
Ferrari FF vs. Jensen FF: Fast Forward to St. Moritz - on video

30 January 2012 | Steve Wakefield

As contests go, it's a bit of a non-starter. How could anything match Ferrari's latest 651bhp four-seater, a car with the cleverest of part-time 4wd systems and 200mph+ performance? Quite. But the opportunity of driving two types of 'FF' on snow in the Engadin Valley was too good to miss...

The adventure started in Zurich. An original, late-60s FF from British manufacturer Jensen was to be my car for the first leg of the journey: motorway out of the city to Chur and then an invigorating drive across the Julier Pass into the Engadin, with St Moritz the final destination.

For those yet to experience the full-on (original) FF experience, it's best described as modern Bristol

meets 1970s Aston V8. Which might appear overly flattering to the car from the West Midlands but, in truth, it's really rather good.



When I say 'good', of course, I am making all sorts of allowances for age. But it's roomy, has a nice driving position, generous luggage space under the glass hatchback and occasional seating in the rear. And, whether cruising serenely at the strictly enforced Swiss motorway speed limit, or taking one hairpin after another through Savognin, Bivio and then on to the Julier, the lazy 6.3-litre American V8 is more than up to the task.

At 2284 metres, though, the single carburettor is chuffing a bit. Fuel-injection here would have been a godsend. Mind you, turn the clock back 40 or so years and the latest Weber-equipped exotic from Maserati or Aston Martin would have been in the same boat – or most likely in big trouble with snow on the ground at -10° C, because our car has the famous Ferguson Formula all-wheel-drive system.



'Ferguson Formula': 'FF'. Neat, don't you think?

At the BP station on the outskirts of St Moritz we meet up with a very different 'FF': Ferrari's quite brilliant 'Ferrari Four', meaning four seats with four-wheel drive.





The car was launched at last year's Geneva Show and, as with any new Ferrari, you'll have to wait a while to take delivery of one, such has been the worldwide demand for the company's flagship V12. This is a Ferrari like no other: genuine seating for four adults and part-time 4wd from a patented, two-speed 'box with wet clutches taking power from the front of the engine.

The ECU's mighty computing power, along with further developments of the E-diff, anti-lock braking and traction control, coupled with the option to add 4wd at everyday speeds, mean that you are still driving a traditional front-engined Ferrari... until you aren't, when the front wheels receive almost imperceptible help in slippery conditions.



The result is quite amazing. Despite its all-new, 6,262cc V12 producing 651bhp, the FF can be driven with total - and I mean TOTAL - confidence on compacted snow, going places no everyday supercar

could go.

As with any Ferrari motor, the engine is just magnificent. While the more track-orientated 458 Italia and 599 GTB deliver more of their power in an exhilarating rush, the FF's V12 has just the right balance of low-down thrust and non-intimidating, top-end rush. And that's in conditions that dropped to -12° C at times.

Likewise, the sublime steering – just light enough, but still very direct – matches both the engine's ferocity and the super-smooth, 7-speed twin-clutch transaxle.



Boy, does this car go. And setting the *Manettino* (steering wheel switch) to 'Snow' means that full-power take-offs in powdery snow are as fun as when on dry Tarmac.

Taking the big Ferrari out of St Moritz and over the Bernina Pass, its virtues of comfort, power and exclusivity became ever more apparent.

The area is in the height of the winter season and the great, good and famous are settling in for a couple of months of sun and snow. Style is all: whether it's the latest must-have from Moncler or Pilatus, St Moritz will see it before too long.

Joining that list is the fabulous new Ferrari FF and, making an honourable return after a 40-year absence, is that 'other' FF – another might-have-been from the British car industry, but now a stylish classic accessory on the slopes.

Production & Photos: Jan Baedeker

Video: Kai Klinke

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