



INSIDER'S REPORT: The All-new Corvette FIRST TEST: Mercedes-Benz SLK

# ROAD & TRACK

JANUARY 1997 \$3.50 CANADA \$4.50 UK £2.30

## FERRARI FRENZY

Ferrari 50th  
Anniversary  
COLLECTOR ISSUE!

We Test  
All the  
**NEW**  
FERRARIS:

- 550 Maranello
- F50
- 456 GTA
- F355 Spider







# 1997 January

VOLUME 48, NUMBER 5

If we had known we were going to be around this long...we would have done it exactly like this. 1997 marks **Road & Track's 50th anniversary** year. We're dedicating this month's issue to **Ferrari**, which is also celebrating its 50th year. You'll find **Road Tests of Maranello's current crop** of supercars (as well as a test of the amazing Mercedes-Benz SLK roadster), **Phil Hill's personal picks** of the top-ten Ferraris of all time, Paul Frère's technical **history of the company's engines**, plus a **Salon on the oldest Ferrari** in existence.

## ROAD TESTS

- 58 Half a Century, Four Ferraris**—Peter Egan treats himself to the 550 Maranello, 456 GTA, F355 Spider and F50 from Ferrari's current catalog
- 76 Mercedes-Benz SLK230 Kompressor**—a supercharged superstar arrives with a retractable hardtop and a spectacular set of performance numbers

## FIRST DRIVES

- 52 Subaru Legacy GT**—with its robust engine, awd and a \$23,364 price, this Subaru is bound to catch some sports sedans by surprise (and pass 'em!)
- 55 Infiniti QX4**—what you get when you cross a lot of Nissan Pathfinder with a little Infiniti luxury, plus a touch of Skyline GT-R thrown in for awd measure

## FEATURES

- 84 50 Years of Road & Track**—presenting the full story of R&T's half-century of automotive enthusiasm, beginning with the early years: 1947–1959
- 96 The Ten Best Ferraris of All Time**—Phil Hill didn't have to dream about Ferraris: He drove them for a living. Here's his affectionate pick of ten "10s"
- 113 The New Corvette for '97**—a peek behind the curtain at the boardroom battles, premature obituaries and final triumphs of America's sports car
- 118 Salon: Ferrari 002C**—if only this car could talk: 002C was the first true Ferrari, present at and bearing witness to the beginnings of the legend

## TECHNICAL

- 128 From Twelve to Two Cylinders**—from Enzo's dozens to Lampredi's deuce: Paul Frère's history of Ferrari firepower from an engineering perspective

## COLUMNS

- 17 Miscellaneous Ramblings**—Thos L. Bryant proudly welcomes the reader to our celebration of a magazine that is now older than most of its staff
- 29 Side Glances**—Peter Egan casts a 1963 Porsche 356B to star in the latest remake of his "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Ford Dealer"
- 38 Ampersand**—John Lamm delivers a stylish photo essay of the Paris show; Paul Frère drives Ford's half-pint Ka; a computer configures the final 911
- 138 About the Sport**—Damon is F1's champ, Wayne Taylor is IMSA's WSC star, Tommy Kendall takes the Trans-Am title, and Mid-Ohio hosts the SCCA Runoffs



58



76



38



84

## DEPARTMENTS

- 13 People & Places  
22 Letters to the Editor  
34 Years Ago  
152 Technical Correspondence  
154 Road Test Summary  
156 Tech Tidbits  
158 Time & Place  
159 Showcase  
164 Market Place  
166 PS



138

COVER PHOTO BY JOHN LAMM  
CONTENTS PHOTOS/ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN LAMM, WM A. MOTTA, RON PERRY & EMPICS LTD



TESTED IN  
R  
&T  
EUROPE



# Half a Century, Four. Ferraris

In which we consider the end product of  
Ferrari's first 50 years of building some of the  
most colorful and charismatic cars of our time

**BY PETER EGAN**  
PHOTOS BY JOHN LAMM





**H**ISTORY IN ITALY comes at you in overlapping layers, like the lifted pages of a transparency in an anatomy book or the rock strata of a road-cut. You see only parts of it, but you see those parts all at once, in a single glance.

Park your red 1997 Ferrari 550 Maranello next to a wall at the Futa Pass on the old Mille Miglia route, and you'll find a plaque commemorating the four Mille Miglia victories of Clemente Biondetti, in 1938, 1947, 1948 and 1949.

Farther down the wall you can see pockmarks where gunfire, probably during World War II, knocked the plaster away from the brick. And where the brick is missing, you see what could very well be Roman stone, or perhaps Etruscan stone. Humans have been treading these paths for a long time, building nice stuff along the way. Well, some nice stuff.

Drive your rented Fiat down the *autostrada* from the Milan airport to the Ferrari factory at Maranello, and you notice a great many postwar concrete industrial and apartment buildings crowding out the small pockets of remaining charm and antiquity. Architects in this half of the 20th century have a lot to answer for.

Not so the car builders of Modena and the nearby village of Maranello. With few exceptions, their cars have been a source of almost continuous pleasure since the first car bearing Ferrari's name appeared in 1947. Which, incidentally, is the same year *Road & Track* hit the newsstands.

To celebrate this dual birthday, we decided it was a fine time to carry cameras, test equipment and notebooks to Maranello. Ferrari President Luca Cordero di Montezemolo (who was born in 1947, by the way) offered us the loan of all four current Ferrari road cars to drive in the hills of the surrounding Apennines and at the Fiorano factory test track. The cars would be the Formula 1-inspired F50; an automatic transmission version of the 456, called the GTA (A for automatic); a mid-engine F355 Spider; and the all-new front-engine, rear-drive 550 Maranello.



Our crew included Phil Hill, photographer John Lamm, Road Test Editor Kim Reynolds and yours truly, team stenographer. We'd driven and tested other versions of three of these cars, and our European Editor, Paul Frère, had done a driving impression of the 550 Maranello, but we'd not yet had a chance to road test this newest and most controversial of the Ferrari family.

## 550 Maranello

WHY CONTROVERSIAL? SEVERAL reasons.

First, the 550 is a traditional front-engine, rear-drive car that harks back to the glory days of the GTO and Daytona coupes, and yet it replaces the mid-engine 512 Testarossa (TR) as Ferrari's current production supercar. This is at odds with the long-standing notion that Ferrari's road cars should rightly celebrate their modern racing pedigree by placing the engine behind the driver, as the BB (Berlinetta Boxer) and TR series cars have done.

While it's true that a mid-engine layout offers many advantages at the outer limits on the racetrack, its benefits have sometimes been oversold in road cars. With proper tires, suspension and weight distribution, a front-engine car can be made to handle nearly as well as a mid-engine one at the limit, while being more forgiving in everyday driving because a car with a high polar moment of inertia responds more slowly, allow-

ing the driver to more easily maintain control.

More important, perhaps, a front-engine car makes it easier to package passengers and luggage, and generally has the added benefit of simpler maintenance and easier access to the engine and running gear.

So, we have front-engine, rear-drive again—in this case balanced by a 6-speed transaxle at the rear, joined to the engine by a solid driveshaft tube for better weight distribution. What else is controversial?

