

Wheels

\$2.00*
JULY
1982
NZ \$2.50*

AUSTRALIA'S TOP-SELLING MOTOR MAGAZINE

Scoop!

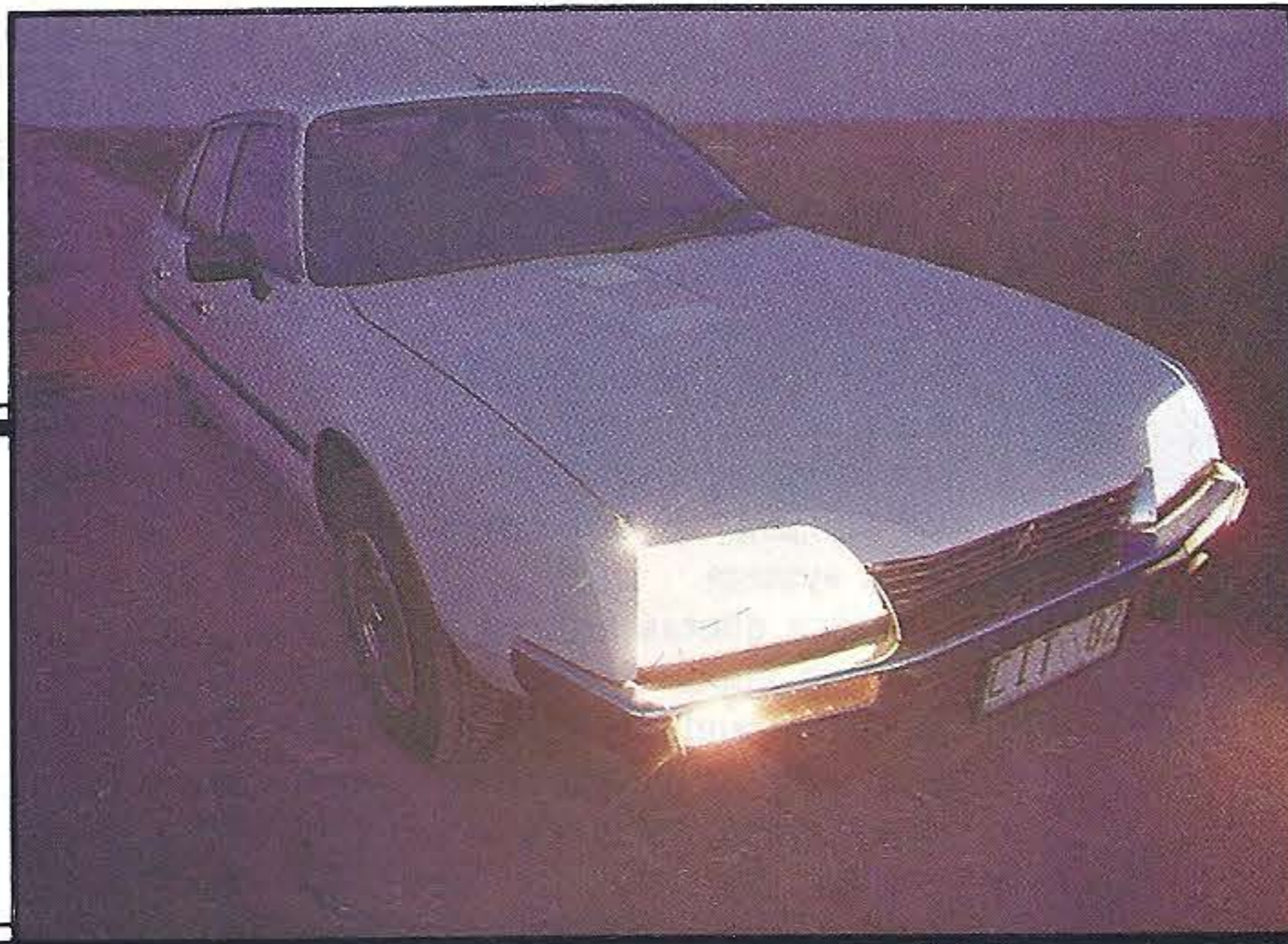


Holden Camira!

Inside the General's front drive challenge

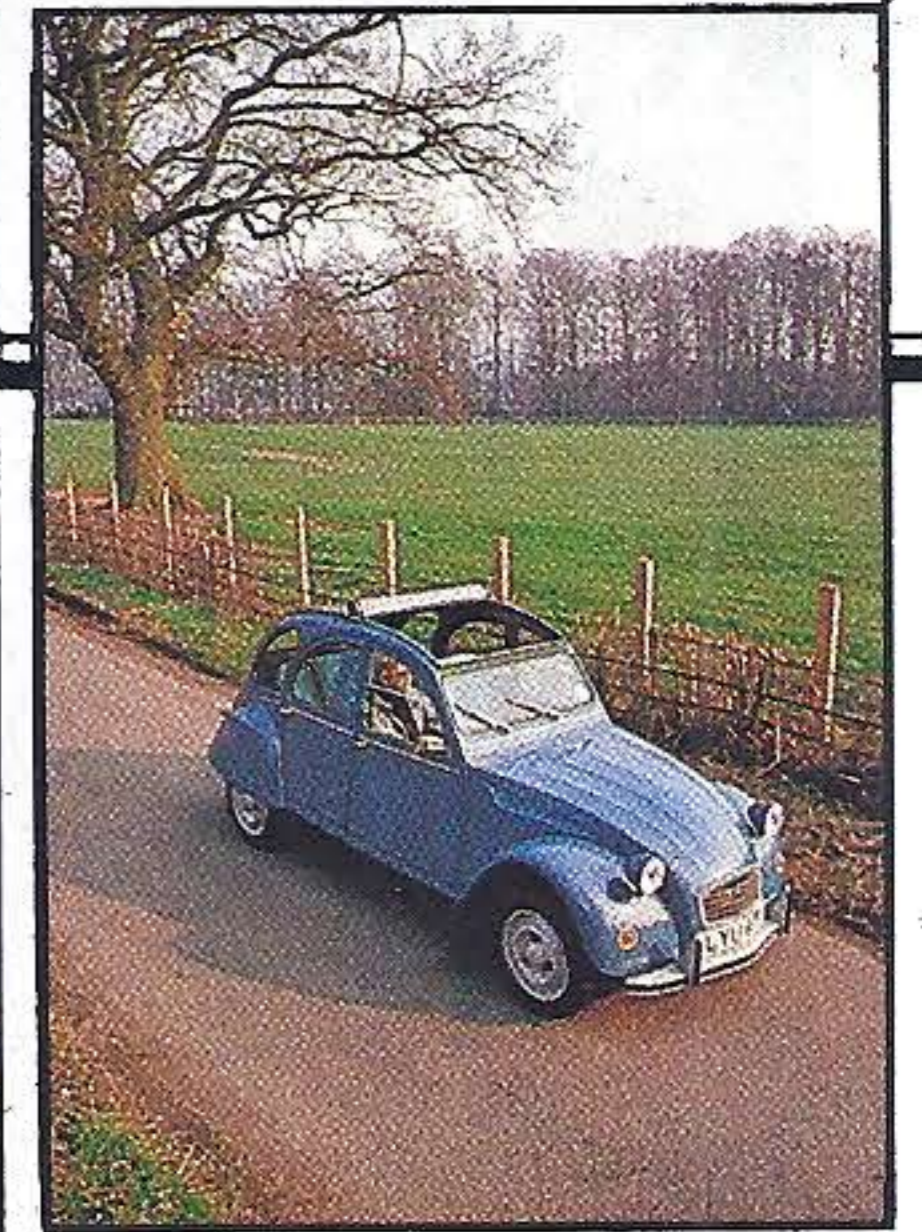
July

68 It looks like a thoroughbred Ferrari all right (centre), but the new-to-Australia Mondial doesn't measure up to the marque's reputation for all things excellent in sports cars



