer from anything really protruding from the surface."

Packaging faults included a lack of space in the rear seats; an interior that "wasn't especially luxurious for a \$65,000



Good & Bad

GOOD

- A full convertible Ferrari that doesn't break the bank to purchase
- Proven powertrain
- Practical, can be used daily
- Cab forward enhances driving feel
- Nimble road manners for a 4-seat car
- Unlike 308s, 328s, and most 348s, you *really* get to hear the engine

BAD

- More so than most other Ferraris, the electrics are prone to trouble
- Steering heavy on 4-valves and 3.2s
- 4-valves feel underpowered, and the 3.2 is only slightly better
- Interior fit and finish is delicate and easily susceptible to sun damage
- If anything breaks on the top, you have to replace all (about \$2,300)
- Top is difficult and cumbersome to use, and can leak in the rain
- Metric tire size on 4-valves makes rubber difficult to replace

car, nor particularly well arranged"; a "mediocre" ventilation system; and an instrument panel that "lacked visibility" for some drivers.

Still, *R&T* came away smiling: "We now feel Ferrari has a Mondial with real *raison d'être*; faster, better looking with wind-in-the-hair driving and all the attention from the sidelines you can handle...(this) Ferrari has the performance to provide the most exhilarating open-air driving you could want."

After 629 Mondial Cabriolets had been built, Ferrari introduced the Mondial 3.2 Cabriolet at the Frankfurt Auto Show in 1985. The *tipo F105C* V8 engine displaced 3185 cc, raising US-spec horsepower to 260 @ 7000 rpm.

According to Keith Bluemel in "*Original Ferrari V8*," other changes to the Cabriolet included a revised lower body design, bumpers that now matched the body color, a grille similar to the 328's, a revised wheel design, and different interior trim and instruments.

Production started with s/n 59393, and continued into 1989. ABS brakes became optional in 1987, and standard equipment the following year. The last of the 810 3.2 Cabriolets was s/n 78895.

Production Numbers

- Mondial Cabriolet production started in 1983 with s/n 47247, and ended in 1993 with s/n 97733. The total number produced was 2,449. Broken down by model, production of the 1983-85 4-valve Cabriolet was 629 (s/n 47247-s/n 59163); the 3.2 Cabriolet was 810 (s/n 59393-s/n 78895); and the 1989-93 t Cabriolet was 1,010 (s/n 80339-s/n 97733).

Succeeding the 3.2 Cabriolet was the "t" Cabriolet. The most refined of the series, the exterior had cleaner air intakes, slightly different rear wings, and lower profile, rectangular headlights that replaced the earlier versions' twin headlights. The interior was now completely new, with a different dash, instrument layout and binnacle; a new steering wheel, center console, seats and door panels; and rear seats with backs that flipped down to become package trays.

Once again, the biggest news was found under the rear bonnet: the engine had grown from 3185 cc to 3405 cc, and its



Service Costs

- Ferrari and Lamborghini specialist Al Burtoni of Milano Imports in Gilroy, California, offers these guidelines for annual operating expenses and major servicing.
- Routine repairs, (spark plugs), and fluid changes: \$750
- Major service every 15,000 miles (without cam belts): \$3,500–\$4,000
- Major service every 30,000 miles or 5-8 years (with cam belts): \$4,200–\$4,900
- Engine rebuild: \$25,000–\$35,000
- Transaxle rebuild: \$7,000–\$8,000

positioning had changed—it now sat in the chassis longitudinally, with the gearbox mounted transversely (hence, the “t” designation) behind it. Horsepower rating was an even 300 @ 7000 rpm.

Other major mechanical changes included electronically adjustable shocks, power-assisted rack-and-pinion steering and, starting later in production, a Valco automatic transmission that retained the model’s conventional gearchange.

When Mondial t Cabriolet production started with s/n 80339, it was truly a *different* car. With 0-60 dispatched in 6.6 seconds and the quarter mile in 15 seconds, *Road &*



Track chopped a full second off the 4-valve’s times recorded in 1984. Top speed also improved, increasing 18 mph to 154. *Car & Driver’s* t Cabriolet was even faster, sprinting to 60 in 6.2 seconds, reaching the 1/4 mile in 14.5, and seeing a final top speed of 159 mph.

