



## ROAD TEST

# MARANELLO'S MONDIAL 8

## A Ferrari for all reasons

IT is almost twelve years since Enzo Ferrari's road car building concern passed into the control of the giant national Fiat company, and there can be little doubt that, Gianni Agnelli fully appreciated just how special and valuable this acquisition was. In consequence, although ownership of the most exclusive, talked-about and fascinating car manufacturer in the World may have changed, Fiat in no way forced the pace of major change and only altered the character of the company by pursuing the same policy of

*CONTACT WITH HOME!* Our road test Ferrari Mondial 8 poses alongside the Ferrari F1 transporter at a recent Silverstone test session.

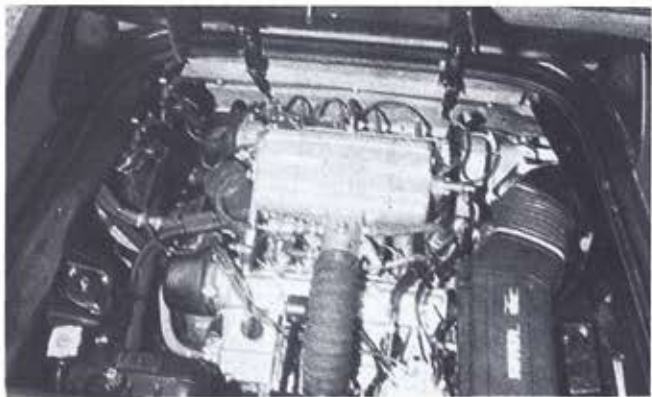
unhurried evolution which characterised Ferrari progress ever since the end of the Second World War. It therefore comes as no surprise that it has taken some years for Fiat's obvious influence to make itself felt in the character of the machines which roll off the Maranello production line. We have lately been spending some time driving the Ferrari Mondial 8, a recently-introduced two-plus-two central-engined coupé with such versatility and docility coupled to the performance side of its character as to demolish much of the criticism and apprehension which has surrounded the prospect of Ferrari ownership in the past. Temperamental? Intractable in traffic? Inflexible? Not at all. The Ferrari Mondial 8 is truly a Ferrari for all reasons, whether they be simply A-to-B transport, open road motoring, or even heavy-traffic commuting. We employed our test model for all these purposes during a hectic

five days' motoring, five days in which many of our own pre-conceptions were laid to rest as well!

Motoring writers risk becoming either totally blasé about the varied cross-section of excellent cars they are lucky enough to test — or, alternatively, they tend to heap praise unreservedly onto anything which is expensive, exclusive and out-of-the-ordinary. Consequently, when faced with a car like the Mondial 8, it's of paramount importance to be honest with oneself. A new Ferrari model doesn't come our way every month of the year. But let's say here and now that the Mondial 8 is *not* the perfect sports coupé to match all others. It has got some shortcomings, which we'll deal with later, although they are not of enormous consequence. But what the Mondial 8 *has* got is a tremendous all-round character, combining the magic of the Ferrari legend with

*COCKPIT:* fine layout and superb leather trim characterise the Mondial's interior.

*HEART:* the 90-degree V8 develops around 210 b.h.p. and is situated just ahead of the rear axle line.





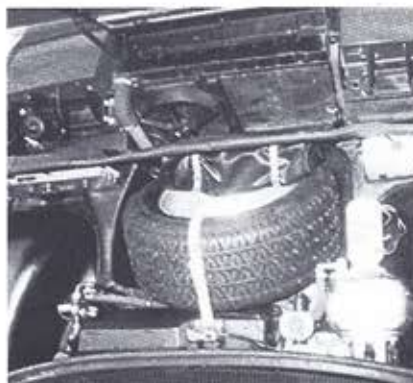


THE clean lines of the Pininfarina styled Mondial 8 are well illustrated in these two shots on this page. Centre, the spare Michelin TRX nestles under the Ferrari's nose section.