52 After the disappointment of the first Citroën CX, the CX Super is the car we always hoped for. We also talk with Citroën's chief designer, Trevor Fiore

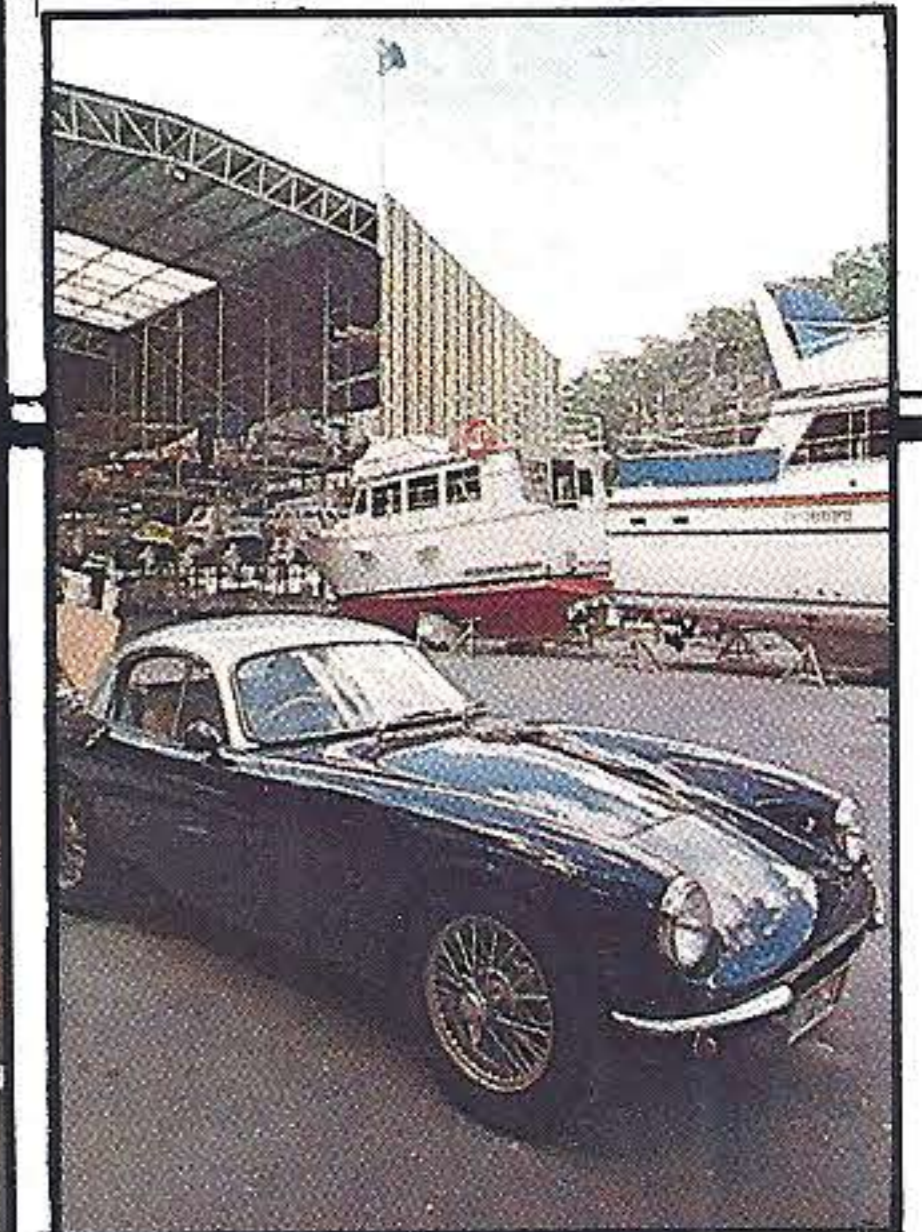
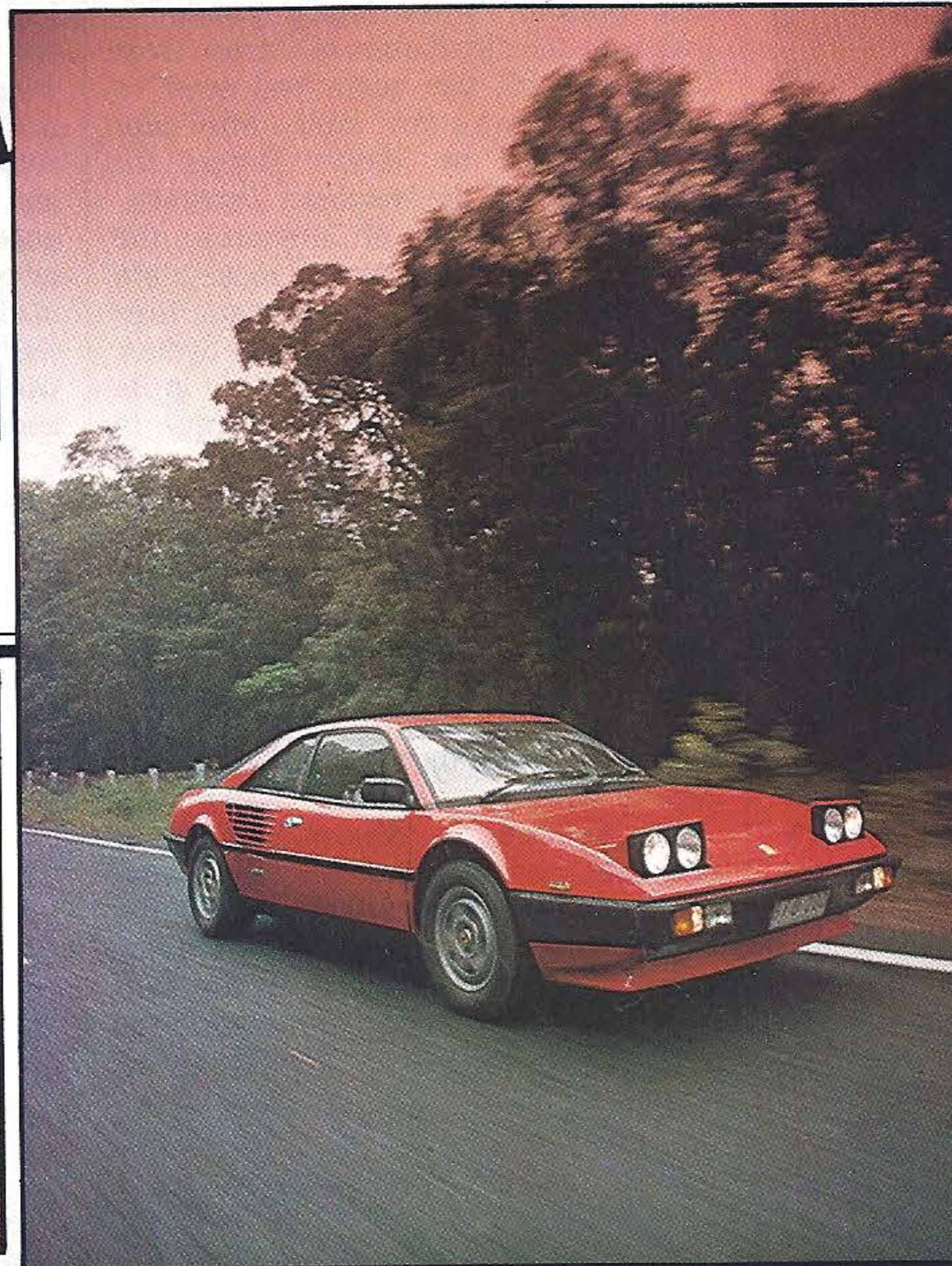
62 In 1936, Citroën destroyed 249 of its radical new car, the 2CV, to keep it out of Hitler's hands. Forty-six years later, demand is strong