Such performance had *R&T* concluding, “Driven fast or slow, the Mondial is exhilarating.” *Car & Driver* weighed in with a similar opinion, referencing Ferrari’s 100+ GP wins in the process: “(While) the Mondial t Cabriolet provides only a taste of the Grand Prix experience...it’s a stronger flavor than almost any other car can provide.

LEATHER LUXURY: A major difference between the t and its predecessors was the interior (top). By far the most refined of the lot, the t has different front and rear seats (the backs of the rear seats fold down to form package trays), different door panels, dash and steering wheel, and a center console over the transmission tunnel. The t Cabriolet’s tool kit came in a stylish carrying case (above). Inside the kit (far right), were two “shelves” (shown here is the bottom one), containing the tire filler can, spare light bulbs, etc. In the photograph to the right, the original keys and key fob.

Plus, (it) is easily the most comfortable and practical of the high-priced Italian exotics."

Still, the t Cabriolet could not escape the controversy that dogged the Mondial t model line since its introduction in 1980. "(A)mong the Ferrari cognoscenti," *R&T* observed in their 1990 road test, "some see the Mondial t Cabriolet as a concession to the times, hardly worthy of the Cavallino emblem. Other Ferrari folks, however, consider it the most useful car out of Maranello, and thus the most coveted in any realistic day-in-day-out sense."

And, as one would expect, opinions

remain divided today, some six years after s/n 97733, the last of 1010 Mondial t Cabriolets, was built.

On the Road

I was well aware of this dichotomy when slipping behind the wheel of 1989 t Cabriolet s/n 82455. Though you sit low and forward, it's clear this is truly a Ferrari that can be used daily. The interior is inviting and airy, not tight and form fitting like its 308-328-348 stablemates.

Directly ahead are an attractive steering wheel and dash. Although the wheel is

adjustable, those above 6'2" will likely want the seat to go back another two to three inches, and the seatback's bolstering might be uncomfortable for more "broad-beamed" *Ferraristi*. The accelerator and brake are perfectly arranged for heel-and-toeing, but a tight fit for those with large shoes.

The engine fires at the turn of the key, idling below 1000 rpm. Despite s/n 82455's more modern transverse gearbox, the lever's movement is notchy. Even when warm, that slight feel of sticking never leaves the 1st-2nd shift.

Where the Mondial t is light-years ahead



of its predecessors is in its power-assisted steering. Communicative at all speeds, the wonderful weighting is a great asset at a dead stop and slow speeds, allowing you to easily turn the wheel. In contrast, the low-mileage '85 Cabriolet I experienced ever so briefly was ponderous and heavy.

Along with the t's excellent steering feel, the light, progressive touch of the supplementary controls and pedals are very much appreciated when driving through town. The 3.4 liter engine's great flexibility, non-temperamental nature, and ability to potter along at low rpm, only reinforces the t Cabriolet's user-friendly, everyday-driver nature.

Another practical plus is storage area. As most t Cabriolet's were delivered with a can of sealant, rather than the optional \$1,300 spare, you'll find space in the trunk and under the front hood. Should you need more space, simply flip down the rear seat backs.

With such practicality at hand, how does the t Cabriolet perform on the open road? Like the 308 GT4, the t has a cab



Prices

● FORZA

Market Expert's Index

4-Valve Cabriolet

Mediocre: \$ 24,500

Good-Very Good: \$30,166

Great: \$35,333

3.2 Cabriolet

Mediocre: \$30,000

Good-Very Good: \$35,500

Great: \$40,666

t Cabriolet

Mediocre: \$43,166

Good-Very Good: \$52,000

Great: \$62,166

● FERRARI MARKET LETTER

Most Recent Asking Price Index

4-valve Cabriolet: \$32,219

3.2 Cabriolet: \$41,354

t Cabriolet: \$58,108

● CAVALLINO

Price Index

'83-85 4-valve Cabriolet: \$30,000-35,000

'85-89 3.2 Cabriolet: \$38,000-50,000

'89-93 t Cabriolet: \$50,000-65,000

forward seating position that enhances the driving experience, putting you that much closer to the front of the action. Dive into the apex, feel the body roll, and keep your foot planted to the floor. The t scoots



through easily, the engine's throaty wail overwhelming your ears, unencumbered by glass, buttresses or tops.

