

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Glorious: The Ferrari P3



*The following is an extract from Roberto Giordinelli's feature in Auto Italia magazine, Issue 118 2006. For access to the full feature, plus articles on the Targa Florio Retro, the Fiat Dino Spider and Coupe, the Hamann Lamborghini Gallardo, and much more, see [www.auto-italia.co.uk](http://www.auto-italia.co.uk)*

**Motoring writers are often asked which is the best car they have driven. It is a question I have always sidestepped, until today at Spa. Something is telling me that this 1966 Ferrari P3 takes the title. Officially a P3/412P and sometimes a 330P3 or P3/4, in the interests of ink conservation let's call it a P3.**



P3 chassis number 0844 was made in 1966 and is the first of only three. In 1966, Ferrari was at war with Ford and the gunfight at the OK Corral was being re-enacted at Le Mans. Ferrari first won Le Mans in 1949. Between 1960 and 1965 Ferrari totally dominated the 24-hour race. Ford had its revenge with wins in 1966/7/8/9 with the 7.0-litre GT40s. After doing battle with Ford, Ferrari had waves of Porsche 917s coming at them and, although Ferrari went on to have countless 'normal' race wins, the red cars never won Le Mans again. One of this P3's race wins was right here at Spa-Francorchamps in the 1966 Spa 1000Km.

The P3 is supplied by the ever-impressive Tim Samways Sporting and Historic Car Engineers (see [www.timsamways.co.uk](http://www.timsamways.co.uk)). Samways totally rebuilt the P3 to race spec and it has since been campaigned successfully in the Shell Historic Ferrari Challenge.

Strolling up to the P3 and ignorant of its outstanding history I make notes. It is a low car – well below waist height. I can feel its presence and I don't know why. There are the rivets to remind you that this is a man-made aluminium car although the doors are in glassfibre. Peer in and you spot the steel tube spaceframe chassis with aluminium floor and inner panels. The windscreen, cockpit, roof, side glass and rear screen form one beautiful teardrop shape; from days when style mattered even on a race car. Under the rear deck, its 4.0-litre V12 is fed by a stack of Webers, and scavenged by those beautifully bunch-of-banana exhausts that helped make the Ferrari F1 cars of the period look so good. Indeed, many say that this P3 is the world's best-looking racing car.

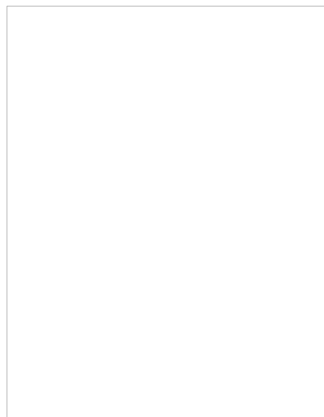
The solitary seat is positioned almost in the centre of the car. The tiny Racetech steering wheel removes for easy entry as there is a right-hand gearlever to negotiate. Straight ahead, the tachometer red-lines at 7750rpm, flanked by just two smaller instruments for water temp and oil pressure. Ignition and starter button are on the right.

Turn the key, press the button and 12 cylinders explode into action and bring the car alive. It is easy to get blasé in this job but driving out of the pits and onto the Spa circuit reminds you otherwise. The non-synchro gearbox operates like a switch. Whap, whap, whap through the gears as clean as a whistle. Down the long straight, the P3 screams to 7000rpm in fifth by the halfway point.

We must be travelling at a hell of a speed but the car feels rock-solid. I wait until the 200-metre board and brake for Les Combes. It becomes obvious that the P3 will still slow down enough even if I wait for the 100-metre board. Dive, squat and roll are minimal. The set-up is a good compromise for varying conditions. Torque is immense and at 5000rpm the P3 rockets away.

Considering the ancient rubber, grip is amazing, and a sure sign of a brilliant chassis and well-designed suspension. Steering is super-quick, response is instantaneous and direction change immediate. Aiming the P3 between those high front wings, the view ahead through that gorgeous windscreen is awe-inspiring.

Finally: it was after writing the track test that I acquainted myself with P3 0844's noble history. Had I known whose bums had sat in this P3 my words might have been blinkered as the period pilots were my teenage heroes. I told you the car had presence.



*Words by Roberto Giordinelli and great pictures courtesy of Paul Jarmyn and Phil Ward.*

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