Well, the styling. While Pininfarina has penned a muscular, handsome car in the 550 Maranello, no one has yet suggested it has the knock-your-socks-off instant classic appeal of the 250 GTO or the Daytona coupe. But then those cars had to contend with neither modern bumper and safety laws, nor a contemporary understanding of aerodynamics. Also, there appears to have been an intentional effort to tone the car down for the buyer who finds a Testarossa, for instance, just a little too flashy and visible. Ferrari's stated purpose was to "create an understatement...consistent with today's tastes and requirements."

Suffice to say that the 550 grows on you when you spend a few days in its presence, and it looks more stunning in real life than in photos. This is especially true when you see one in a rearview mirror, or through a windshield as it speeds off into the distance.

Which it will do quite readily, because the 550 Maranello is a very, very fast car. It can lap Ferrari's Fiorano test track 3.2 seconds faster than the 512 Testarossa, according to Ferrari, and our test car accelerated 0-60 exactly as fast as our 512 TR test car did, in 4.7 sec.—on a much less grippy surface—while braking harder and getting through the slalom faster than the TR. We did not have the space to do a top-speed run on the 550, but Ferrari claims a top speed of 199 mph, versus our own test speed of 192 for the TR.

In other words, this civilized, handsome, "conventional" 2-seater is one of the fastest and nimblest cars on earth.

What the numbers don't necessarily convey is the remarkable flexibility of the 550's 65-degree, 48-valve aluminum 5474-cc V-12 engine. It makes usable, stump-pulling power from just above idle and then nails you to the seat with euphoric, hand-of-God ac-





celeration all the way to its 7700-rpm redline. No peakiness, just power on tap any time, at any speed. The engine is rated at 485 bhp at 7000 rpm and has a very flat torque curve. As a device for passing slower (almost all) cars on a winding road, the 550 has few equals. Wish yourself into a slot, and it's there, all with a resonant, velvety rustle of V-12 thrust.

Variable-length intake runners, opened flute-like by computer-controlled valves, contribute to this flexibility, as does an exhaust system in which backpressure is regulated with bypass valves. The red cylinder heads have four valves per cylinder with the blessing of hydraulic tappets, eliminating the drama and expense of periodic valve shimming by experts.

The chassis is made of steel tube, with aluminum panels welded directly to the tubing using a special sandwich alloy known as Feron, which allows aluminum to be welded to steel. The interior is the usual feast of soft leather, tan with black trim in this case, with a luggage shelf behind the seats that has straps and buckles to hold down the suitcases. The rear (and only) trunk is deep and wide, though not very long, and holds a Sony 6-disc CD player.

A chromed ball and shift lever snick their way mechanically but nicely through the traditional slotted metal plate, which looks like brushed stain-

less steel. The beautifully finished and drilled clutch, brake and gas pedals are suspended invitingly in the driver's footwell.

To give the car a good run on the road, we drove south from Modena on the *autostrada* toward Florence, then doubled back on one of the most famous stretches of the Mille Miglia route, S-65, which crosses the Apennines through the Futa and Raticosa passes. It's a road where breathtaking views of the Italian countryside and its ancient villages try to distract you from endless switchbacks and sweeping bends. It was here we stopped to look at the Biondetti plaque on a wall near the Futa Pass, right across the road from a German military cemetery.

Biondetti, the tough-looking driver with a scar over his left eye, and his co-driver, Giuseppe Navone, gave Ferrari its first Mille Miglia win—and one of its first major race victories—in 1948, at the wheel of a 166 Spyder that had been fitted with a berlinetta roof. He and co-driver Count Igo Troubetzkoy, husband of heiress Barbara Hutton, had earlier that spring won the Targa Florio in the same car, sans roof. Not a bad start for a new car company. Biondetti, incidentally, celebrated his 50th

birthday in the summer of 1948.

Nearly a half-century later, driving on the sinuous S-65 highway, Phil Hill pronounced the 550 Maranello "the best Ferrari road car I've driven." A testimonial not to be taken lightly.

"The flexibility of this engine," he said, "is just amazing. Well balanced...pleasant, safe suspension. It took so many years of racing over roads like this, trying this and that, experimenting, to get all the combination right, and they've really done it with this car."

That evening we had dinner at the famous Fini restaurant in Modena, where we sampled such Modenese delights as boiled tongue and the won-

■ What's a Ferrari without a gated shifter and drilled pedals? Racing-style and carbon-fiber-shelled seats are options.







■ Phil and Peter stop at the monument to Biondetti along the old Mille Miglia route in the Apennines. In 1948, Biondetti won Ferrari's first MM in a 166 model.

derfully rich zampone sausage, which could clog an artery the size of the California aqueduct. Kim Reynolds, a near-vegetarian, was visibly moved.

At dinner the night before, John Lamm had been trying to pry out of Phil Hill a list of his 10 all-time favorite Ferraris. He had about six on the list and was pondering a seventh. I asked Phil what factors caused a car to be included in the favorites' list.

"It's a terrible thing to say," Phil mused, "but you often judge older Ferraris, particularly the racing cars, on their relative lack of vices, rather than



just their virtues."

The user-friendly cars, he said, those that cooperated with your wishes and didn't have any strange or unsettling quirks, were often those most fondly remembered.

At the Fini that night, after a day with the 550 Maranello, Phil added



this new Ferrari to the list of his 10 best. "A pleasure to drive, and no vices," he said. "It does everything you want a car to do for you."

No argument from me. Of all the high-performance and exotic cars I've driven, I think the 550 might be my first choice for a summer of motoring around Europe. If I could afford one.

But enough of the 550 Maranello; on to the others.





# 1997 Ferrari 550 MARANELLO

## IMPORTER

Ferrari North America, Inc.  
250 Sylvan Ave.  
Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632

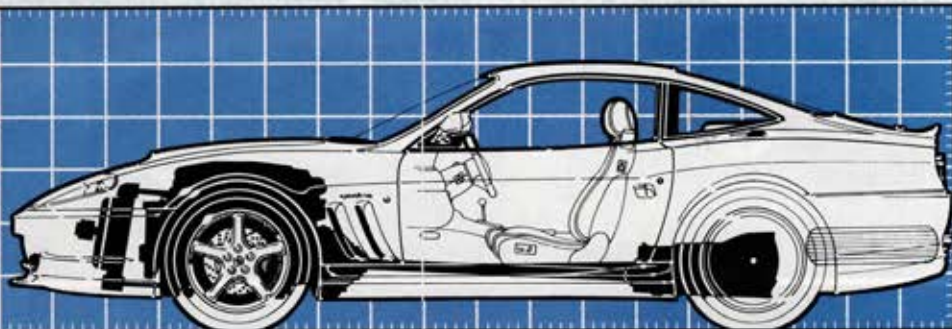
## PRICE

List price ..... est \$200,000  
Price as tested ..... est \$222,733  
Price as tested includes std equip. (air cond, leather interior, AM/FM stereo/cassette/CD player; power windows, mirrors, seats, adj shocks, central locking), luxury tax (est \$15,583), gas-guzzler tax (est \$5500), dest charge (\$1300), dealer prep (\$350).