Scoop!



26 In four weeks' time, this name (above) and its strange graphics will be well-known throughout Australia. A special scoop report inside tells you what to expect



86 You're looking at what is arguably the best-looking English sports car ever — the Lotus Elite. It did, and still does, everything a sports car should



34 If you want a diesel that goes, look no further than Australia's fastest (above) — the Peugeot 505 Turbo



38 So you want an instant image? Our team did the hard work of choosing for you in our coupe comparo



30 Datsun has come up with a Pulsar that, at last, represents a real challenge to Laser, 323 and Corolla

MONDIAL

Ferrari by name only

IN FOUR days we drove the Ferrari Mondial 1600 kilometres. We ambled the new mid-engined V8 Ferrari through suburban Melbourne, running with the traffic flow but no more. We sprinted it as hard as we dared until we had it flat through the gears on the lovely, diving, twisting roads that link the city with Yea and the Hume Highway. We parked the red machine right outside the restaurant in Benalla so that we could admire Our Ferrari while we ate. We fought with trucks from Benalla to Sydney, seldom exceeding the speed limit nor using any gears but four and five. We loaded four adults for commuter runs to the office. We drove it as hard as it is possible to drive, using the red line in the four lower gears, on a lonely stretch of undulating road and in the teeming rain. Then we washed it, filled it with petrol for the last time, and returned it to Maranello Concessionaires, the Australian Ferrari people.

And left it quite happily. No tears were shed, no children sold to raise the deposit, no bank managers' arms twisted for a loan. Ferrari's new Mondial, you see, is a puzzling car, an understandable car and one destined to be successful but not, according to our judgement, one to be coveted, or a model that is destined to become an instant Ferrari classic.

On one hand the Mondial is the finest-handling Ferrari we have ever driven, and probably the most roadable, practical Ferrari ever, yet it doesn't have the performance expected of a Ferrari and is, by the standards of the marque, downright slow. Mondial drivers are going to have to get used to assuming a look of arrogant superiority at the traffic lights in the hope they can psyche any opposition before the lights go green.

Perhaps we could forgive the lack of grunt if it were a true four-seater, as Ferrari obviously intended it be, but for all the high roof line and bulk of the not-so-beautiful and sometimes even crude Pininfarina body, the Mondial isn't any more than a mediocre two-plus-two, a fault compounded by the intolerably uncomfortable front bucket seats. It is

Peter Robinson drives the Mondial and finds it the best handling Ferrari ever. He also comes to some shattering conclusions that will have Ferrari-philes thinking twice before trading in their Dinos.

neither quick enough to rate as a real Ferrari sports car, nor roomy enough to be a genuine family-sized Ferrari. At a price expected to be around \$90,000 — that's \$25,000 more than the lighter, faster 308GTBi, and \$27,000 more than the Porsche 928S — that becomes very hard to accept.

What is the Mondial? Steve Cropley's story in WHEELS, September 1981, took the view that the latest Ferrari was the first truly Fiat-influenced model and that it was a car which reflected this in the way it attempted to compete with German — meaning Porsche in this case — standards of quality in both materials and finish. Cropley came to the conclusion that it was the "sensible Ferrari" and we know what he means, but the compromises involved in achieving such an end are too obvious and the result of trying to be sensible is a car that is neither sedan nor sports.

The Mondial was released at the 1980 Geneva motor show and replaces the old Bertone-bodied 308 GT4 as Ferrari's mid-engined two-plus-two. The GTB and GTS are pure two-seaters, although they share the same basic mechanicals: all-alloy, three-litre, four-cam 90 degree V8 now with Bosch K-jetronic and developing 158 kW at 6600 rpm and 243 Nm at 4600 rpm in pre-ADR27A (although the same figures are quoted for the Australian-spec engine in the 308s). It sits transversely amidships in the chassis and drives a five-speed gearbox that shares the same lower four internal ratios with the 308s but has a slightly taller fifth (0.919 instead of 0.952) and a shorter 4.0625 final drive compared to the older car's 3.71. Fifth gear hence pulls 31.6 km/h per 1000 rpm instead of 33.4.

Double wishbone suspension with coil springs and anti-roll bars are used front and rear, the steering is by rack and pinion and

the brakes are, of course, four-wheel discs. Where the Mondial is different is in having a subframe at the rear to carry the engine, transmission and suspension together so that they can be removed as one unit.

