
Bang for Your Buck: Our pick of the V8 Ferraris

14 May 2013 | Charis Whitcombe

Who says that a 'real' classic Ferrari should have 12 cylinders? You only have to look at the modern-day 458 Italia or California to see that a V8 engine, with its raucous bark, can be every bit as thrilling as a full-blown V12. Here are five classic V8 Ferraris that you can buy today.

Ferrari 308 GT4: The first V8





Nowadays a relatively affordable classic for first-time Ferrari buyers, the 308 GT4 saw the Prancing Horse tread new ground when it was unveiled in Paris in 1973. Initially badged as a Dino, it only officially became a 'real' Ferrari three years later but the wedge-shaped car offered real Ferrari performance from the outset: if 250bhp and 0-60mph in 6.9 seconds is real enough for you.

And the new ground? Not only was this Ferrari's first V8 road car and the marque's first mid-engined 2+2, but the 308 GT4 ('3' for 3 litres, '8' for 8 cylinders, '4' for 4 seats) was – shockingly – styled by Bertone rather than the marque's choice of the last 20 years, Pininfarina. This must have annoyed the latter styling house no end.

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Ferrari Mondial: Pininfarina fights back



At the 1980 Geneva Salon, a successor to the 308 GT4 appeared in the form of the Mondial 8 – but this time Pininfarina had managed to regain the styling job. The Mondial's longer wheelbase meant less restrictive back seats and, thanks to this and its greater levels of comfort, the Mondial gained a reputation for being a genuinely useable Ferrari.

The '8' was just the first in a long line of Mondials, with a 13-year production run that spanned the Mondial Quattrovalvole in 1982, the Cabriolet in 1983, the 3.2 coupé and Cabriolet of 1985 and, finally, the Mondial T (and T Cabriolet) in 1989. Today, Mondial is a byword for an affordable – but still high-performance – classic Ferrari.

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Ferrari 328 GTS: Curvy and topless



In the mid-80s, the elegant shape of the open-topped 308 GTS was further softened and rounded to become – once a 270bhp 3.2-litre engine had been fitted amidships – the 328 GTS. The curvier body not only updated the looks, it also improved the aerodynamics. Inside the new drop-top, the now outdated 1970s seats and trim and switchgear were also thoroughly refreshed.

Launched at the Frankfurt Motor Show of 1985, the 328 GTS was an instant hit and – during the four years of its production – more than 6,000 cars were sold: around five times as many as its hard-topped brother, the 328 GTB.

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Ferrari 288 GTO: More bang, more bucks



In terms of classic car ownership, we're well out of the 'readily affordable' bracket when it comes to the exquisite 288 GTO. (Pedants and pub-quiz enthusiasts might wish to note that its official title was GTO - no '288', which was popularly added to denote the 2.8-litre capacity and 8 cylinders.)

From the outset, at the 1984 Geneva Salon, the GTO was intended as a low-volume special series. Just 200 were planned, but 272 were eventually built, thanks to demand from customers, many of whom discovered that they could sell the car on - at a profit - before it had been delivered. Stunning performance, flawless good looks, rarity value and the all-important 'GTO' name made sure of that.

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Ferrari 360 Modena: Aluminium obsession



The first production Ferrari to be built entirely in aluminium, the 1999 360 Modena – which Ferrari claimed was a “clean-sheet design” – anticipated the next decade’s obsession with low weight and high rigidity, those all-important objectives inherited from motorsport.

As a replacement for the much-loved F355, it had a hard task ahead in persuading Ferrari-lovers of its virtues, not least because it was so different (cosmetically as well as technically) from its ruder, cruder predecessor. While not everyone was convinced, the happy result is that the 360 Modena – a truly spectacular technical triumph – can these days be had for not much money. Well, “not much” considering what you get for the outlay.

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