0-60 mph ..... 4.7 sec  
0-¼ mi ..... 13.1 sec  
Top speed ..... est 199 mph  
Skidpad ..... na  
Slalom ..... 62.8 mph  
Brake rating ..... excellent

## TEST CONDITIONS

Temperature ..... 75° F  
Wind ..... calm  
Elevation ..... 115 ft



SCALE: 18 in. (254mm) DIVISIONS  
DRAWING BY BILL DOBSON

## ENGINE

Type ..... aluminum block and heads, V-12  
Valvetrain ..... dohc 4 valve/cyl  
Displacement ..... 334 cu in./5474 cc  
Bore x stroke ..... 3.46 x 2.95 in./  
88.0 x 75.0 mm  
Compression ratio ..... 10.8:1  
Horsepower  
(SAE) ..... 485 bhp @ 7000 rpm  
Bhp/liter ..... 88.6  
Torque ..... 419 lb-ft @ 5000 rpm  
Maximum engine speed ..... 7700 rpm  
Fuel injection ..... elect. sequential port  
Fuel ..... prem unleaded, 91 pump oct

## CHASSIS & BODY

Layout ..... front engine/rear drive  
Body/frame ..... aluminum alloy/  
skeletal steel  
Brakes  
Front ..... 13.0-in. vented discs  
Rear ..... 12.2-in. vented discs  
Assist type ..... vacuum; ABS  
Total swept area ..... 534 sq in.  
Swept area/ton ..... 287 sq in.  
Wheels ..... cast magnesium;  
18 x 8½ f, 18 x 10½ r  
Tires ..... Pirelli P Zero;  
255/40ZR-18 f, 295/35ZR-18 r  
Steering: rack & pinion, vari power asst  
Overall ratio ..... 13.8:1  
Turns, lock to lock ..... 2.1  
Turning circle ..... 39.3 ft  
Suspension  
Front ..... upper & lower A-arms,  
coil springs, elect. adj tube  
shocks, anti-roll bar  
Rear ..... upper & lower H-arms,  
coil springs, elect. adj tube  
shocks, anti-roll bar

## DRIVETRAIN

Transmission ..... 6-sp manual  
Gear Ratio Overall ratio (Rpm) Mph  
1st ..... 3.15:1 ..... 12.32:1 ..... (7700) 49  
2nd ..... 2.18:1 ..... 8.52:1 ..... (7700) 70  
3rd ..... 1.57:1 ..... 6.14:1 ..... (7700) 97  
4th ..... 1.19:1 ..... 4.65:1 ..... (7700) 128  
5th ..... 0.94:1 ..... 3.68:1 ..... (7700) 162  
6th ..... 0.76:1 ..... 2.97:1 ..... est (7700) 199  
Final drive ratio ..... 3.91:1  
Engine rpm @ 60 mph in 6th ..... 2300

## GENERAL DATA

Curb weight ..... est 3725 lb  
Test weight ..... est 3845 lb  
Weight dist (with driver), f/r, % ..... 50/50  
Wheelbase ..... 98.4 in.  
Track, f/r ..... 64.3 in./62.4 in.  
Length ..... 179.1 in.  
Width ..... 76.2 in.  
Height ..... 50.3 in.  
Ground clearance ..... 4.5 in.  
Trunk space ..... 5.9 cu ft

## MAINTENANCE

Oil/filter change ..... 7500 mi/7500 mi  
Tuneup ..... 15,000 mi/use-dependent  
Basic warranty ..... 24 mo/unlimited mi

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Seating capacity ..... 2  
Head room ..... 39.0 in.  
Seat width ..... 2 x 19.0 in.  
Leg room ..... 44.0 in.  
Seatback adjustment ..... 35 deg  
Seat travel ..... 6.5 in.

## INTERIOR NOISE

Idle in neutral ..... 57 dBA  
Maximum in 1st gear ..... 85 dBA  
Constant 50 mph ..... 68 dBA  
70 mph ..... 70 dBA

## INSTRUMENTATION

340-km/h (199-mph) speedometer,  
10,000-rpm tach, coolant temp, oil  
press., oil temp, fuel level

## ACCELERATION

Time to speed Seconds  
0-30 mph ..... 2.1  
0-40 mph ..... 2.8  
0-50 mph ..... 3.9  
0-60 mph ..... 4.7  
0-70 mph ..... 6.2  
0-80 mph ..... 7.4  
0-90 mph ..... 8.7  
0-100 mph ..... 10.5  
Time to distance  
0-100 ft ..... 3.0  
0-500 ft ..... 7.4  
0-1320 ft (¼ mi): 13.1 @ 113.0 mph

## FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving ..... 15.0 mpg  
EPA city/highway ..... na  
Cruise range ..... 435 miles  
Fuel capacity ..... 30.0 gal.

## BRAKING

Minimum stopping distance  
From 60 mph ..... 112 ft  
From 80 mph ..... 199 ft  
Control ..... excellent  
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop ..... na  
Fade, effort after six 0.5g stops from  
60 mph ..... na  
Brake feel ..... excellent  
Overall brake rating ..... excellent

## HANDLING

Lateral accel (200-ft skidpad) ..... na  
Balance ..... na  
Speed thru 700-ft slalom ..... 62.8 mph  
Balance ..... moderate understeer  
Lateral seat support ..... excellent

## Test Notes...

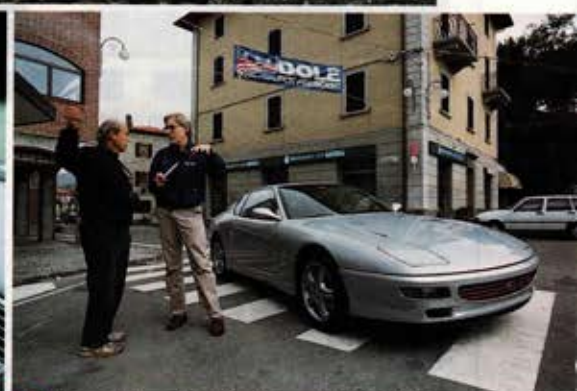
■ Despite its transaxle, the 550 easily spins its rear wheels off the line. Oddly, the engine's rev limiter would occasionally intervene 200 rpm prematurely.

■ Switching the 550's electrically adjustable shocks to firm transforms the car's responsiveness through the slalom, drastically reducing body roll.

■ More so than the lower-revving 456 GTA, the 550 positively screams at redline, with that raucous layering of cam chains, cylinders and exhaust pulses that are 100-percent pure Ferrari.

Subjective ratings consist of excellent, very good, good, average, poor; na means information is not available.





■ Peter and Newkirk Eldredge discuss the WWII battle in which both Newkirk and Bob Dole were injured. The village of Castel d'Aino hasn't forgotten.

## 456 GTA

A CIVILIZED 2+2 coupe that follows in the footsteps of the old 400i and 412i models, the 456 series was introduced in 1993 and continues to give the Ferrari owner an opportunity to thrill (or frighten) two rear-seat passengers, provided they are not very tall.

Ferrari introduced the 2+2 concept in 1960 with the 250 coupe, but perhaps it should have been called the 2+1/2+1/2. A tall adult would have to sit in the back with head bowed as if in prayer, perhaps petitioning the Lord for a short trip. The 456 is really just a very nice *Gran Turismo* 2-seater with comfortable space for children or emergency space for adults.

We've tested the 456 GT before in these pages (December 1995) and liked it very much. Though "softer" than the 550 Maranello, it is still a force to be reckoned with on a winding road or a run down the *autostrada*. It has variable-rate shock absorber damping (soft, medium and hard), a movable tail spoiler that keeps a proper balance of downforce above 75 mph and a torquey 5.5-liter 65-degree V-12 that shares its block with the 550 Maranello but produces a mere 436 bhp instead of the 550's 485. Torque is also slightly lower: 398 lb.-ft. at 4500 rpm vs. 419 at 5000.