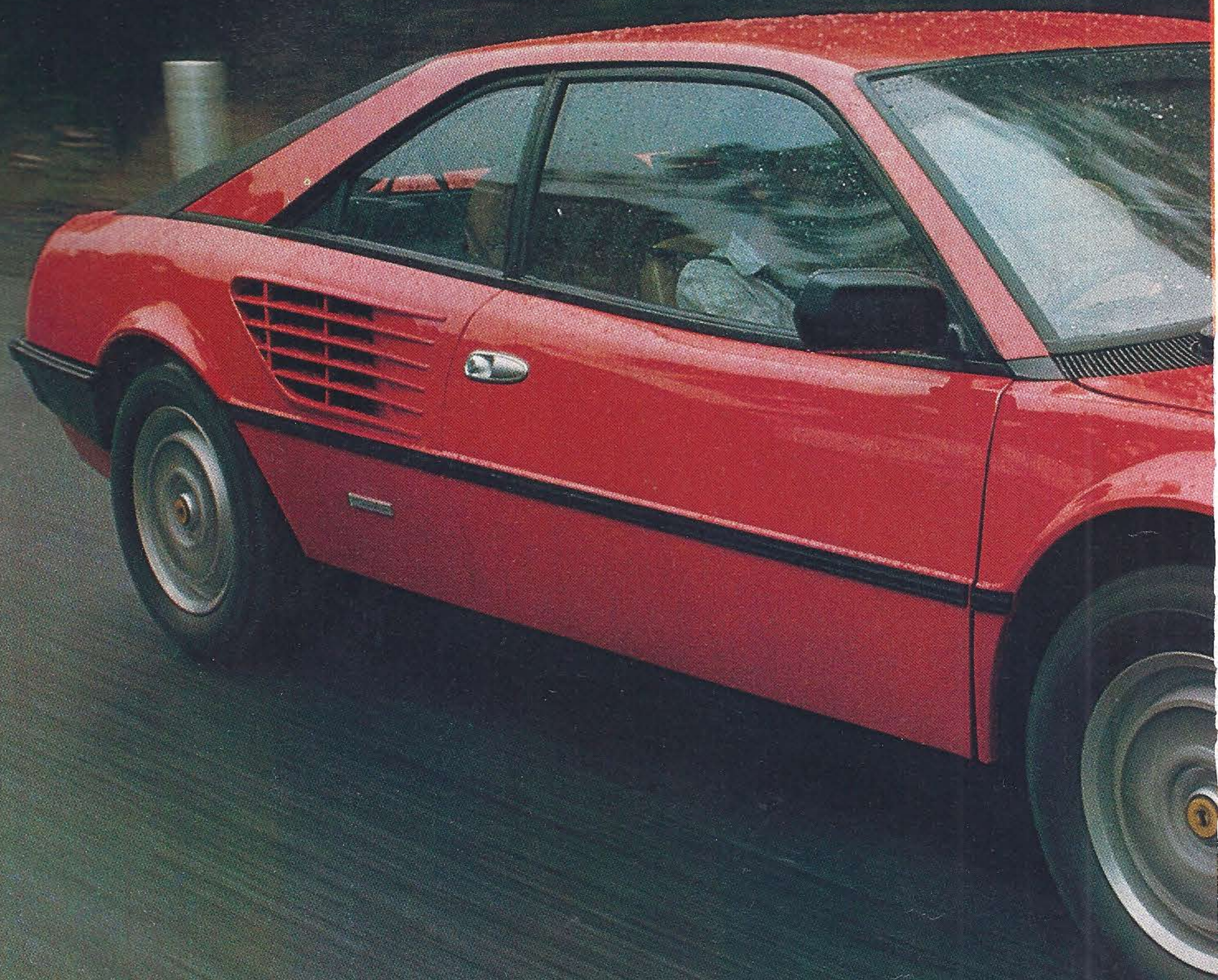
The body follows Ferrari tradition in clothing a tubular steel frame, although the chassis does have more folded and boxed members which add to the body's strength at the penalty of increased weight. Ferrari quotes a figure of 1288 kg for the latest 308GTBi, while the Mondial weighs in at 1445 kg, so it is no lightweight machine.

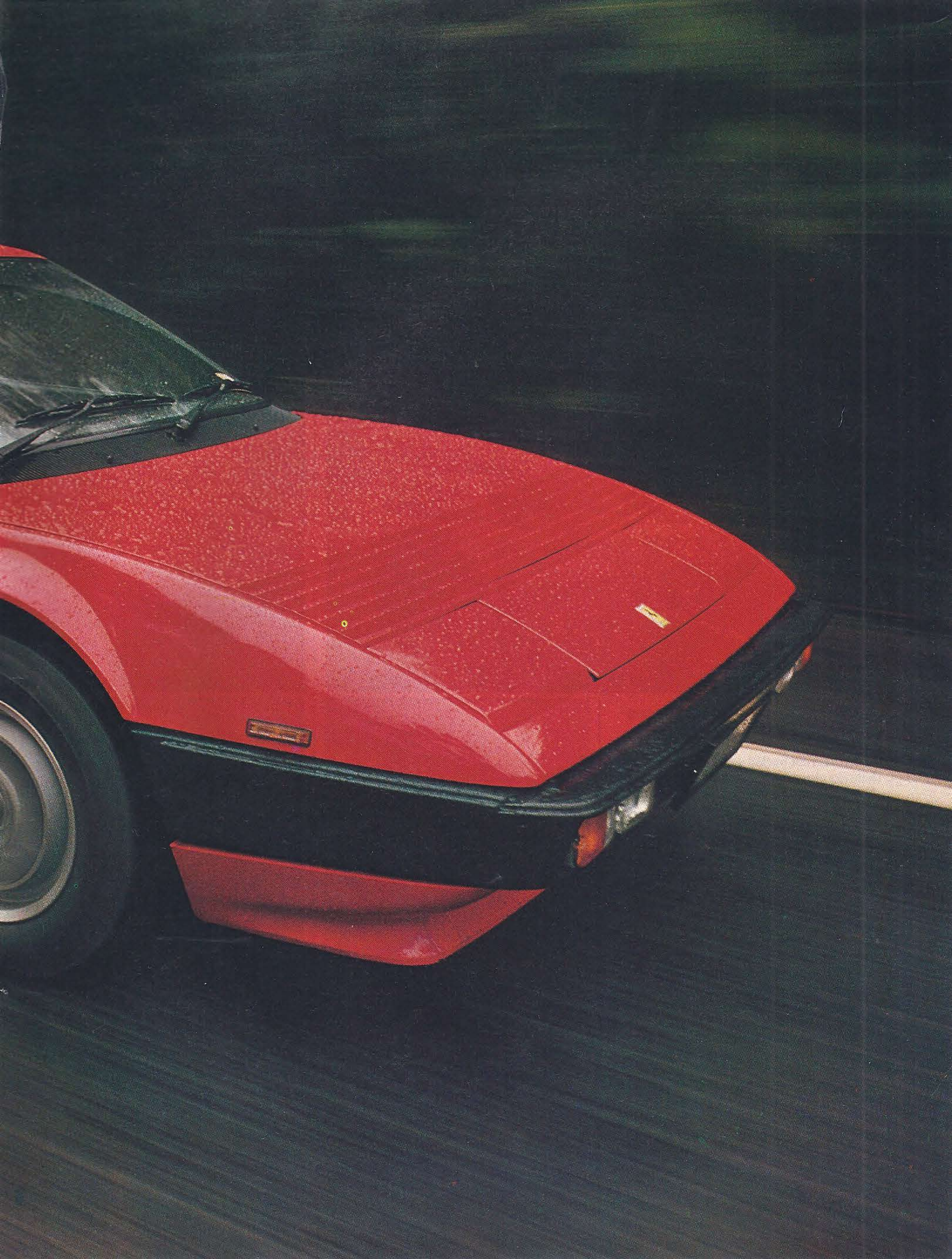
Nor is it a small car. The wheelbase of 2650 mm is almost as long as a Commodore and its overall length of 4580 mm, width of 1790 and, especially, its height of 1250 — 130 mm above the GTB — make it much larger and taller than it appears in photographs. By increasing the wheelbase and height, Ferrari's designers hoped to build a mid-engined car that really is a four-seater, something the basic format of the layout makes difficult. Despite their best intention, Ferrari's men have built what could fairly be called a three-seater if the front passenger is happy to compromise.

