

CLASSIC DRIVER

Ferrari 250 GT SWB Recreation: A Fast Drive in the Country



It's the image of Willy Mairesse in a full-on drift in one of these cars back in 1960 that's always done it for me: pure aggression mixed with a certain feminine delicacy that is the ultra-desirable 'SWB'.

In addition to 'Wild Willy' you can list the **Rodriguez brothers, Stirling Moss, Graham Hill, Carlo Abate, Michael Parkes, Olivier Gendebien, Augie Pabst** and **Maurice Trintignant** - hard-driving men, all. Built as Ferrari's main GT weapon, it blitzed the opposition from 1960 to 1961, softening them up for the introduction of the company's ultimate closed two-seater: the **250 GTO**.

Le Mans, the Tourist Trophy, Targa Florio and, most famously, the original **Tour de France** were the playgrounds of the SWB in period, and Ferrari built some *Lusso* versions, too, with steel bodywork, bumpers and chrome trim. An alloy-bodied *competizione* would today set you back maybe \$6m, with a Classiche-certified steel car around the \$4m mark.



Being part of the same 'family' of 250 GT cars, it's hardly surprising that a flourishing industry has grown up with donor chassis converted (in many cases by artisans in the Modena region who'd worked on the original cars) into 'Recreated' Short Wheelbases. With alloy, hand-beaten bodywork, many original parts and an all-Ferrari drivetrain and suspension, it's an opportunity to 'live the dream' without *quite* so much pain on the finances...



The *Giallo Fly* car you see here is one such. Based on a **1959 250 GT Pininfarina Coupe**, the car was built up by **Giovanni Giordanengo** of Cuneo, south of Turin, in the late 80s. Instead of the familiar 3-litre V12, there's a Tipo 209 engine from a 330 GT, producing around 300bhp from its four litres and mated to a four-speed Ferrari transmission.

Inside, the trim is matched to a competition-spec car, with crackle-black dash, Veglia instruments and the characteristic tall gearlever complete with turned alloy ball. Bucket seats (there's an alternative, 'tighter' one for more compact drivers that also comes with the car), the same as the originals, give occupants that typical early-60s driving experience: reclining, arms outstretched, head back.



I've sat in a few SWBs but never had the opportunity to drive one. An eagerly anticipated moment. The car would be joining an exclusive event - typical, perhaps, for a likely owner - a drop-off at an airport, then overnighting at home and a brisk cross-country journey to eastern England the following day.

Ignition on, dip the throttle three times and press the key to start - as simple as that. The big V12 fires immediately, requiring just a little caress of the accelerator to keep the revs up, letting some heat sink into the oil and water.



The clutch is light in action and it's easy to engage first. A little gas and the small car pulls away with vigour. The larger engine has torque aplenty so above 3000rpm, when it runs discernibly more crisply, it has all the power everyday driving could demand.

Open up the motor and the car will fly, with steering - as in all older Ferraris - more by intuition and careful input than brute force. It shares its worm-and-peg design with that of the GTO; no bad thing as that is often praised for delicacy and feel, albeit with a slight degree of play that's absent in rack-and-pinion setups.



On the open road, motorway speeds are (enjoyably) noisy as the short axle ratio - to give the most brutal performance - makes itself felt. The driving position is pure **Goodwood**: head back, arms outstretched and legs drawn up under the wheel. And watch your footwear - no outdoor shoes here, it's the thinnest slip-ons or nothing to get the best out of the narrow, close-together pedals.

Fillin' 'er up is an experience. The modern nozzle is lost in a gigantic competition filler neck more used to fuel churns in long-distance races. Underneath the stubby boot are the two chromed, 'Snap' exhaust extractors. However, the driver's side one does not have the usual Le Mans modification of an aluminium cover to prevent fuel spilling through right-handers. There is, though, a 'bug-screen' on the bonnet; another period mod'.





Would driving an original car be 10 times as good? I doubt it, there's a lot to be said for these well-made recreations and - for the cost of a few gallons of 102 octane - I was transported far away from the M25/A12, back in time to the early 60s, with no seatbelts, and wearing driving shoes, slacks and a jacket.

You cannot put a price on that.

*This Ferrari will be offered at **RM's Automobiles of London** auction on 29th October. For more information please contact mgirardo@rmauctions.com.*

*The event was the annual **Bruschetta e Berlinetta** gathering of historic Ferrari and other unique classic cars held at Tyringham Hall. Organised by the London law firm **GOODMAN Derrick LLP**, it will be reviewed at a later date.*

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