The difference lies in the cylinder heads and their intake and exhaust

plumbing. The 550 has the new hydraulic tappets, different combustion chambers, variable-length intake runners and exhaust system.

So, in the 456 GT we have a roomier car than the 550, in a gentler state of tune. Our incentive for retesting the car, however, was its new 4-speed automatic transmission, which makes it the 456 GTA.

This unit—which is incorporated into a rear-mounted transaxle like the 6-speed manual gearbox but weighs 172 lb. more—uses computer-controlled "artificial intelligence." It reads a variety of inputs to interpret the driver's current mode of sporting aggression and adjusts the shift points to match. It is coupled to a torque converter with a high stall rate, its slippage producing a pronounced multiplication of torque for improved acceleration at any speed. In highway cruising, a me-



# 1997 Ferrari 456 GTA

## IMPORTER

Ferrari North America, Inc.  
250 Sylvan Ave.  
Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632

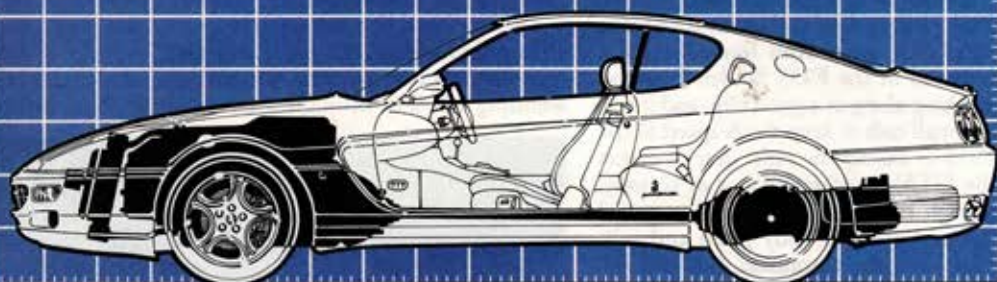
## PRICE

List price ..... \$229,950  
Price as tested ..... **est \$255,379**  
Price as tested includes std equip. (air cond, leather interior, AM/FM stereo/cassette; power windows, mirrors, seats, adj shocks and central locking), luxury tax (\$18,279), gas-guzzler tax (est \$5500), dest charge (\$1300), dealer prep (\$350).

0-60 mph ..... **5.1 sec**  
0-¼ mi ..... **13.6 sec**  
Top speed ..... **est 185 mph**  
Skidpad ..... **0.93g**  
Slalom ..... **62.0 mph**  
Brake rating ..... **excellent**

## TEST CONDITIONS

Temperature ..... 75° F  
Wind ..... calm  
Elevation ..... 115 ft



SCALE: 10 in. (254mm) DIVISIONS  
DRAWING BY BILL DOBSON

## ENGINE

Type ..... aluminum block and heads, **V-12**  
Valvetrain ..... dohc 4 valve/cyl  
Displacement ..... 334 cu in./5474 cc  
Bore x stroke ..... 3.46 x 2.95 in./88.0 x 75.0 mm  
Compression ratio ..... 10.6:1  
Horsepower (SAE) ..... **436 bhp @ 6250 rpm**  
Bhp/liter ..... 79.6  
Torque ..... **398 lb-ft @ 4500 rpm**  
Maximum engine speed ..... 7000 rpm  
Fuel injection ..... elect. sequential port  
Fuel ..... prem unleaded, 91 pump oct

## CHASSIS & BODY

Layout ..... **front engine/rear drive**  
Body/frame ..... aluminum and honeycomb composite/skeletal steel  
Brakes  
Front ..... **13.0-in. vented discs**  
Rear ..... **12.2-in. vented discs**  
Assist type ..... vacuum; ABS  
Total swept area ..... 531 sq in.  
Swept area/ton ..... 239 sq in.  
Wheels ..... cast magnesium;  
**17 x 8½ f, 17 x 10 r**  
Tires ..... Bridgestone Expedia S-01;  
**255/45ZR-17 f, 285/40ZR-17 r**  
Steering: **rack & pinion**, vari power asst  
Overall ratio ..... na  
Turns, lock to lock ..... 2.6  
Turning circle ..... 38.0 ft  
Suspension  
Front ..... **upper & lower A-arms**, coil springs, elect. adj tube shocks, anti-roll bar  
Rear ..... **upper & lower A-arms**, coil springs, elect. adj tube shocks, anti-roll bar, auto leveling

## DRIVETRAIN

Transmission ..... **4-sp automatic**  
Gear Ratio Overall ratio (Rpm) Mph  
1st ..... 2.96:1 ..... 10.45:1 ..... (6500) 45  
2nd ..... 1.63:1 ..... 5.75:1 ..... (6700) 85  
3rd ..... 1.00:1 ..... 3.53:1 ..... (6700) 139  
4th ..... 0.68:1 ..... 2.40:1 ..... **est (6075) 185**  
Final drive ratio ..... 3.53:1  
Engine rpm @ 60 mph in 4th ..... 1850

## GENERAL DATA

Curb weight ..... **4325 lb**  
Test weight ..... 4445 lb  
Weight dist (with driver), f/r, % ..... 48/52  
Wheelbase ..... 102.4 in.  
Track, f/r ..... 62.4 in./63.2 in.  
Length ..... **186.2 in.**  
Width ..... **75.6 in.**  
Height ..... **51.2 in.**  
Ground clearance ..... 4.7 in.  
Trunk space ..... 6.8 cu ft

## MAINTENANCE

Oil/filter change ..... 7500 mi/7500 mi  
Tuneup ..... 15,000 mi/use-dependent  
Basic warranty ..... 24 mo/unlimited mi

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Seating capacity ..... **2+2**  
Head room, f/r ..... 36.5 in./34.5 in.  
Seat width, f/r 2 x 19.5 in./2 x 19.0 in.  
Front-seat leg room ..... 41.5 in.  
Rear-seat knee room ..... 22.5 in.  
Seatback adjustment ..... 30 deg  
Seat travel ..... 4.0 in.

## INTERIOR NOISE

Idle in neutral ..... 58 dBA  
Maximum in 1st gear ..... 83 dBA  
Constant 50 mph ..... 70 dBA  
70 mph ..... 70 dBA

## INSTRUMENTATION

320-km/h (199-mph) speedometer,  
10,000-rpm tach, coolant temp, oil temp, oil press., fuel level

## ACCELERATION

Time to speed Seconds  
0-30 mph ..... 2.0  
0-40 mph ..... 2.8  
0-50 mph ..... 3.8  
0-60 mph ..... **5.1**  
0-70 mph ..... 6.4  
0-80 mph ..... 7.9  
0-90 mph ..... 10.2  
0-100 mph ..... 12.7  
Time to distance  
0-100 ft ..... 2.9  
0-500 ft ..... 7.4  
0-1320 ft (¼ mi): 13.6 @ 103.0 mph

## FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving ..... **est 14.0 mpg**  
EPA city/highway ..... na  
Cruise range ..... **est 395 miles**  
Fuel capacity ..... 29.1 gal.

