

CLASSIC DRIVER

Autobahn Burner

The following is an extract from Roberto Giordanelli's feature in Auto Italia magazine, Issue 112 2005. For access to the full feature, plus articles on the Maserati race transporter, spy photos of the upcoming Ferrari 575M replacement, a review of Monterey and Pebble Beach, the rare Fiat 850 Moretti Sportiva Coupe, and much more, see www.auto-italia.co.uk



Question: How do you improve a Ferrari? Answer: Depends how you define 'improve'. For purists, the standard factory car is the ultimate. Even preening a car for a concours d'elegance is considered by some to be vandalism. If, by making a 5.7-litre V12 Ferrari 575 Maranello faster, lighter, sportier and more stable you consider this to be an improvement, then Novitec Rosso is right up your street. I am driving a Novitec Rosso Ferrari 575M near its HQ on some fabulous Bavarian country roads in southern Germany. The power upgrade is modest but combined with bigger brakes, sports suspension, wide wheels and tyres and an aerodynamic kit, it makes the 575M feel more Olympic sprinter than Marathon runner.

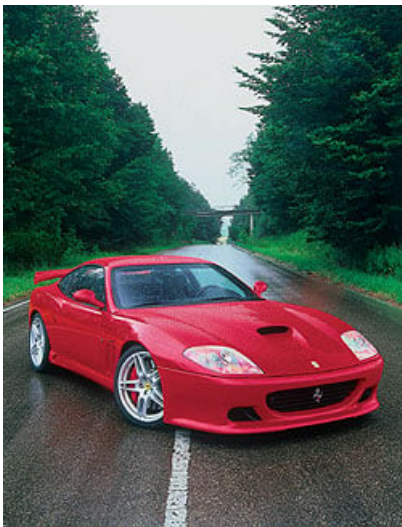
The Germans are Europe's top tuners, and Novitec is right up there with the best of the best. The company's headquarters ooze quality, professionalism and integrity and the helpful, multilingual staff sell their produce worldwide. The parts are also TUV-approved, which means they are to the world's highest standards.

Novitec takes great care to make modifications to cars that are in harmony with the original design. You can judge for yourselves just how well that has been achieved. At one time they considered an 800bhp supercharged version of the 575M but research found that while Ferrari 360 and 430 customers are gagging for their breathtaking supercharger kits, the owners of V12 Ferraris are more conservative. Consequently the standard 575M's 515bhp at 7250rpm and 434lb ft of torque at 5250rpm have been gently upgraded to 533bhp at 7250rpm and 440lb ft at 6300rpm. This has been achieved by re-mapping the ECU and by fitting a Novitec exhaust. Not an enormous difference but enough to make the 575M feel a bit quicker, especially when combined with some lightweight carbonfibre panels.



As an example, a Ferrari 360 front bumper weighs 20kg, while a Novitec carbon version barely tips the scales at 3kg. While any driver would be hard pushed to notice a 0-100km/h improvement from 4.2sec to 4.1sec and a top speed hike from 202mph to 204mph, improved braking and handling capabilities are easily felt. The combination does noticeably improve the overall driveability. The driver feels more connected to the Novitec 575M. Grip levels are higher, necessitating a stiffer set-up with stainless steel coilovers to combat the greater body roll that comes with higher g-forces. While the dampers are adjustable, they are not intended to be altered as they have been set up by Novitec test drivers after extensive road and track work, including testing at the world's most challenging 13 miles – the Nürburgring Nordschleife. Brake disc diameters are up from 330mm to 380mm and are now clamped by 8-pot front and 4-pot rear calipers all working through the standard servo and ABS. Those higher grip levels come from wider wheels and copious Pirelli rubber.

The aero-kit comprises Supersport front bumper, side panels, rear wing and rear skirt all in lightweight materials. International tastes vary. For instance, that rear wing sells like hot cakes in the USA but nobody in Germany wants it. The same goes for chrome wheels. Special black rear lights and side indicators are also fitted. Modifications continue inside the car with a Supersport steering wheel, seats, Novitec Rosso pedals and footrest, a red tachometer and a 360km/h speedo. My own colour preference for the 575M is in turmoil. Normally I would go for a sombre colour but such are the clever changes to this Novitec Rosso 575M that it really suits this bright F1-style orange/red factory colour.



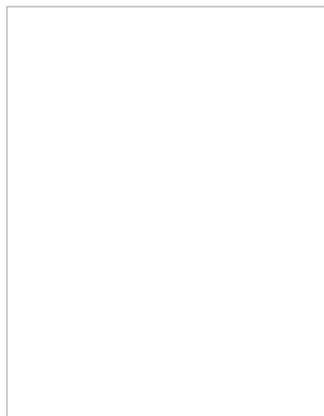
The Novitec Rosso 575M has a six-speed F1 paddleshift. I click into first gear and blast off. Such is the acceleration that unless the road is bone dry, the ASR traction control cuts in immediately to maintain traction. ASR is engaged every time you start the 575M. To switch it off, you need to depress the button for a few seconds. My tip is to leave it operational. There are times when its power-cutting antics are an intrusion as it does cut in quite early on, but unless you are an experienced drift-driver, better that the warning light on the dash is not seen. The other clever switch, 'Sport', firms up the suspension and speeds up gearshift time from a picosecond to a nanosecond. My advice is to save it for smooth, dry roads or track days.

Colossal speeds are attainable on German Autobahns where it is legal to travel at a pace that the manufacturer intended. The 575M is rock steady and quiet, even at two-miles-a-minute. At three-miles-a-minute there is still another 24mph to come but I slow down and find some empty country sweepers. The super-low-profile tyres work on billiard table Teutonic tarmac but would be in trouble on pot-holed roads. Roll and dive are

minimal. The 50/50 weight balance and the suspension ride/comfort compromise are just right for spirited driving. Only a race track would demand that it be stiffer. Then you would need a roll cage to stop the bodysell from distorting, which means that I am distorting the subject.

Novitec Rosso makes everyday Ferraris go quickly. Reliability is not an issue as Novitec's research goes way beyond normal outputs. Novitec then reduces that reliable improved output further, to guarantee longevity, so that the goods come with a one-year warranty. Time to leave the freedom of Germany and fly to London where the average speed of cars is 9mph.

For more information visit www.novitec.net



Words by Roberto Giordanelli and pictures courtesy of Michael Ward, and Auto Italia magazine.

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