Grab the next gear, and do it all over again. At speed on twisty roads, the Mondial Cabriolet doesn't have the two-seaters' taut, lithe reflexes—you sense the car's bulk behind you, and feel the chassis flexing slightly. The way the sights and sounds assault your senses go a long way to make up for such shortcomings—you *feel* like you are going just as fast as in one of Maranello's two-seaters.

Where the t truly shines is as a sporty, open touring car. This Ferrari can easily hold a week's worth of luggage, and you'll want to pack that much if you live in a sunny climate. The chassis and suspension serve up a most comfortable and compliant ride, and the tall, awkward-looking-from-

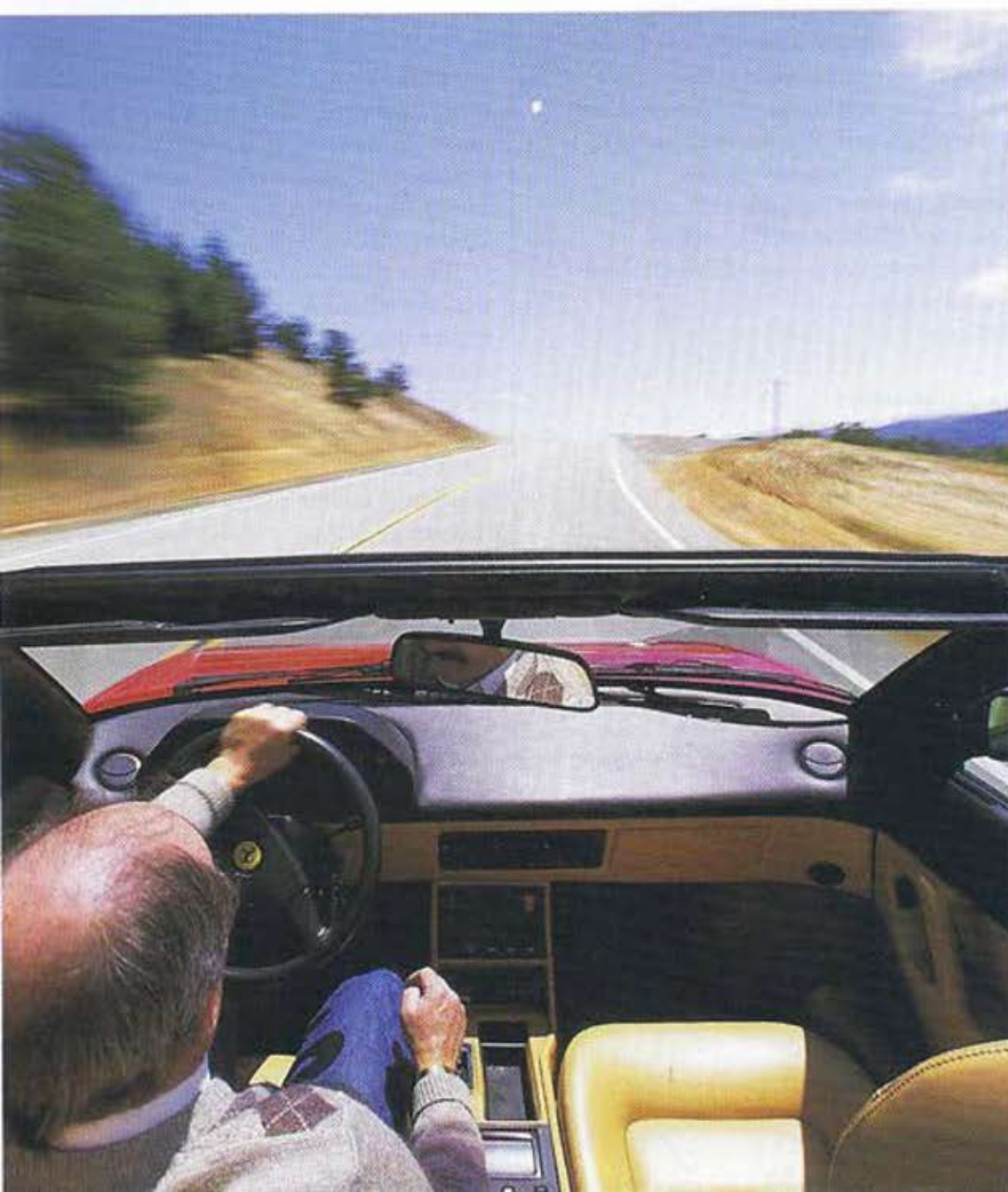
MONDIAL ON THE MOVE: While the t is a highly useable and comfortable Ferrari, all Mondial Cabriolets are at their best on the move (above). The most refined of the lot, the t has enough luxury, amenities, space and refinement to make it a Ferrari that can be driven daily. While the car's ride is quite compliant, thus making it the perfect commuter, the Mondial driver will find more pronounced body roll than on other 3-series Ferraris when attacking the twisties. Still, the Mondial Cabriolet remains a most cost efficient way to enjoy a fully open Ferrari (right). Like the rest of the Mondial t's interior, the dash was completely revised when compared to the earlier 3.2 and 4-valve Cabriolets. The t was also the only Mondial to be equipped with low-profile, rectangular headlights (pictured to the right, top).