For Pininfarina the task of penning a body which retains the sleek lines expected of a Ferrari and yet has the practical room of a four-seater must have been a more difficult challenge than the brief to do the two-seater-only GTB. Ferrari's previous attempt at a mid-engined four-seater looked like a Bertone reject for the Lamborghini Uraco. There is more than a hint of the GT4 in the Mondial but at the same time there are touches of the 512 Boxer and the GTB so it comes across as a melding of the more recent Ferrari designs without having a strong personality of its own. The side air scoop with its horizontal plastic embellishment is a crude and unfortunate eyesore that detracts from the smoothness, style and elegance of the rest of the body.

The mid-engined format means that the cockpit begins much further forward than would be the case in a front- or even rear-engined car. By extending the side windows well beyond the rear seat, the roof to a point just above the engine and with





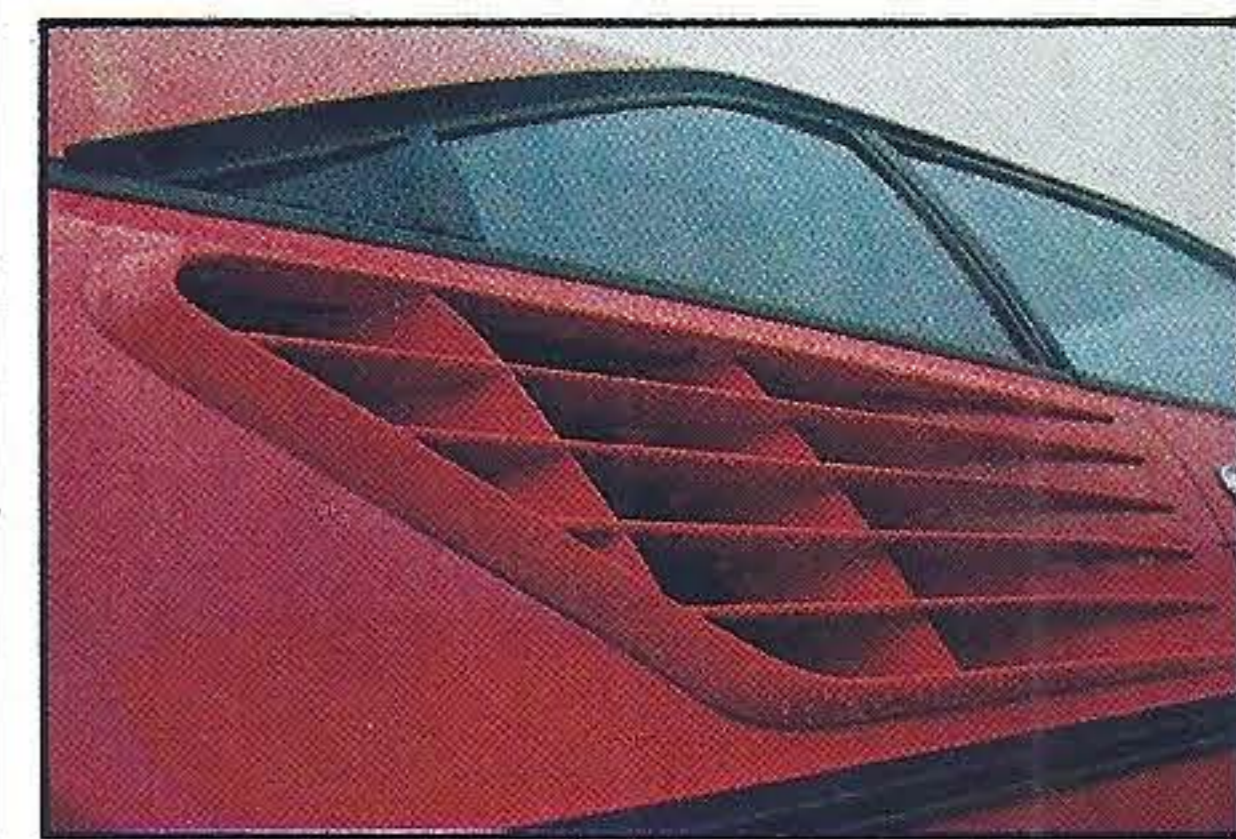
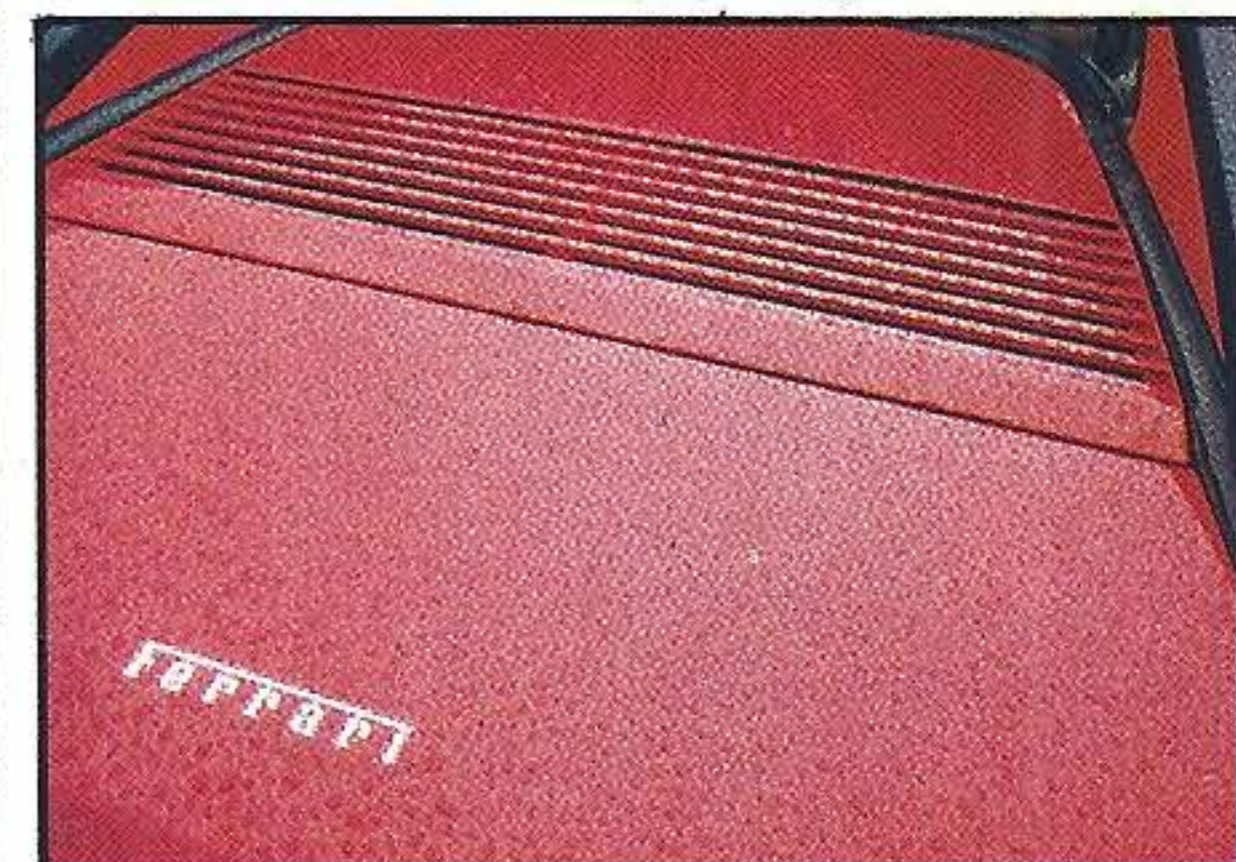
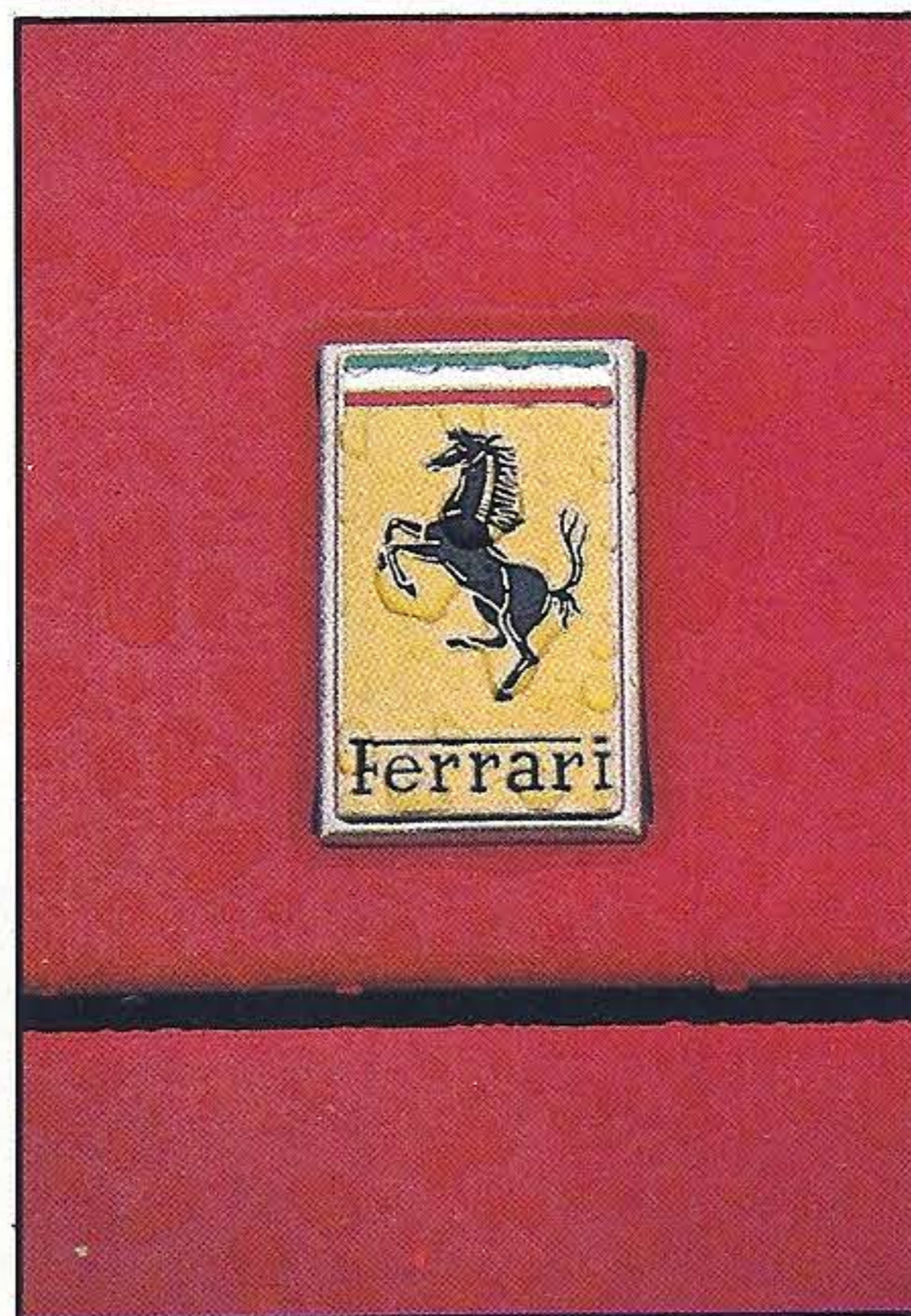