## BRAKING

Minimum stopping distance  
From 60 mph ..... 120 ft  
From 80 mph ..... 212 ft  
Control ..... excellent  
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop ..... na  
Fade, effort after six 0.5g stops from 60 mph ..... na  
Brake feel ..... excellent  
Overall brake rating ..... excellent

## HANDLING

Lateral accel (200-ft skidpad) ..... 0.93g  
Balance ..... moderate understeer  
Speed thru 700-ft slalom ..... 62.0 mph  
Balance ..... moderate understeer  
Lateral seat support ..... excellent

Subjective ratings consist of excellent, very good, good, average, poor; na means information is not available.

## Test Notes...

■ It would be easy to mistake the 456 GTA's neatly controlled way of accelerating off the line for a complex type of traction control at work. In fact, it has none.

■ Through the slalom, the 456 GTA felt considerably more plush than the 550 Maranello, exhibiting more body roll with its adjustable shocks on firm than the 550 did with its shocks set on soft.

■ Despite its considerable sophistication, the GTA's automatic transmission somehow takes the edge off the delight of its 5.5-liter V-12 by muting its mechanical music.



chanical clutch locks in to prevent slippage and poor fuel mileage.

Our slice-of-history test-bed for this car was another fast run into the Apennines, this time up S-623 toward the little village of Castel d'Aino, just a few mountain ridges west of the Futa Pass. What is the significance of this little burg, you ask? Well, it's where the American 10th Mountain Division attacked a ridge full of Germans on April 14, 1945, and a young lieutenant named Bob Dole was badly wounded. The town, we were told, was festooned with "Dole for President" banners.

On the long drive to Castel d'Aino, Phil Hill and John Lamm drove the 456 GTA, while Kim Reynolds and I followed in the F355 Spider. Phil was smoking along at a good clip, and it was no small task to keep the 6-speed of the F355 in exactly the right gear to match the GTA's acceleration out of corners, though the F355 braked and cornered flatter, with less body pitch and roll. Phil liked the automatic, but said the music of the V-12 was too heavily muffled and somewhat overwhelmed by the mechanical whirrings of engine and gearbox under hard acceleration.

I drove the GTA back down the mountain toward Modena and had to agree. The car gets the job done, but without the tautness and direct mechanical sensitivity of a manual Ferrari gearbox. During a turn, the automatic trans-

mission has almost a turbo sensation; you have to get on the throttle early to get a strong drive off a corner. The transmission needs a brief moment to gather engine revs and feed solid power into the rear tires. Left in 3rd gear, the transmission works more succinctly, but there's still a hint of lost wallop.

At lower speeds, this is less noticeable, and the car simply becomes a calm, civilized traveling companion with lots of power on tap, allowing fast travel with few demands on the driver. When we hit Modena at rush hour, the automatic was also appreciated. No aching clutch leg, no fiddling with the gearbox.

Ferrari says the automatic is in strong demand in the Far East, and one can almost picture an owner wending his way through a crowded

Eastern city street clogged with pedicabs, microcars and Honda 50s, glad for the freedom from shifting.

### F355 Spider

IT WOULD BE easy, in this four-car test, to become overwhelmed with the grace and power of the 550 Maranello or the 456 GTA and even convince yourself that the mid-engine road car is perhaps an idea whose time has come and gone.

But then you slip into the F355 Spider, put the top down, head into the mountains and remember: The 550 and 456 GTA are GT cars; the F355 Spider is a sports car. And a sports car can be a very good thing. Especially with the top down on a crisp autumn day in Italy.

Not insignificantly, the F355 we



■ Ferrari President Luca di Montezemolo's personal F355 Spider, top down on open Italian roads. Mmm. Tough work.





# 1997 Ferrari F355 SPIDER

## IMPORTER

Ferrari North America, Inc.  
250 Sylvan Ave.  
Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632

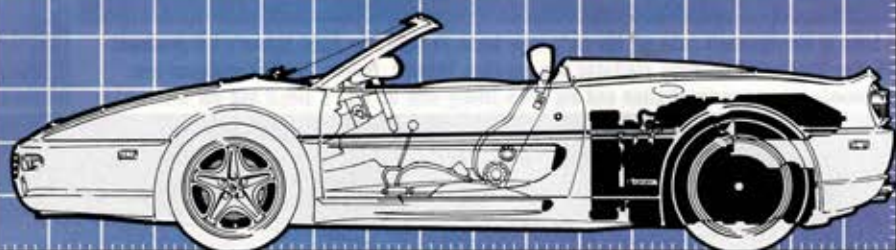
## PRICE

List price ..... \$137,075  
Price as tested ..... \$154,036  
Price as tested includes std equip. (air cond, leather interior, AM/FM stereo/cassette; power windows, mirrors, seats, adj shocks, and central locking), luxury tax (\$9911), gas-guzzler tax (\$5400), dest charge (\$1300), dealer prep (\$350).

0-60 mph ..... 5.3 sec  
0-1/4 mi ..... 13.7 sec  
Top speed ..... est 175 mph  
Skidpad ..... 0.93g  
Slalom ..... 66.1 mph  
Brake rating ..... excellent

## TEST CONDITIONS

Temperature ..... 75° F  
Wind ..... calm  
Elevation ..... 59 ft



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

## ENGINE

Type... aluminum block and heads, V-8  
Valvetrain ..... dohc 5-valve/cyl  
Displacement ..... 213 cu in./3496 cc  
Bore x stroke ..... 3.35 x 3.03 in./  
85.0 x 77.0 mm  
Compression ratio ..... 11.0:1  
Horsepower  
(SAE) ..... 375 bhp @ 8250 rpm  
Bhp/liter ..... 107  
Torque ..... 268 lb-ft @ 6000 rpm  
Maximum engine speed ..... 8500 rpm  
Fuel injection ..... elect. sequential port  
Fuel ..... prem unleaded, 91 pump oct

## CHASSIS & BODY

Layout ..... mid engine/rear drive  
Body/frame ..... steel & aluminum/  
unit & skeletal steel  
Brakes  
Front ..... 11.8-in. vented discs  
Rear ..... 12.2-in. vented discs  
Assist type ..... vacuum; ABS  
Total swept area ..... 485 sq in.  
Swept area/ton ..... 277 sq in.  
Wheels ..... cast magnesium;  
18 x 7 1/2 f, 18 x 10 r  
Tires ..... Pirelli P Zero Directionale;  
225/40ZR-18 f,  
265/40ZR-18 r  
Steering ..... rack & pinion, power assist  
Overall ratio ..... na  
Turns, lock to lock ..... 3.2  
Turning circle ..... 38.1 ft  
Suspension  
Front ..... upper & lower A-arms,  
coil springs, elect. adj  
tube shocks, anti-roll bar  
Rear ..... upper & lower A-arms,  
coil springs, elect. adj  
tube shocks, anti-roll bar

## DRIVETRAIN

Transmission ..... 6-sp manual  
Gear Ratio Overall ratio (Rpm) Mph  
1st ..... 3.07:1 ..... 13.35:1 ..... (8500) 48  
2nd ..... 2.16:1 ..... 9.40:1 ..... (8500) 68  
3rd ..... 1.61:1 ..... 7.00:1 ..... (8500) 92  
4th ..... 1.27:1 ..... 5.52:1 ..... (8500) 116  
5th ..... 1.03:1 ..... 4.48:1 ..... (8500) 143  
6th ..... 0.84:1 ..... 3.65:1 ..... est (8340) 175  
Final drive ratio ..... 4.35:1  
Engine rpm @ 60 mph in 6th ..... 2860