ome-angles windshield keeps wind noise and buffeting to a minimum during *al fresco* motoring. At triple-digit speeds, roll up the windows, and you don't have to raise your voice to be heard.

What to Look For

So how do our market experts react to Ferrari's open four seater? "If the following

comments seem unduly harsh," Tom Shaughnessy stresses up front, "you need to remember that us market experts are *traditional* Ferrari guys—we want two-seaters that go fast. Thus, Mondials and 400s don't meet the criteria that would make *us* want to own one, something that may be completely different than the purpose for which the car was built."



No doubt, such insight does explain *some* of our experts' lukewarm enthusiasm. "Because its not 'performance-oriented,'" Shaughnessy continues, "I feel that the Mondial Cabriolet is 'just a car,' something that will never be collectible."

Forza Motorsports' Peter Sweeney concurs. "The Mondial Cabriolet is not one of my favorites," he says matter-of-factly. "It's kind of a wimpy car, like the ultimate pretty-boy Ferrari. Outside of the t, the 4-valve and the 3.2 feel gutless. I just can't get excited."

Brandon Lawrence of Sport Cars Italiano in Burlingame, California, is a bit more upbeat. "If you are interested in a Cabriolet," he says, "save your money for a t. The more you use it, the better it is—it's a Ferrari convertible that can be driven on a daily basis. Don't even consider the earlier cars if your budget permits—they have too many negatives."

When asked for specifics, Lawrence points to fuse boxes ("quite problematic and very expensive to fix"), steering that is "too heavy," and the earlier models' "lack of power." Other headaches include "metric

Buyer's Checklist

GREEN FLAGS

- Good ownership history, particularly where the car was garaged
- Complete records
- Proper, timely servicing
- Interior and top in good to excellent condition
- On 1989 t, 2.5 Motronic injection/ignition has proper updates

RED FLAGS

- Lack of ownership history or service records
- Intermittent/irregular servicing
- Interior in tatty/worn condition
- Any problems or wear on the top
- 2.5 Motronic injection/ignition without the updates

wheels on the 4-valves, for they had an odd offset," and all models' "lack of refinement in the top—they changed it five or six times during the Cabriolet's life, and it still doesn't work very well. Not only is it hard to put up and down, but in the rain it leaks at the corners by the windshield."

Shaughnessy agrees that "the top is difficult, almost impossible to do in less than five minutes without coaching." He also says to be careful of an '89 t, because "you want the Bosch Motronic 2.7 injection/

ignition, not the 2.5 (a change that began with Cabriolet s/n 86986). Make sure the factory modifications were done."

He also points to "electronics that break all the time—the 3.4's can be nightmares. Earlier cars aren't as bad, but they are still up there."

Like Shaughnessy, Peter Sweeney says to "pay attention to the interior. Ferrari leather doesn't like the sun, and the seat bottoms wear out. Also, the switches are very Fiat-ish. Tops can rip if they are not put up and down correctly."

But Lawrence says that a lot of these problems may result from a Cabriolet's use and care: "I had a client who bought one new in the mid-eighties, and used it daily. He had no problems with his top, and the electrics didn't flair up. I recently saw an

'86 with 18,000 miles that had electrical problems, while another '86 with 45,000 miles didn't have any."