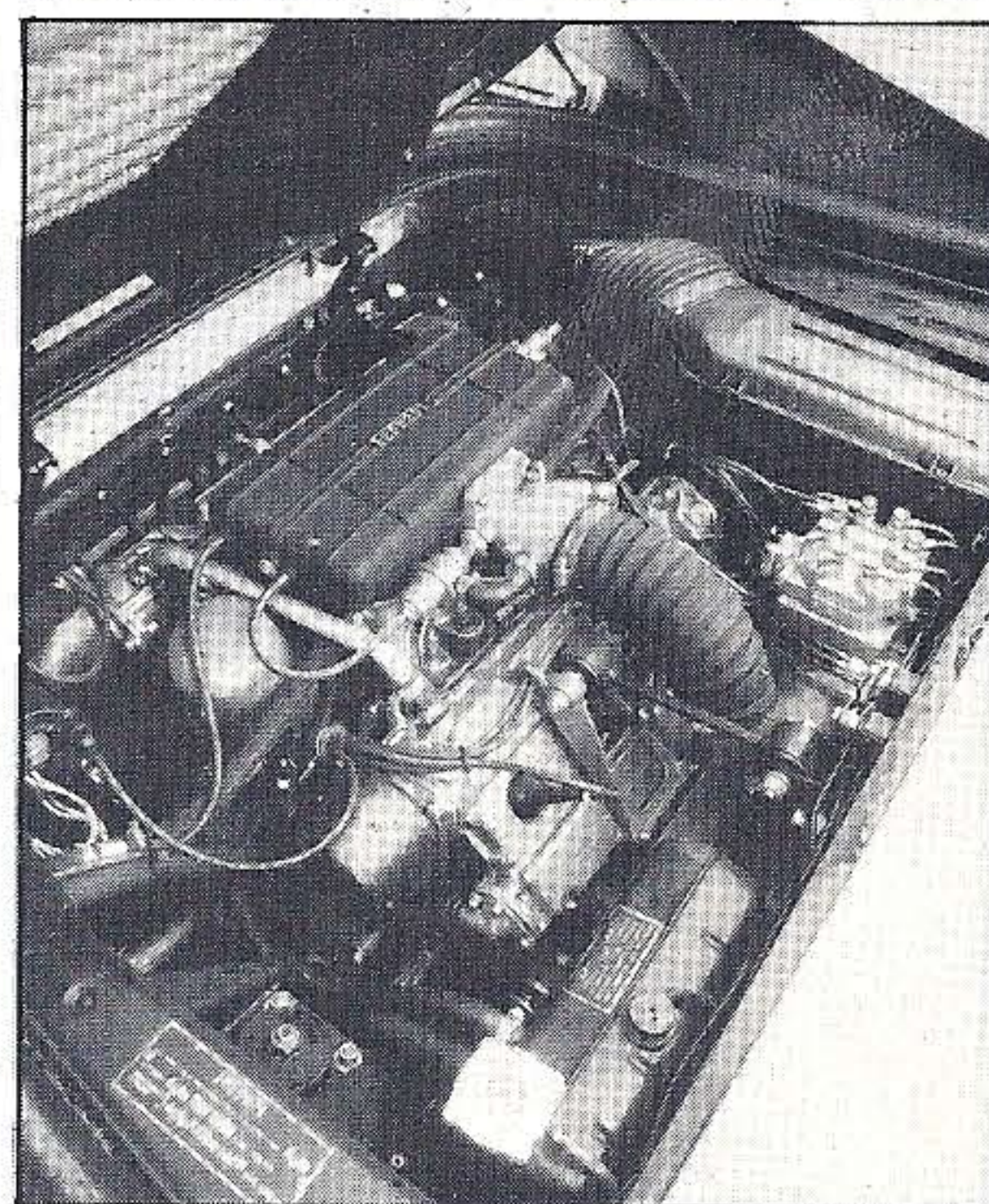
buttresses running down to midway along the boot, the cabin looks roomier than it really is.

So the front bucket seats are sited about halfway along the doors and the driver's legs go down into a relatively narrow well between the front heel arches. As a consequence the pedals are heavily offset to the left but perfectly angled for heel-and-toe changes. There is plenty of room for large feet and a tall driver can stretch out. The simple, three-spoke steering wheel is adjustable for reach and height — unusual in any car — and is set at that typical Maranello angle that is less upright than many first-time Ferrari drivers expect. In fact, for most people it rests perfectly, quite low and between splayed knees, raked gently so that it can be used for supporting the hands on a long run.

The front bucket seats, leather finished and with various slits in the cushions, look and smell inviting. In practice they are among the most uncomfortable seats we have tried. They are too hard, too slippery, lack effective lateral support and provide virtually no lumbar support. So bad are the seats that each time the car was driven the driver (and front



The Mondial's handling in the wet is nothing short of sensational (top left), but the cabin has its drawbacks, not least of which are the seats, among the most uncomfortable in the world. The engine also doesn't do the job you would expect from a Ferrari. The body has touches of 512 Boxer, GTB and GT4, while the side air scoop (bottom right) is an unfortunate eyesore.



passenger) complained bitterly of a numb bum within 30 minutes and spent the rest of the journey squirming around in pain. Nothing less than a total redesign is required.

The interior is quite conservative by exocar standards. In front of the steering wheel is a large oblong binnacle containing all the instruments with a vertical row of warning lights between the 10,000rpm tachometer and 180 mph/300 km/h speedometer. A shroud above the binnacle limits reflections but the gauges are vertical so that for most drivers the top of the dials, and even the turn indicator lights and clock, are impossible to see.

There are three steering column stalks — from recent Lancia models — and a series of touch-sensitive switches to the right of the instruments for the heated rear window, fog lights and bonnet, engine and boot lids. A large centre console carries the radio but it is so far back that it is difficult to see and very fiddly to operate quickly. Ferrari's new electronic check control is immediately to the rear and below the radio and provides a series of warning lights to monitor the engine

water, engine oil, transmission oil, windscreen washer fluid and air-conditioning fluid among other functions. Three major warning lights tell you if it is a major or minor failure and even when a service is due.

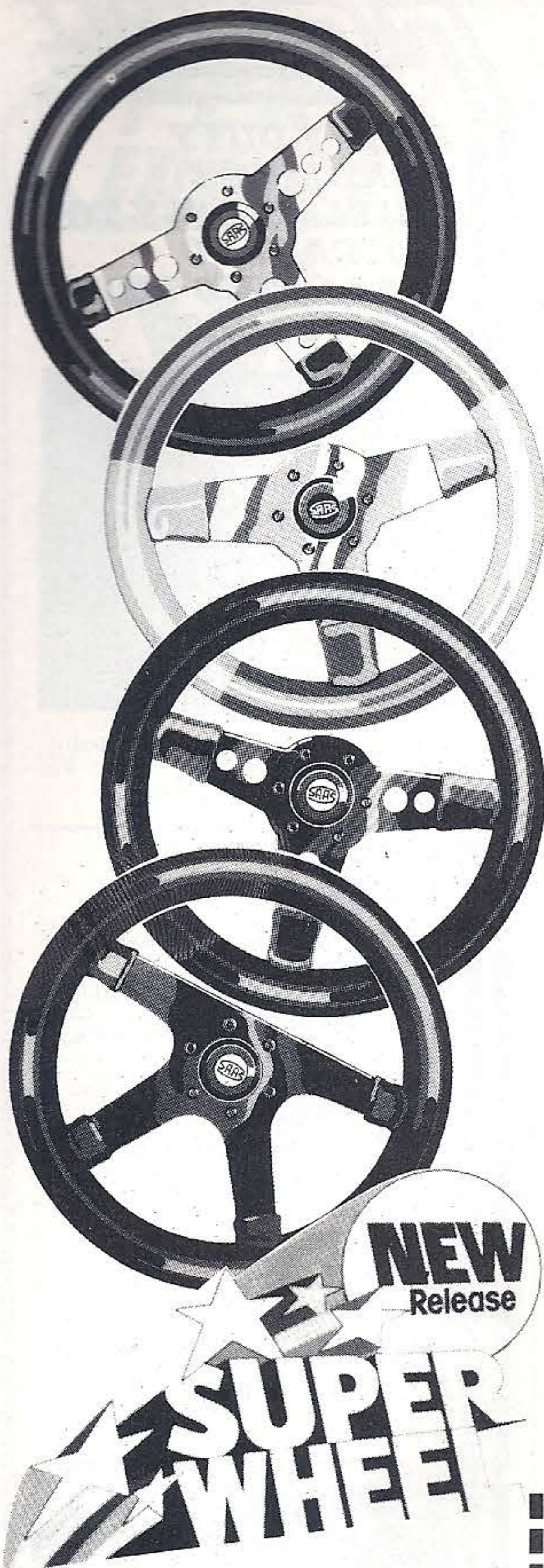
In front of the radio and just behind the gated gear lever is yet another row of buttons for a variety of functions including the electrically-operated windows, and hung down below the centre of the dashboard is a row of push buttons for the air-conditioning and heater. There are map pockets in the doors (which don't open very wide) and between the backs of the rear bucket seats which are separated by a huge, hard central armrest and a glove box which can only be opened with the ignition on. The handbrake is between the driver's seat and the door and while it drops down, whether it is on or off it still rubs against the door trim and is hard to engage. The front-seat passenger would appreciate some form of grab handle. The leather upholstery extends to the doors and dashboard and there is plenty of expensive-feeling carpet.

