

CLASSIC DRIVER

The Ferrari 330 GT Speciale is the result of one man’s lifelong dream

Lead
Patience really is a virtue – over the last six decades, one man has been dreaming of building his very own Ferrari Grand Tourer in tribute to the prolific 20th Century designer Giovanni Michelotti. Now, the dream has finally become a reality. Say ciao to the Ferrari 330 GT Speciale...

If at first, you don't succeed...



“If you don’t try, you don’t achieve anything.” It’s fair to say Jose Fernandez knows a thing or two about trying. He’s been trying for 57 years to realise a childhood dream, of building his very own coach-built Ferrari in homage to the great 20th Century designer Giovanni Michelotti. Only now, thanks to his unrelenting determination and a team of incredibly talented craftsmen, has Fernandez’s dream finally come true. And we’re sure you’ll agree he’s achieved *a lot*.

A bookshop in Mexico City



Let’s go back to where this remarkable story began over five decades ago, in an American bookshop in Mexico City. While browsing an old copy of *Ferrari Handbook*, a young and impressionable Fernandez spotted a photo of a Vignale-bodied 250 Europa. The sleek 1950s Grand Tourer exhibited Michelotti’s then-signature design cues including the high waistline and low, tapering roof.

So taken with the car was Fernandez that he carved a miniature model of it from balsa wood. Later, in the 1960s, features about the similarly styled 340 America in *Road & Track* and *Cavallino* magazines added fuel to the fire and prompted him to further refine his model, which he’d been sketching obsessively using several of Michelotti’s drawings for reference. With the utmost respect for the original design, he widened ‘his’ car slightly and added a boot for the sake of practicality.

Ready to proceed?



It wasn't until the new Millennium that Fernandez felt his design was complete. He hired a man in Buenos Aires to sculpt a larger model from foam and plastic and, after countless hours of research, decided that a 330 GTC was the best model on which to base his unique Ferrari thanks to its wheelbase and width.

He sourced a tatty but sound example from New York City (chassis number #7877, in case you were wondering) and set about stripping it and rebuilding the engine. In the meantime, he and his wife even flew to Italy to visit the Scaglietti factory in Modena in the hope of gleaning more information about how his vision should be authentically coach-built.

Wrong turn



It's at this point that the journey goes a little wayward. Over the course of the next decade, Fernandez entrusted several different specialists to build his Ferrari. But, for whatever reason, it appeared to be a case of the blind leading the blind. Sure, the aluminium body was handcrafted using the correct techniques and, in its raw state, actually looked very good. But the standard of the rest of the work, including the electrics and trimming, was almost an insult to Fernandez, who'd poured so much energy into the car over such a long period of time.

Out of desperation perhaps more than anything, Fernandez – prompted by his family, every single member of whom understood the importance of the project to him – approached [The Creative Workshop](#) in Florida in 2015, one of the foremost restoration workshops in the world.

Understandably apprehensive



Expecting another clueless joker with a self-built car in need of finishing, Creative's founder Jason Wenig was understandably apprehensive. But that changed when Fernandez started telling his story. "What struck me immediately was that Jose, a man in his 80s, is as sharp as a tack and a true Michelotti and Vignale historian – he truly knows every detail of these cars," explains Jason Wenig, founder of The Creative Workshop. "He knew what he was talking about and had a pure and crystal clear vision. He'd just found the wrong people to guide him along the way."

The starting sculpture



At that point, the car – which Wenig now refers to as the 'starting sculpture' – was in a rather sorry state. "It was heart-breaking because I was sat in front of one of the sweetest, most conscientious and passionate men I've ever met with the means to accomplish what he dreamed of accomplishing," Wenig recalls. "But now that we've drunk a

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lot of champagne together, I can say that the car was nowhere near finished. The doors wouldn't close, the steering wheel was crooked, the wiring wasn't hooked up, the glass was duct-taped into the frames, and you could fit your fingers between the grille and the body. I could go on for 20 minutes."

The virtue of patience



Wenig agreed to help Fernandez and so commenced a painstaking three-year restoration, during which virtually everything that had been done to the car up until that point was scrapped and redone. "It was like ripping the plaster off, but it had to be done." Rest assured, backdating the 1960s 330 GTC to a 1950s-spec car was not a straightforward endeavour. But the patience and effort to realise the car exactly as Fernandez had envisaged was more than worth it. The details are delightful!

To the casual observer, the car raises no questions. And that's perhaps the biggest compliment Wenig and his team could receive. The shortened 330 tubular chassis retains its matching numbers engine and gearbox. But myriad original 1950s parts have been utilised to make it look and, perhaps more importantly, feel like a 1950s car. Take the Borrani Record wire wheels, period Nardi steering wheel, intricate Jaeger gauges, and the saddle-brown Vaumol upholstery, for example.

For Michelotti



The stunning homage to Michelotti and the lost art of coachbuilding was finally finished and revealed to the public at The Quail, A Motorsports Gathering, where it was displayed next to an original 340 America. For Fernandez, who's flown his entire extended family to California for the occasion, the moment was emotional, to say the least. "I think the family was probably more emotional than Jose!" Wenig remembers. "It was definitely a celebration of achievement rather than pride of ownership."

Now, onto the elephant in the room – no, this is not a factory built Ferrari. But nor is it claiming to be. This is no shoddy GTO replica or an 'official continuation' built for commercial gain, and, to be honest, we don't condone either. It's the result of a lifelong personal venture and obsession, and, ultimately, a tribute built with the utmost respect for the glorious machines from which it took its inspiration.



"What are we here for? We're living, and if I'm living, I'm going to do things my way," Fernandez told The Creative Workshop frankly. "I built the Ferrari because I liked the Ferrari. I never asked anybody if it could be done, I just did it." Finally, Jose's dream had come true.

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Gallery

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