## Ferrari Mondial

impressively high standards of finish and ease of driving. It's interesting to watch the Mondial's effect on bystanders in comparison with their reaction to, say, a Porsche. With so many Porsches coming into England each year, you might be forgiven for feeling that these German cars are a little commonplace. But if Porsche's philosophy tends towards a wider market for their products, in effect educating Mr. Everyman to appreciate fine machinery, Ferrari's approach is still unashamedly elitist. Heads turned in respectful acknowledgement when we tried Porsche's 924 Carrera turbo and 928S, in a manner which suggested they had a quiet appreciation of the car's quality. But with the Mondial 8, heads *spin* round, joyous smiles abounded and little clusters of people appeared from nowhere when we pulled up at petrol pumps. A Ferrari is intended for the select few like no other car on earth!

At a tax paid price of £24,488.25 the Ferrari Mondial falls between the 308GTB two-seater and the big V12 front-engined 400i in the Maranello range, and is intended to replace the two-plus-two 308GT4. Obviously, the Mondial 8 is only what might be described as a "nominal" two-plus-two, for although there are two very positively styled rear seats beneath the gently sloping Pininfarina roofline, there's no question of getting any full-size human being in behind the driver if he chooses to use the full range of the seat adjustment. Three people can be squeezed in with a moderate degree of comfort, but it's really for two and the shopping/dog/kids — something which might, in itself, be regarded as heresy to



those Maranello addicts who believe that any Ferrari with more than two seats is something of an imposter!

The Mondial's splendid body shape is rooted in the traditional Ferrari practice of overlaying a tubular frame base with steel panels, although alloy is employed for the engine and front bonnet cover and there are some glass fibre panels within the structure itself. Viewed from any angle, the Mondial 8 is really a most aggressive and imposing machine, and although some frowned slightly at the sight of the heavily finned air cooling ducts behind each door, preferring the more subtle vents on the 308GTB models, we felt that they enhanced the car's sleek appearance. Power comes from a 90-degree transverse mounted, five bearing, light alloy V8, sited just ahead of the rear axle line, with a bore and stroke of 81 x 71 mm. for a total capacity of 2,926 c.c. Its four overhead camshafts driven by toothed belts, this Ferrari V8 develops a maximum of around 212 b.h.p. at 6,600 r.p.m., delivering maximum torque at 4,600 r.p.m. A single dry plate clutch transmits the power through a delightful five-speed gearbox which is controlled from the cockpit via the "traditional", notchy, but satisfying open Ferrari "gate". Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection has recently replaced Weber carburation on this V8 power unit.

On first acquaintance, the interior of the Mondial 8 makes quite an impact. If you've been educated to suspect that all Italian super-cars subjugate every aspect of their make-up to sheer performance, you'll be surprised with the first-rate level of finish in this Ferrari. The driver sinks into a superbly upholstered and trimmed leather covered seat — a trifle too narrow for the writer, perhaps — and the smell of that top quality leather is all-pervading. The floor is covered with high quality carpeting and leather trim extends to the fascia and door panels. It's all executed to a very high standard. Nowhere could be found any trace of shoddy workmanship; everything fitted and, with the exception of a broken rear ashtray, worked impeccably. This was proof of Fiat's influence; the sheer quality of the car's production engineering and assembly standards. It really was approaching the level we've been used to expecting from Porsche. . . .

The driving position was excellent, we discovered, although the writer had to make full



### FERRARI MONDIAL —

use of the adjustable steering column, pulling the wheel as far as it would come towards him in order to make use of the rearward adjustment of his seat. That arrangement guaranteed that his six foot-plus British frame could be accommodated in comfort without any of the concessions to the Mediterranean physique which usually has to be made when driving Italian cars. There was adequate headroom, more than sufficient elbow room and, although the pedals are slightly off-set owing to the obvious intrusion of the front wheel arch, this proved absolutely no bother at all. The pedals, incidentally, are superbly positioned in relation to each other and allowed my sloppy interpretation of "heel and toeing", whereby I simply roll the side of my right foot from brake to throttle, to be carried out with no problems whatsoever!

