

HERE'S A CAR that generates controversy in just about any circle. Even among Ferrari cognoscenti, some see the Mondial t Cabriolet as an effete 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.

Among enthusiasts in general, there are those who find being around a Ferrari, any Ferrari, a rare treat. Therefore, for them, the Mondial is an object of veneration. On the other hand, some of these enthusiasts are fortunate enough to sample a Ferrari, and a few come away disillusioned. What's left is an intellectual appreciation for the marque, but the mystique is a bit tarnished.

Last, among those of us here at R&T, there's everything from cognoscenti to newcomers, elitists to populists, wind-in-the-face types to those actually not liking Morgan trikes; can you imagine? So it's no wonder driving a Mondial t Cabriolet for a couple of weeks left its mark—lots of them, in fact.

Before sharing these, though, let's fit the car into the full Maranello spectrum. Its 1980 Geneva show introduction dates the Mondial Coupe as the oldest of current Ferraris; four years later came the soft-top Cabriolet of our road test interest here. Sharing its powertrain is the 348 introduced last year as replacement for the 308/328, each of these models sporting a targa version, thus leaving the Cabriolet the only truly open Ferrari these days. The exotic Testarossa and hyperexotic F40 complete the range.

By way of numbers, the 348 accounts for something like half of Ferrari North America's business; the Testarossa, around 30 percent; the F40, only a handful; and the Mondial rounds things out at roughly 20 percent, Cabriolets outselling Coupes by 9 to 1.

Do we infer from this that the Mondial is a rara avis or merely the lame duck of the Ferrari lineup?

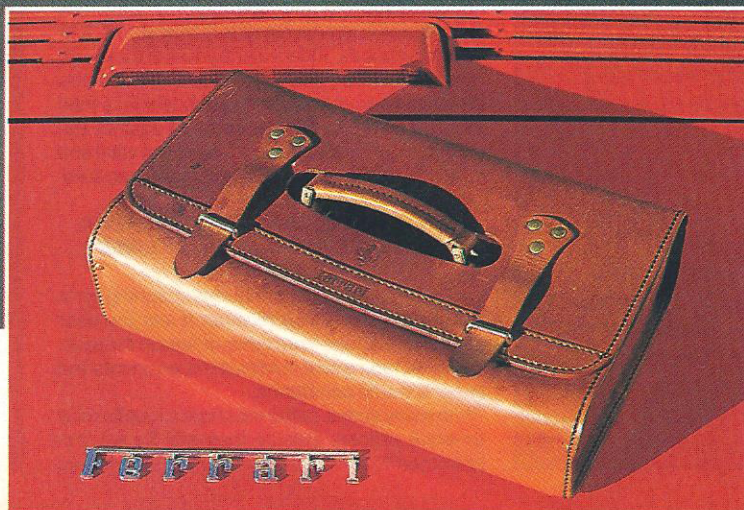
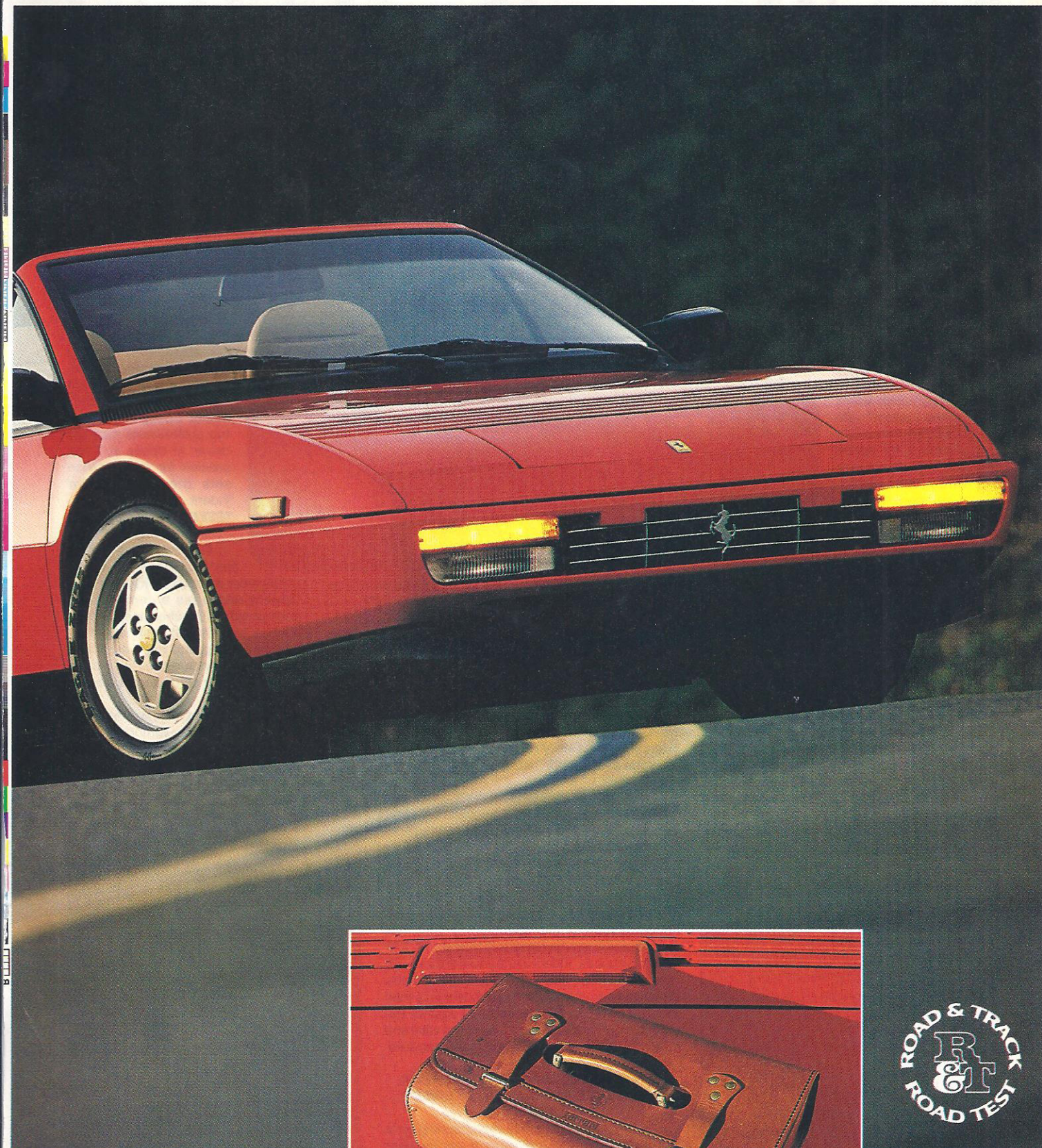
"I really like the car's open configuration," one enthusiastic owner