## GENERAL DATA

Curb weight ..... 3390 lb  
Test weight ..... 3500 lb  
Weight dist (with  
driver), f/r, % ..... 45/55  
Wheelbase ..... 96.5 in.  
Track, f/r ..... 59.6 in./63.6 in.  
Length ..... 167.3 in.  
Width ..... 74.8 in.  
Height ..... 46.1 in.  
Ground clearance ..... 4.3 in.  
Trunk space ..... 8.0 cu ft

## MAINTENANCE

Oil/filter change ..... 7500 mi/7500 mi  
Tuneup ..... 15,000 mi/use-dependent  
Basic warranty ..... 24 mo/unlimited mi

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Seating capacity ..... 2  
Head room ..... 37.5 in.  
Seat width ..... 2 x 18.5 in.  
Leg room ..... 43.5 in.  
Seatback adjustment ..... 30 deg  
Seat travel ..... 6.5 in.

## INTERIOR NOISE

Idle in neutral ..... 72 dBA  
Maximum in 1st gear ..... 88 dBA  
Constant 50 mph ..... 77 dBA  
70 mph ..... 77 dBA

## INSTRUMENTATION

320-km/h (199-mph) speedometer,  
10,000-rpm tach, oil press., oil temp,  
coolant temp, fuel level

## ACCELERATION

Time to speed Seconds  
0-30 mph ..... 2.0  
0-40 mph ..... 2.9  
0-50 mph ..... 4.2  
0-60 mph ..... 5.3  
0-70 mph ..... 7.0  
0-80 mph ..... 8.6  
0-90 mph ..... 10.3  
0-100 mph ..... 12.7  
Time to distance  
0-100 ft ..... 3.0  
0-500 ft ..... 7.6  
0-1320 ft (1/4 mi): 13.7 @ 104.5 mph

## FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving ..... 16.0 mpg  
EPA city/highway ..... 10/15 mpg  
Cruise range ..... 330 miles  
Fuel capacity ..... 21.6 gal.

## BRAKING

Minimum stopping distance  
From 60 mph ..... 122 ft  
From 80 mph ..... 219 ft  
Control ..... excellent  
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop ..... na  
Fade, effort after six 0.5g stops from  
60 mph ..... na  
Brake feel ..... excellent  
Overall brake rating ..... excellent

## HANDLING

Lateral accel (200-ft skidpad) ..... 0.93g  
Balance ..... moderate understeer  
Speed thru 700-ft slalom ..... 66.1 mph  
Balance ..... mild understeer  
Lateral seat support ..... excellent

Subjective ratings consist of excellent,  
very good, good, average, poor; na means  
information is not available.

## Test Notes...

■ The Spider weighs roughly 250 lb. more than the Berlinetta, and this reasonably accounts for its being 0.4 sec slower to 60 mph, although subjectively, our test car didn't feel entirely broken in.

■ For the F355's test, our slalom was conducted on a slightly humpy surface, which surprisingly necessitated setting the Spider's adjustable shocks on soft to maintain control.

■ Does a mid-engine layout matter in a road car? Subjectively, the F355 feels nimble through the slalom and around the skidpad, although its rear-weight bias demands that much extra respect.

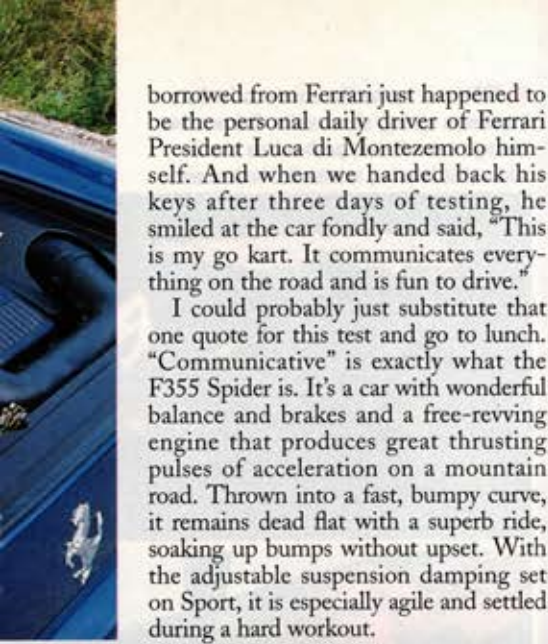




■ Luca di Montezemolo asks for his car's keys back. At right, the F355 Spider's V-8 produces 375 bhp (that's 107 normally aspirated bhp per liter, friends). Below: The F50 produces two responses—intense concentration and big grins (along with its V-12's 109.2 bhp per liter).







borrowed from Ferrari just happened to be the personal daily driver of Ferrari President Luca di Montezemolo himself. And when we handed back his keys after three days of testing, he smiled at the car fondly and said, "This is my go kart. It communicates everything on the road and is fun to drive."

I could probably just substitute that one quote for this test and go to lunch. "Communicative" is exactly what the F355 Spider is. It's a car with wonderful balance and brakes and a free-revving engine that produces great thrusting pulses of acceleration on a mountain road. Thrown into a fast, bumpy curve, it remains dead flat with a superb ride, soaking up bumps without upset. With the adjustable suspension damping set on Sport, it is especially agile and settled during a hard workout.

Setting aside for a moment the unearthly-exotic F50, the F355 is the one car out of Ferrari's three "regular" production cars that you can most easily imagine screaming through the streets of some Sicilian village in the Targa Florio.

At the heart of the mid-engine F355 is a 4-cam 3.5-liter 90-degree V-8 with five valves per cylinder and an output of 375 bhp at 8250 rpm, with a redline of 8500. A Bosch M2.7 twin injection system feeds red cylinder heads that draw heavily on Ferrari's F1 search for high specific output, allowing a detonation-free compression ratio of 11.0:1. The connecting rods are titanium.

Not exactly a truck engine, in other words. A side-mounted close-ratio 6-speed transmission feeds a limited-slip differential en route to the rear wheels, which push a car that is 335 lb. lighter than the 550 Maranello.

Ferrari claims to have worked hard to create a car of considerable speed, commendable stability and good downforce while avoiding a lot of awkward wings and big spoilers. Wind-tunnel work therefore produced a clean, stylish body with a flat bottom, the underside tunneled with aerodynamic ducts that diffuse air upward at the tail.

Open cars have long been a part of the Ferrari tradition, and the F355 Spider makes the convertible top easy to live with. Unhook a latch at the leading edge of the top, lower the windows, push a button and invisible electrical elves do the rest. Seats automatically slide forward a few inches, the top folds back and you snap a cover over it. Wind noise and buffeting are minimal. You can easily talk to the passenger while driving top down, though it seems a shame to talk over the euphonious, mellow snarl of the exhaust.

We drove the F355 Spider first up the famous road from Maranello to Serramazzoni, the early, unofficial "test track" of the Ferrari factory. En route, we stopped at a curve where Phil once had a famous photograph taken, of himself and his Testa Rossa, for the cover of the *Fuller Brush Magazine* in 1959. It looked pretty much the same, he said, but a new garage had replaced an old house on the outside of the curve. As if to offer proof, an elderly man and his wife came out of their house across the street and showed us a framed photo of the curve from the Fifties, when the original house sat on the site.

