

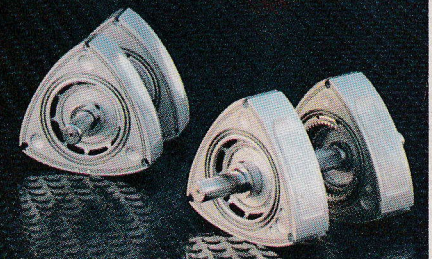
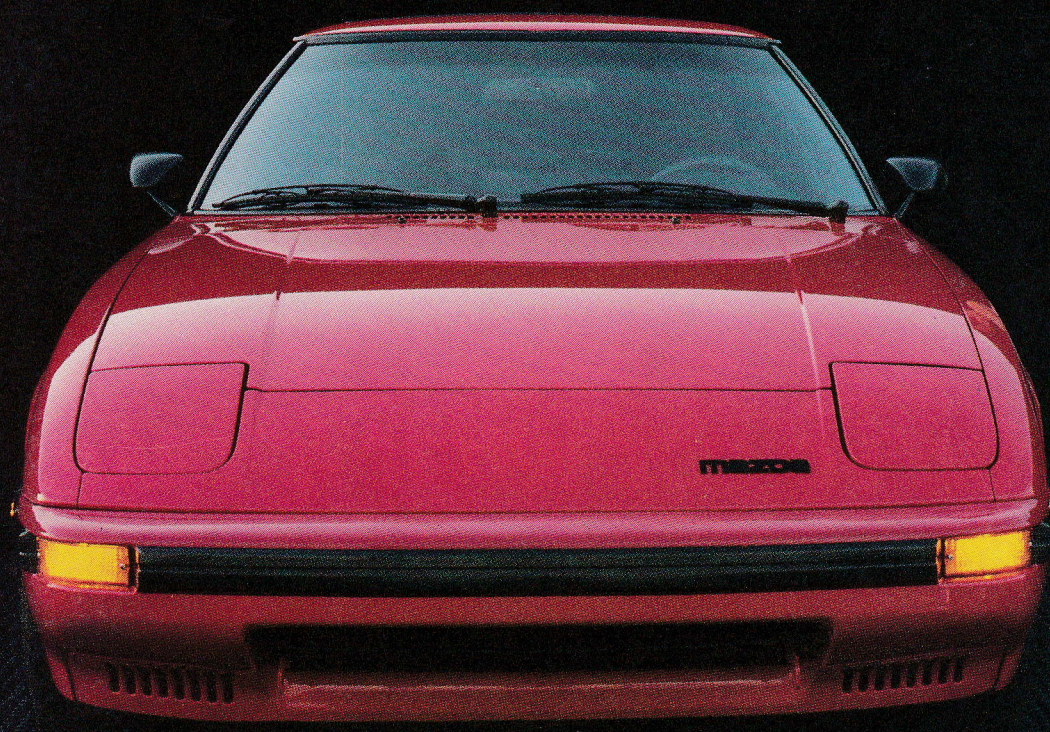
CHEVROLET EUROSPORT Best all-round Chevy in years!

CAR AND DRIVER

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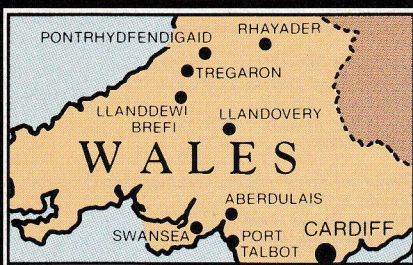
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ro, Super Trans Am,
Ferrari Mondial Convertible, Avanti, Honda Civic S