FERRARI MONDIAL t CABRIOLET

Maranello's
most practical
product



PHOTOS BY GUY SPANGENBERG



ROAD & TRACK
R & T
ROAD TEST

told us, "and, besides, it's the only Ferrari I fit into." Indeed, the interior of the Mondial is the most spacious of current models.

Don't read too much into its 2+2 nomenclature, however. The second pair of seats is for occasional use at best, and then only if the front-seat occupants are generous in sharing their leg room. Used as a *bi-posti*, though, the car offers its driver and front-seat passenger ample luggage and storage space, well beyond that of any other Ferrari.

What's more, the Mondial's driving position doesn't require the exaggerated seat rake of more extreme examples of Pininfarina styling; even taller sorts can sit relatively erect. And the rest of the interior is characteristically Ferrari, which is to say a whole spectrum of good, bad and indifferent.

For instance, the oversize pedals are offset distinctly to the right; this, to clear the left front fender cutout. Some Ferrari newcomers find this awkward; others accommodate in a minute. The thickly wrapped steering wheel, despite its adjustability for rake, lamentably blocks interesting segments of the 7500-redline tach. By contrast, the 180-mph speedometer is in clear view, and this is the one that can keep you out of—or get you into—a lot of trouble.

The gear lever and its exposed, polished gate are also characteristically Maranello. And so are the opposing views as to its function. "Like

all Ferrari boxes," noted a resident *tifosa*, "this one encourages the confidently firm hand motions that come with practice."

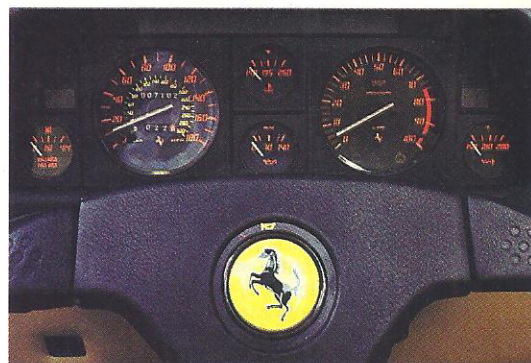
Countered a newcomer: "Call me a pragmatist, but large chunks of Ferrari mystique erode when I'm dealing with this cantankerous shift linkage."

Even he, though, fell prey to the wonderful noises emitted by the Mondial's 3405-cc 300-bhp V-8. "It's as though there's an extra set of gears driven off the camshafts whose sole purpose is to make beautiful sounds."

The *t* in our Cabriolet's name is for *trasversale*, indicating the transverse orientation of its 5-speed transmission behind the longitudinal

amidships V-8, a la Ferrari Formula 1 practice. As opposed to earlier Mondials in which the engine was transverse, this powertrain layout offers a lower center of gravity, most evident in the powerplant's relatively low residence in the engine bay.

Mondial performance has traveled an upward curve since the first *quattrovalvole* appeared in 1984, to the point that the current t Cabriolet gets full marks. It accelerates from a standstill to 60 mph in just 6.6 seconds, reaches the quarter mile in 15.0 sec. at 93.0 mph and is capable of topping out at 154 mph. Its oversize disc brakes, now with ABS, haul the car down from 60 mph in 147 ft. On our skidpad, the Mondial turned in a lateral acceleration of 0.89g.