Where else but Italy, I wondered, do people own a framed portrait of the curve on which they live?

With dark clouds gathering we

headed off the main road onto the loop that took us to Castel d'Aino, home of Italy's largest Bob Dole fan club. While John Lamm photographed the cars and the Bob Dole for President banners, I found myself talking to a distinguished-looking gentleman from Newport, New Hampshire, named Newc Eldredge. He wore an ascot and a 10th Mountain Division patch on his jacket.

"Were you in Bob Dole's unit?" I asked.

"No," Eldredge said, smiling, "he was in mine. We were both wounded the same day, attacking Hill 913. Out of 200 of us, only 28 got to the objective. It was a rough day."

Eldredge explained to me that the 10th Mountain Division was a lively and well-educated bunch. "You had to have been in a ski club or a mountain climbing club to get in, so we had a lot of college men, many of them out of Ivy League schools." Bob Dole, he said, came in as a replacement after a bad battle for Mt. Belvedere, in which casualties had been 50 percent.

"Was he a good soldier?"

"Very good. He listened to his men very carefully and talked to them to find out how we were operating and what was going on before he started issuing orders. He was well respected."

By the time you read this, the Presidential election will be over. But whichever way it goes, we owe a lot to the likes of Newc Eldredge and his young replacement lieutenant, Bob Dole. I looked at the hill they assaulted and felt a tightness in my chest. There were a lot of rough days in these mountains.

## F50

WITH RAIN THREATENING in northern Italy, Ferrari asked that we not take the F50 out on the road. The Berlinetta detachable top, which can be clicked in to replace the twin headrest/rollbar covers of the Barchetta configuration, cannot be carried with you on the road, so if it rains the leather interior gets wet. We wanted to drive and photograph the car in its open Barchetta form, so we limited our driving to the Fiorano test track.

Which is an environment in which the F50 is quite happy.

The F50 is Ferrari's centerpiece, its look-what-we-can-do car. Fifty years ago, Ferrari F1 cars were still roadable, with minor modifications, and the F50 is simply the modern embodiment of that spirit. It's a 2-seater F1 car, compromised as little as possible for the street.







■ F50's rear opens like a race car's. Note transverse spring/shock units. Below: view through open-air tail; push-button starter; minimalist interior; maximalist instruments.



And what a piece of work it is: a 225-lb. carbon-fiber monocoque chassis, pushrod suspension, aircraft-grade rubber fuel tank, electronically managed shock absorber damping control, twin-plate racing clutch, titanium hubs, magnesium axles and a special "Fiorano" tire made by Goodyear.

Propelling this expensive mass of lightness is a 4.7-liter 65-degree V-12 engine putting out 513 bhp at 8500 rpm and 347 lb.-ft. of torque at 6500. On paper, it looks, in many ways, like a 12-cylinder version of the F355's V-8: titanium rods, dry-sump system, Bosch Motronic 2.7 engine management and injection and Nikasil-coated cylinder bores. The block, however, is of nodular cast iron rather than aluminum and the liners are not of the wet-sleeve type. The V-12 also weighs 66 lb. more than the V-8, but the

2710-lb. F50 is still 680 lb. lighter than the F355 Spider.

So, does she go?

My, yes. The F50 howled up the barely long-enough Fiorano straight, much to the pleasure of German Ferrari owners visiting the track, turning a 0-60 time of 3.6 sec. and a quarter mile of 12.1 sec. at 124.5 mph. By comparison, the next fastest Ferrari, the 550 Maranello, ran 0-60 in 4.7 sec. and did the quarter mile in 13.1 sec. at 113.0 mph. Ferrari claims a top speed of 202 mph for the F50, although our calculations suggest a speed of 190 mph, given our test car's gearing.

The F50 looked rather relaxed twisting through the slalom cones and turned in the second-highest speed of the family at 65.7, edged out by the F355 Spider's 66.1 mph. Kim Reynolds pointed out, however, that we had

achieved the F355 number in an earlier test on an extraordinarily grippy surface, so on equal pavement the F50 would no doubt better it.

One thing that slows the F50 down a bit in the tight stuff is its heavy understeer. Ferrari has gone to great lengths to keep that big V-12 pendulum in check, tuning the chassis to drift front-end-first toward its destiny.



# 1997 Ferrari F50

## MANUFACTURER

Ferrari S.p.A.  
Via Abetone Inferiore 4  
41053 Maranello (MO)  
Italy

## PRICE

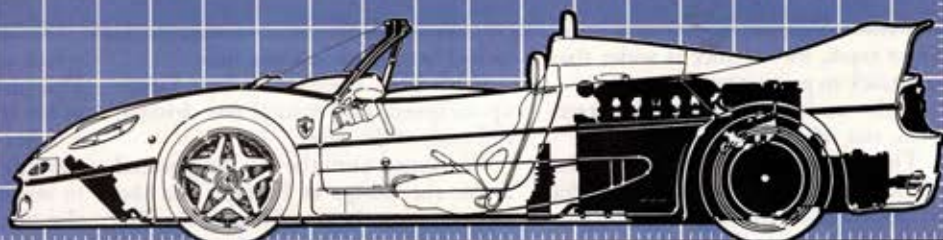
List price ..... \$480,000  
Price as tested ..... \$480,000  
Price as tested includes std equip. (air conditioning,  
leather seats).

0-60 mph ..... 3.6 sec  
0-¼ mi ..... 12.1 sec  
Top speed ..... see text  
Skidpad ..... na  
Slalom ..... 65.7 mph  
Brake rating ..... excellent

## TEST CONDITIONS

Temperature ..... 75° F  
Wind ..... calm  
Elevation ..... 115 ft

SCALE: 10 in./254mm DIVISIONS  
DRAWING BY BILL DOBSON



## ENGINE

Type ..... cast-iron block,  
aluminum heads, **V-12**  
Valvetrain ..... dohc 5-valve/cyl  
Displacement ..... 287 cu in./4699 cc  
Bore x stroke ..... 3.35 x 2.72 in./  
85.0 x 69.0 mm  
Compression ratio ..... 11.3:1  
Horsepower  
(SAE) ..... **513 bhp @ 8500 rpm**  
Bhp/liter ..... 109.2  
Torque ..... **347 lb-ft @ 6500 rpm**  
Maximum engine speed ..... 8500 rpm  
Fuel injection ..... elect. sequential port  
Fuel ..... prem unleaded, 91 pump oct

## CHASSIS & BODY

Layout ..... **mid engine/rear drive**  
Body/frame ..... honeycomb carbon fiber  
and Kevlar/honeycomb carbon  
fiber with tubular steel and  
stressed engine block and transaxle  
Brakes  
Front ..... **14.0-in. vented discs**  
Rear ..... **13.2-in. vented discs**  
Assist type ..... none  
Total swept area ..... 583 sq in.  
Swept area/ton ..... 430 sq in.  
Wheels ..... cast magnesium; **18 x 8½ f,**  
**18 x 13 r**  
Tires ..... Goodyear Eagle F1 GS-Fiorano;  
**P245/35ZR-18 f, P335/30ZR-18 r**  
Steering ..... **rack & pinion**, power assist  
Overall ratio ..... na  
Turns, lock to lock ..... 2.0  
Turning circle ..... 41.3 ft  
Suspension  
Front ..... **upper & lower A-arms,**  
pushrods, rockers, coil springs,  
elect. adjust tube shocks, anti-roll bar  
Rear ..... **upper & lower A-arms,**  
toe links, pushrods, rockers,  
coil springs, elect. adjust tube  
shocks, anti-roll bar

