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Ferrari 275 GTB

12 October 2006 | Classic Driver



The last 'pre-Fiat' Ferrari, and the subject of rampant price inflation in recent years as its desirability amongst collectors has soared, the 275GTB is firmly up there with 'the greats'. But does the driving experience match the expectation? There's only one way to find out, and an afternoon spent in an early shortnose car left your writer in no doubt that all the talk is right - it's one of the best driving experiences ever.

Having stabilised the company into long-term car production with the 250 GT model, and swept all before them at long-distance racing with prototypes and the sublime 250GT SWB and GTO (also collecting a couple of F1 world championships along the way...), by the early- to mid-1960s Ferrari was at the peak of its form as the supplier of the fastest and most exciting cars to the world's richest and most discerning drivers.

The 275GTB series was born out of lessons learnt on the track with the relatively simple 250 GT-series cars, yet featured advanced technology such as Pininfarina's aerodynamic, penetrative body styling with rear spoiler first seen on the GTO, a 3.3 litre version of Colombo's famous over-square V12, and a rear-mounted 5-speed transaxle with independent suspension. The fact that Michael Parkes, the British works Ferrari racing driver and qualified engineer, was responsible for the chassis set-up says a lot about the car. Steering was still by worm and peg however, and the factory's early

decision to use 14" wheels limited the size of the brake discs; thus rendering the 'stopping' of the 150mph+ car never quite matching its powers of 'going'...



Nevertheless, these faults were swept to the back of my mind as I settled in the very supportive leather bucket seat and faced the classic Nardi steering wheel and Veglia instruments. Once you have adopted the long-arms-short-legs driving position (that takes a little while to live with if you're tall) it's a comfortable cabin for a brisk drive across country. Starting is by virtue of a twist-and-press ignition key, and with a little delicate throttle the V12 idles without missing a beat.

Pulling away, the first noticeable sign of 'GTB magic' is the torque of the motor. The dog-leg gearbox means first is back and to the left, but with its classic chromed gate the lever will easily snick from ratio to ratio once warmed up - be careful with reverse though, it's just opposite first and is tempting for the unfamiliar. The second evidence of greatness is the steering. Neither power-assisted nor rack and pinion, it enables the car to be 'thought' through bends with a deftness lacking in contemporary cars - the driving position is no longer an issue, you just lay back and enjoy it; all to the magical V12 soundtrack of cams, valves, chains and exhaust.

With getting on for 300bhp in a 2425lb/1100kg chassis, performance is going to be brisk, if not the devastating figures that would come later with the 4.4 litre 'Daytona'. At the time, the car was just about the quickest thing out there and the later addition of a longer nose (to reduce high speed lift) and the ultimate four-cam engine specification made a good car even better.



The car rides the bumps and ruts of modern day British roads with aplomb, and the torquey yet free-spinning motor can either deliver relatively relaxed 5th gear cruising or barking acceleration in 3rd.

Over 40 years on from its introduction, the quality shines through and for those still hesitating: try one, you'll enjoy it.

Editor's Note: *With grateful thanks to the owner of the yellow **Ferrari 275 GTB**, an early shortnose 'outside fuel filler' model, who most generously made the car available to your writer.*

*An arrangement kindly organised by **Simon Kidston** of **Kidston S.A.***

*The occasion was the '**Bruschetta e Berlinettas**' informal gathering of like-minded (mainly V12 Ferrari) motoring enthusiasts superbly organised by Martin Emmison (seen above) of **GOODMAN DERRICK LLP**. To read further about this event please **CLICK HERE**.*

Text: Steve Wakefield

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