■ Veglia gauges, with their characteristic orange markings, grace the instrument panel. Quality of the interior's leatherwork is exceptional; the downside of an open car is that the aroma of leather gets away!

FERRARI MONDIAL t

0-60 mph 6.6 sec
0-1/4 mi 15.0 sec
Top speed est 154 mph
Skidpad 0.89g
Slalom na
Brake rating very good

PRICE

List price, all POE **\$96,300** Price as tested **\$96,300**
Price as tested includes std equip. (air cond, leather interior, elect. window lifts, elect. adj mirrors, central locking, ABS).



ENGINE

Type dohc 4-valve/cyl **V-8**
Displacement 208 cu in./3405 cc
Bore x stroke 3.35 x 2.95 in./
85.0 x 75.0 mm
Compression ratio 10.4:1
Horsepower (SAE): **300 bhp @ 7000 rpm**
Torque **229 lb-ft @ 4000 rpm**
Maximum engine speed 7400 rpm
Fuel injection Bosch Motronic elect. port
Fuel premium unleaded, 91 pump oct

GENERAL DATA

Curb weight **3640 lb**
Test weight 3790 lb
Weight dist, f/r, % 44/56
Wheelbase 104.3 in.
Track, f/r 59.9 in./61.4 in.
Length **178.5 in.**
Width **71.3 in.**
Height **48.6 in.**
Trunk space 5.0 cu ft

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission **5-sp manual**
Gear Ratio Overall ratio (Rpm) Mph
1st 3.21:1 11.43:1 41
2nd 2.11:1 7.52:1 63
3rd 1.46:1 5.20:1 91
4th 1.09:1 3.88:1 121
5th 0.86:1 3.06:1 est (7400) 154
Final drive ratio 3.56:1
Engine rpm @ 60 mph in 5th 2880

CHASSIS & BODY

Layout **mid engine/rear drive**
Body/frame: steel, aluminum/skeletal steel
Brakes, f/r **11.1-in. vented discs/**
11.0-in. vented discs;
vacuum assist, ABS
Wheels cast alloy; **16 x 7J f, 16 x 8J r**
Tires Goodyear Eagle ZR;
205/55ZR-16 f, 225/55ZR-16 r
Steering **rack & pinion**, power assist
Turning circle 38.9 ft
Suspension, f/r: **upper & lower A-arms,**
coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar/**up-**
per & lower A-arms, coil springs, tube
shocks, anti-roll bar

FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving est 15.0 mpg
EPA city/highway 12/19 mpg
Fuel capacity 22.5 gal.

INTERIOR NOISE

Idle in neutral 66 dBA
Constant 70 mph 77 dBA

ACCELERATION

Time to speed Seconds
0-30 mph 2.3
0-60 mph 6.6
0-80 mph 11.0
Time to distance
0-100 ft 3.1
0-500 ft 8.2
0-1320 ft (1/4 mi) 15.0 @ 93.0 mph

BRAKING

Minimum stopping distance
From 60 mph 147 ft
From 80 mph 258 ft
Control excellent
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop 17 lb
Fade, effort after six 0.5g stops from
60 mph 17 lb
Brake feel excellent
Overall brake rating very good


HANDLING

Lateral accel (200-ft skidpad) 0.89g
Balance neutral
Speed thru 700-ft slalom na
Balance na

Refinements to the car include driver-adjustable shock absorbers, befitting the Ferrari heritage in ranging from reasonably firm to intermediately so to downright racer-stiff. Another refinement is power-assisted steering that actually improves what was already one of the world's better rack-and-pinion systems. Gone is the previous low-speed heaviness; what's more, an on-center dullness typical of earlier Ferraris is gone as well.

To many of us, it's less than completely satisfying to operate the Cabriolet's soft top. This one goes up quite easily; it's the lowering that demands patience and perseverance. The owner's manual even cites potential misalignments, something you would expect Ferrari's engineering expertise to have eliminated during development.

Its appearance is also paradoxical: The Cabriolet's top looks quite handsome when up, several staff members liking the way its tapered sails rakishly flank the engine hatch. But, when stowed, the top resides rather high, obstructing vision to the rear, making side mirrors invaluable and reminding one that this is not just any convertible—it's an exotic.

In fact, though, this duality of the practical and the exotic sums up the Mondial very well. Despite their quirks, Ferraris have earned enviable reputations as durable machines when maintained properly. And *because* of their quirks, these cars offer added satisfaction to those learning how to drive them properly. In particular, the Mondial's blend of Ferrari attributes, good and bad, sets it distinctly apart from other cars on the road, even other exotics. And the Cabriolet's 2+2 nature sets it distinctly apart, even from other Ferraris. 

Test Notes . . .

■ Unlike earlier 2.9-liter models, the Mondial t's new 300-bhp 3.4-liter engine produces acceleration times worthy of a Ferrari. Driven fast or slow, the Mondial is exhilarating.

■ The Mondial t's longitudinal engine/transverse gearbox layout eliminates axle tramp under hard acceleration and considerably improves shifting.