## DRIVETRAIN

Transmission ..... **6-sp manual**  
Gear Ratio Overall ratio (Rpm) Mph  
1st ..... 2.79:1 ..... 10.32:1 ..... (8500) 61  
2nd ..... 2.00:1 ..... 7.40:1 ..... (8500) 86  
3rd ..... 1.59:1 ..... 5.88:1 ..... (8500) 108  
4th ..... 1.32:1 ..... 4.88:1 ..... (8500) 130  
5th ..... 1.11:1 ..... 4.11:1 ..... (8500) 154  
6th ..... 0.90:1 ..... 3.33:1 ..... see text  
Final drive ratio ..... 3.70:1  
Engine rpm @ 60 mph in 6th ..... 2685

## GENERAL DATA

Curb weight ..... **est 2710 lb**  
Test weight ..... **est 2965 lb**  
Weight dist (with  
driver), f/r, % ..... **est 42/58**  
Wheelbase ..... 101.6 in.  
Track, f/r ..... 63.8 in./63.1 in.  
Length ..... **176.4 in.**  
Width ..... **78.2 in.**  
Height ..... **44.1 in.**  
Ground clearance ..... 4.5 in.  
Trunk space ..... none

## MAINTENANCE

Oil/filter change ..... 7500 mi/7500 mi  
Tuneup ..... use-dependent  
Basic warranty ..... na

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Seating capacity ..... **2**  
Head room ..... na  
Seat width ..... 2 x 14.0 in.  
Leg room ..... 43.0 in.  
Seatback adjustment ..... 45 deg  
Seat travel ..... 7.5 in.

## INTERIOR NOISE

Idle in neutral ..... 69 dBA  
Maximum in 1st gear ..... 101 dBA  
Constant 50 mph ..... 82 dBA  
70 mph ..... 86 dBA

## INSTRUMENTATION

360-km/h (224-mph) speedometer,  
10,000-rpm tach, coolant temp, oil  
temp, oil press., fuel level

## ACCELERATION

Time to speed ..... Seconds  
0-30 mph ..... 1.8  
0-40 mph ..... 2.4  
0-50 mph ..... 2.9  
0-60 mph ..... 3.6  
0-70 mph ..... 4.5  
0-80 mph ..... 5.4  
0-90 mph ..... 6.9  
0-100 mph ..... 8.0  
Time to distance  
0-100 ft ..... 2.8  
0-500 ft ..... 6.6  
0-1320 ft (¼ mi): 12.1 @ 124.5 mph

## FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving ..... **est 13.0 mpg**  
EPA city/highway ..... na  
Cruise range ..... **est 345 miles**  
Fuel capacity ..... 27.7 gal.

## BRAKING

Minimum stopping distance  
From 60 mph ..... 136 ft  
From 80 mph ..... 213 ft  
Control ..... excellent  
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop ..... na  
Fade, effort after six 0.5g stops from  
60 mph ..... na  
Brake feel ..... excellent  
Overall brake rating ..... excellent

## HANDLING

Lateral accel (200-ft skidpad) ..... na  
Balance ..... na  
Speed thru 700-ft slalom ..... 65.7 mph  
Balance ..... heavy understeer  
Lateral seat support ..... excellent

## Test Notes...

■ At low revs (say 4000 rpm!), the F50 is actually easy to stall, but drop the clutch at 6000 rpm and it explodes away from the line in a cloud of tire smoke.

■ Through the slalom, the F50 is difficult to get used to, especially its extremely forward driving position, great width and considerable understeer.

■ While most exotics coyly hint at what driving a race car might be like, the F50 slaps you in the face with all its visceral ingredients.

Subjective ratings consist of excellent, very good, good, average, poor; no means information is not available.





Front track, for instance is wider than rear track to promote understeer.

It also understeers a bit on the race-track, but who cares?

There you are, sitting in red and black racing bucket seats, surrounded by carbon fiber, shifting a carbon-fiber shift knob through its chromed 6-speed gates, accelerating like a banshee between every corner and listening to a ripping-quick engine shriek normally associated with F1 racing.

Click through a multiple downshift into a corner and it slides through flat, supple, composed. That understeer in the slalom becomes reassuring on the track because the F50 accelerates very hard through corners with a tremendous level of grip, and you'd hate to back it off the track into the weeds, or something harder.

More than anything, the F50 simply feels like a racing car. It's as pleasant and predictable to drive as my Reynard F2000 car, but with the bonus of an extra 400 bhp, fat tires and a second seat. And air conditioning!

As I lapped Fiorano, I suddenly found it unbelievable that a person with my high school grades was being allowed to drive this car. It is humbling in its exoticism and beauty.

Late on our last afternoon, I got Phil Hill to take me for a few laps in the F50 and was reminded again why he became a world champion in F1 and won Le Mans so many times. He operates the shift lever and pedals in a hard, hydraulically smooth motion while downshifting for a corner, pitches the car in at a speed that seems way too fast, fixes the problem in mid-corner with throttle and steering wheel and accelerates out, right on line at full throttle. All this even though, like me, he is trying to remember which way the corners go at Fiorano, as neither of

us had been there in some time.

With Phil, there's very little build-up to speed, just natural fast driving, right out of the gates.

We lapped until the sun disappeared under the bridge at Fiorano and the moon was on the rise. Driving the F50 a short distance through the streets of Maranello (to the cheers of moped-mounted schoolboys on a corner), we returned the car to its covered outdoor stall within the factory gates. The engine stopped with typical high-compression abruptness. Done.

All trips to Modena, which is the gastronomic center of Italy, end with a good dinner and wine, which is why we had found our-



selves at the Fini again. This is when Phil picked the 550 Maranello as one of his 10 favorite Ferraris.

After dinner, we decided to skip the cab ride and walk the 3 or 4 miles back to our hotel through the old center of the once-walled city of Modena. It was a warm autumn night, and we strolled through the cobblestone piazza around the *duomo*, past grand old houses of great Modenese families, through parks and out onto the Via Emilia toward our hotel.

Phil showed us where the old Ferrari works used to be; walked us past the former Real hotel—now a bank—where drivers, visitors and journalists from all over the world used to stay; pointed out where the arches of the old walled city had been removed for modern traffic flow, and so on.

Many things have changed since Phil Hill first came here in 1952, but not everything.

After all these years, Ferrari still has four charismatic cars that remain among the most desirable automobiles on earth. They are right on the cutting edge of technology, yet their fastest and best new road car is a pleasing throwback to a classical form. All four cars work brilliantly on the road and racetrack, yet could just as well be driven straight to a museum, admired for their finely crafted components and sublime beauty. Just as in 1947.

The racing, too, goes on. Right before I left on this trip, I turned on my TV to watch Michael Schumacher win the Grand Prix of Belgium at Spa-Francorchamps—in an Italian-red Ferrari. The only car on the track that didn't look like a cluttered billboard.

Continuity is a wonderful thing. Next time you have a glass of *vino rosso*, raise it to the folks from Maranello.