Obviously it is well equipped and has a more luxurious feel than the cheaper

GTB, but the control placement requires a rethink and a more logical location, while better use of the available space — there is, at least, plenty of headroom — would make the cabin a more inviting place to spend one's motoring life. Ferrari has yet to match the German quality standards if the 3000 km-old test car is typical. It leaked water badly around the frames of both doors.

Ferrari's injected V8 engine starts without touching the accelerator when cold and idles consistently, pulling away without hesitation. Perhaps the engine becomes a little smoother, more free-revving, when it is fully warmed up but the Bosch system is responsible for it now being totally untemperamental, and very much quieter without the sucking induction roar that could be both exhilarating and tiring on the carburettor GTB and GT4. Crawling through city traffic no longer produces a splutter when the throttle is opened wide, but equally, where the GTS we road-tested two years ago had acceleration that was "one, uninterrupted burst" if you changed gears at the red line, the Mondial's is

Continued on page 124



The wheel you've been waiting for! At Saas, we set the pace with the Nations latest range of feature-packed sports wheels. Find out more about Super Wheel. . . .

send for a catalogue today.

To Saas Manufacturing Co.
73 Levanswell Rd., Moorabbin, Vic. 3189.
Telephone (03) 553 0207

Please send me a free Super Wheel catalogue



Name

Address

Postcode

From page 73

more a civilised spurt.

With more weight, less power — the carburettor V8 developed 190 kW — and a larger frontal area, there is no way the Mondial is going to have the performance of the GTS (or the GT4) but it is also limited by the shorter gearing. In absolute terms it must be considered a humble performer. Sadly, a wet spell for the entire time we had the car in Sydney — witness our photographs — prevented us from taking the car out to the Castlereagh drag strip. However, we know enough about measuring performance by the seat of our pants to claim this Ferrari would be hard pressed to break 16.5 seconds for the standing 400 metres.

And that is giving the Mondial the benefit of the doubt as a time of 17 seconds would probably be closer to reality. Not that the engine is ever flat or inadequate for the task, it simply doesn't deliver the raw power that is so much — or has been — a part of the Ferrari mystique. It is very easy to drive the Mondial changing up at around 3500 rpm and have no trouble keeping up with the traffic while using most of the gears, and this will be top of the range in many people's normal use of the car. Above 5000 rpm the exhaust note deepens and at 7000 rpm there is a screaming from the combined talents of the gear whine, cam noise and exhaust that will be music for most owners. Only at 6000 rpm and above — 190 km/h — in fifth gear is there a drone which is entirely unpleasant.

If weight is the Mondial's number one problem then the relatively low gearing only exaggerates the trouble. Taken to the red line, the new Ferrari runs to 65, 95, 132 and 180 at 7700 rpm in the lower four ratios and it will do 210 km/h in fifth, but only if the road is long enough.

Compare these to the GTS which reached 71, 104, 145, 192 (at 7500 rpm) and 245 in fifth. But even these figures don't indicate that where the four upper ratios all seem to be in constant use in the GTS, first and second in the Mondial are reserved for getting away from rest. So in most driving conditions the Mondial is one gear down on the GTS and always feels decidedly lower-g geared. Such are the Mondial's levels of roadholding that in most fast driving situations on winding sections of road, only fourth and fifth gears are used frequently, third being reserved for relatively slow hairpin bends. But this is a car in which you can double most recommended speed signs. . . .

The Mondial's great strength is its remarkable handling and roadholding. The Michelin TRX tyres — the Ferrari Formula One car's switch to Goodyear hasn't had any effect on what rubbers the road cars use — can take some of the credit, of course, and the longer

wheelbase has certainly improved the ride, but the latest mid-engined Ferrari has a chassis which comes alive when the car is driven quickly.

Initially the steering feels (and is) quite heavy at low speeds, and with a turning circle of 12 metres and 3.5 turns lock-to-lock, it seems to understeer to excess. Corner more quickly, away from the confines of traffic and absurd speed limits, and the car becomes agile, every component in its make-up standing at alert ready to play its part in ensuring a balance and grip which mark this down as easily the best handling Ferrari.

Like all mid-engined cars, the Mondial is best on an open throttle, but there is no sudden increase in understeer if you back off quickly in the apex of a corner and there is never the feeling, as sometimes developed in the GTS, that entering a corner too fast meant real trouble. Maybe the Mondial doesn't have the acceleration to get it into difficulties, but it responds so subtly, so instantaneously, to any input at the wheel, the throttle or the brakes that it allows the driver to be precise in a manner which means the car is ultimately very close to being truly neutral in its steering characteristics.

The roads can be covered in water and every corner taken at full throttle in second gear and still it is the nose which is pushed out — backing off just brings it back into line, the degree of change in attitude being entirely up to the driver and how he organises, through the car's senses, the weight transfer.

There is a little jarring through the steering wheel on particularly severe potholes but this, too, is less obvious than with the other 308s. At low speeds the ride is firm and comfortable and it improves noticeably as speeds rise, coping brilliantly with bumps which are effectively felt as an undulation, the Mondial's stability allowing it to ride over them in an almost supple fashion.

The brakes are rather heavy and need a strong consistent push but they are difficult to lock up and only do so after a punishing drive.

One of the constant joys of driving a Ferrari is the touch and sensations associated with the long and slender gear lever. Perhaps no other part of any car in the world is as elegant. Combined with a clutch that is lighter and more direct, it makes for a gear change that has the driver snapping from ratio to ratio once the oil has warmed up.

Of course, there isn't the same need, nor ability, to change gears the way the real Ferrari sports cars do. And that is part of the contradiction that is the Mondial. At \$90,000 it seems to us to be an over-priced piece of imagery that will trade on the legends without contributing to their existence. □