The Mondial's V8 fires up instantly, with no fluffing or spitting, a pleasant mixture of deep rasping and mechanical whirring. By no stretch of anybody's charitable imagination could the Mondial's cockpit be described as quiet once its engine burst into life, but it's not obtrusively worrying. First gear is dog-legged to the left and back towards the driver and it takes total depression of the long-travel clutch pedal to engage it without a gentle crunch. From that point onwards the clutch takes up smoothly and progressively, although, again, it needs to be fully depressed before second gear goes in without mild protest. At first, second baulks slightly until the box is fully warmed up and we found ourselves double-declutching "just to be sure". But from that moment on, it's a dream — not in the Ford-fashion, but in the way it rewards precise and conscientious use. In fact, the Mondial is a car which brings out the best in a driver. Drive it sloppily and it will look after you, but it won't be fun. Drive it as it's meant to be driven and you suddenly become aware that you're paying more attention to your own driving style, concentrating more and taking a pride in your progress.

Faced by the tempting 180 m.p.h. speedometer

and matching rev. counter which is yellow-lined at 7,000 r.p.m., there's a choice of the Mondial's temperament to explore. Either you marvel at its flexibility, running down to as little as 20 m.p.h. in fifth with matching behaviour in the other ratios, or you get that rev. counter needle swinging its way round the dial. That's the great joy of this engine, it simply revs. and revs. And it's quick, with 60 m.p.h. coming up in fractionally more than seven seconds and just over 20 seconds to 100 m.p.h., figures which may mean the Mondial is lagging marginally in the split-second contest to be the quickest super-car, but by no means making it a sluggard. Fourth gear is good for 115 m.p.h., by which time you're ready for the slog up towards its claimed limit of 150 m.p.h. Judging by the way in which it started to run out of breath at around 125 m.p.h., we must agree with a rival magazine which suggests that a Mondial straight off the production line probably wouldn't be good for much more than 140 m.p.h. But, again, it's not always what things do in this world, it's the way that they do it!

Contact with the ground is made through Michelin TRX 240/55 VR390 radials mounted on distinctive alloy rims. There is a perceptible degree of roll from the coil spring/unequal length wishbone suspension when hurrying in this Ferrari and if you make the mistake of running into a sweeping corner on a trailing throttle, you may emerge a little disappointed at the ensuing understeer. Thus caught out, it takes a little time to become acquainted with the reassuring way the Mondial behaves under hard acceleration, within a corner. With the power hard on, the Michelins really do their stuff, absorbing most of the bumps and ripples without any wavering from their prescribed line. The ride is excellent, although some adjudged it a little too firm for their taste during sustained motorway cruising. Certainly, although there's not too much kick-back through the steering wheel from minor road undulations, any large pothole or distortion doesn't receive the same favourable reaction. The brakes are superb by any standards and never gave us the slightest

worry, even in the wet.

Visibility forward is fine, although one tends to guess when it comes to knowing precisely where the nearside front corner is at any particular moment. Rearward visibility is awful when it comes to parking and I was slightly surprised to find that there is no passenger door mirror on the Mondial, something I would have liked a great deal. These two points, allied to the heavy clutch and second gear's reluctance to engage, made a crawl round the North Circular Road in the rain a bit of a misery although the luxury of the efficient air conditioning, the first-class stereo and the effective windscreen wiper/washer system must be mentioned as mitigating factors!

To the right of the fascia, three buttons electrically activate the rear luggage compartment lid, the engine cover and the front boot (where the spare Michelin TRX resides). There is a bank of warning lights on the central console in a position where *nobody* is ever going to see them until too late, unless they look down to slip another tape into the stereo system. On the central console, just behind the gear lever, there are controls for the electric windows, the fuel filler cap and the retractable aerial on the right rear flank. The headlights fold upwards from the front of the nose section and proved more than adequate for our needs.

During its spell in our hands, the Ferrari Mondial 8 returned an average fuel consumption of 16.6 m.p.g. It is obviously not a cheap car to run, nor is it meant to be, but it is a very positive step in the direction of persuading Jaguar, BMW, Mercedes and Porsche owners that here is a car to match their current machines. . . and it carries a Ferrari badge. It is a very realistic *alternative*, rather than an extravagant *indulgence*. For that reason, the Ferrari Mondial 8 should be regarded as a significant step forward for the Italian marque. It's not the quickest car available for that money, but it's about as well finished as you could wish and offers the indefinable magic of Ferrari motoring as an everyday experience rather than as an occasional treat. — A.H.