How Much to Pay

Peter Sweeney feels the market runs from the "mid-\$20s for a mediocre 4-valve, to the mid-\$60s for a t in outstanding condition." He says that top of the line 4-valves "bring \$37-38,000, with 3.2's in the same condition costing \$38-42,000." A t in mediocre condition is "\$40-45,000; a good one is \$50-53,000, while a great one will cost you \$55-65,000."

Brandon Lawrence's figures parallel Sweeney's: "\$25,000 will buy a mediocre 4-valve, one with an off color, not a lot of records, and overall worn condition; top value 4-valves bring \$35,000. The 3.2

Cabriolets range from \$32,000 for mediocre to \$42,000 for one in great condition (under 20,000 miles, good colors, all books and proper maintenance records, no service needed)."

Tom Shaughnessy's figures run slightly lower. Cabriolet 4-valves cost "\$22,000-35,000, with \$32-35,000 for 'special cars.' The 3.2s bring \$28,000 for a mediocre one, \$35,000 for one in good condition, and \$40,000 for a Cabriolet in great condition." Like our other experts, Shaughnessy says t market prices vary from \$45,000-65,000, depending on condition.

Summary

Some six years after Mondial Cabriolet production ended, the debate still rages on: is it, or isn't it, a "real" Ferrari? And if it is indeed a "real" Ferrari, is it a Ferrari for everyone?

When it comes to the t (the only model driven at length for this report), there is no question about the fact that the engine makes the right sounds, the gearbox feels the same as other 8-cylinder Ferraris, and that the brakes grab with identical authority. The Mondial Cabriolet was also made by the same Maranello craftsmen, and it proudly sports a Prancing Horse on its nose. And while its character and feel are more "feminine" when compared to its contemporary stablemates, does that make a Lusso "not a Ferrari" when stacked up against a 275 GTB?

Thus there is no question about the fact that the Mondial passes the "real" Ferrari litmus test, unless you maintain the elitist attitude that such cars are only those with 12 cylinder engines.

Still, where the Mondial Cabriolet falls short of other open and closed Ferraris is when it comes to the excitement factor. It is certainly fun to drive, but never once did the t get my blood boiling, my body buzzing from exhilaration. Simply put, if "everyone" in this case means Ferrari traditionalists looking for a pulse-inducing driving experience, then the Mondial Cabriolet falls short of the mark.

Yet, to expect such a visceral emotional return is to miss the point entirely. Ferrari wasn't trying to create a maximum-performance sports car. Rather, they desired to reach a different, broader clientele by building a smile-inducing, nimble but roomy as well as sporty cabriolet that could be used on a daily basis.

In this role, the t Cabriolet truly is a Ferrari for everyone. After spending two days with s/n 82455, my also-easy-to-use 1990 Mercedes-Benz 560 SEC certainly felt big, heavy and cumbersome on the drive home. ●

Specifications

1989 Mondial t Cabriolet

General

Vehicle Type: 2+2 mid-engined convertible

Structure: steel and aluminum body with a steel skeletal frame

Market as tested: US

Engine

Type: DOHC 4-valve V8

Displacement: 3405 cc

Compression ratio: 10.4:1

Power (bhp): 300 @ 7000 rpm

Torque (lb. ft.): 229 @ 4000 rpm

Intake system: Bosch Motronic electronic fuel injection

Valvetrain: double overhead cams, four valves per cylinder

Transmission

Type: 5-speed manual

Final drive: 3.56:1

Dimensions

Curb weight: 3640 lbs.

Wheelbase: 104.3 inches

Track, f/r (in.): 59.9/61.4

Length (in.): 178.5

Width (in.): 71.3

Height (in.): 48.6

Suspension, brakes, steering

Suspension, front: upper & lower A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar

Suspension, rear: upper & lower A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar

Steering type: rack-and-pinion

Wheels, f&r (in.): cast alloy; 16 x 7/16 x 8

Tires, f&r: 205/55ZR-16/225-55ZR-16

Brakes f/r: 11.1 inch vented discs/11 inch vented discs

ABS: yes

Performance*

0-60 (sec.): 6.6 seconds

1/4 mile (sec.): 15.0 seconds

Top speed: 154 mph

* Figures are from *Road & Track's* 1990 test of a Mondial t Cabriolet; the 4-valve and 3.2 cabriolet will have slower acceleration times and a lower top speed.

