

CLASSIC DRIVER

Maserati Quattroporte: Beauty and brawn

Lead

The original Frua-designed Quattroporte surprised many with its impressive performance but elegantly unassuming exterior. Forty years later, the same design ethic was very much behind the modern interpretation of the four-door saloon...

With the new [2013 model unveiled late last year](#), the Quattroporte (translated simply as 'four door') has now seen six iterations over 50 years. The fifth-generation model was introduced at the Frankfurt Motor Show in September 2004, and came with a Ferrari-derived 4.2-litre V8 developing 400bhp and propelling the car to a top speed of 170mph – not that its graceful saloon shape would suggest it.

The Quattroporte is a luxury limousine during the week, and a focused sports car at the weekend, capable of tackling cross-Continent highway jaunts to the Alps, where its dynamic performance can then be enjoyed on the twisty mountain roads, too.

The voluptuous, muscular styling was the responsibility of Pininfarina, and harks back to the original 1963 Tipo 107 Quattroporte. A lavish interior coupled sportiness with space and comfort, offering a virtually endless raft of personalisation options that included 10 shades of leather, and briarwood, rosewood or mahogany trim options.





But the evocative design could only carry the car so far commercially. It was far from perfect and early cars were somewhat flawed by their 'Duo Select' gearbox: an electro-hydraulic sequential manual controlled through steering-wheel-mounted paddles. It was poorly received – its fully automatic function clumsy and awkward while moving through stop-start traffic, and the manual mode slow and uncooperative when you wanted to take control. As a result, Maserati was forced to update the system and in 2007 the car's underpinnings were heavily redesigned to accommodate a more conventional automatic gearbox connected directly to the engine, rather than at the rear axle.





Quality control appeared to have been thrown out of the window too, and interiors were strewn with cheap plastics and gaping panel gaps, not at all representative of a prestige product from the Trident marque.

Despite the issues, the original Quattroporte was arguably far better looking than its German rivals (and perhaps even its successor), and the sophisticated, practical appeal is a tempting proposition. Early cars are available for less than a third of their original price and, if you can surmount the niggles and the mid-teens consumption, Quattroporte ownership should offer a rewarding experience. Besides, being greeted by that timeless Pininfarina body every morning might on its own be worth the price.

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