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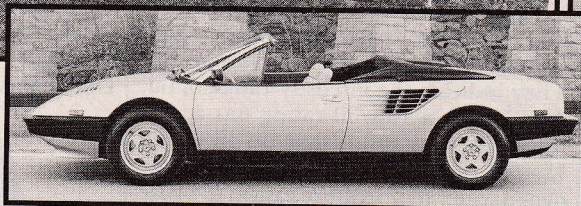
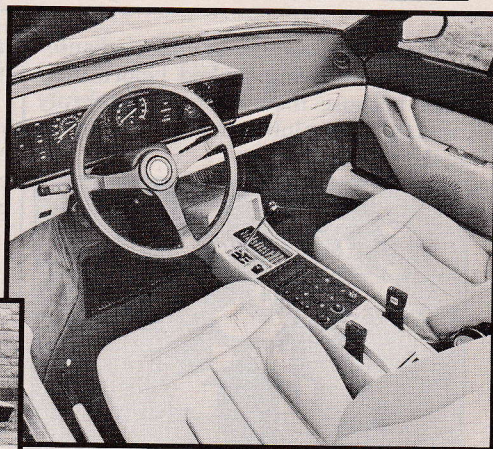
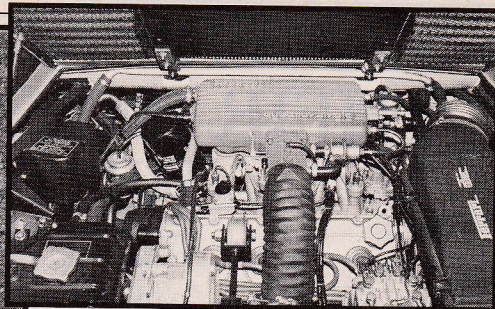
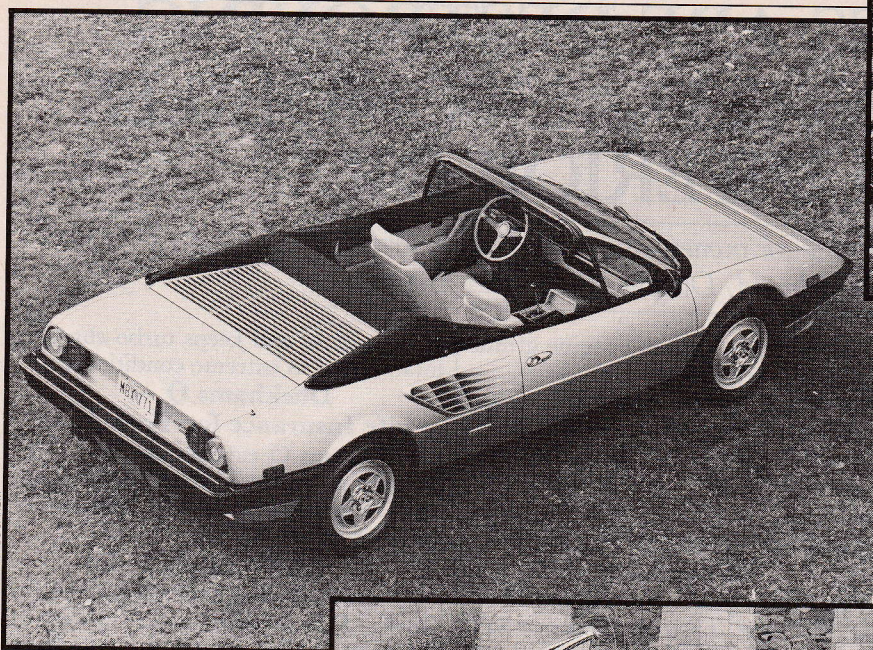
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PHOTOGRAPHY: GREG WAREM

Ferrari Mondial Cabriolet

A two-plus-two with sunshine injection.

• You're looking at the first Ferrari convertible made by Ferrari—not even this brand is safe from the aftermarket metal surgeons—in fourteen years. And you know what? It's a better-looking piece than the coupe version from which it was derived. Disappearing the rather thin-lipped top leaves the Mondial with a wedgy, broad-shouldered shape that's quite pleasing. The Cabriolet's folding roof pretty much duplicates the shape of the original hardtop—including the tunneled rear window, which must have been quite a trick—but its fabric blackness (the only available color) has a camouflaging effect, encouraging the eye to ignore it in favor of the brightly painted sheetmetal below. The Mondial never looked so good.

Ferrari thinks of this as an "American" model. The Europeans don't care much about convertibles, but the resurgence of interest in the U.S. started a few minds working back in Maranello. This was a "Saturday-Sunday" development project, a spare-time deal. A car was sent off to Scaglietti, Ferrari's longtime body builder, just to see what would happen if they cut the top off. The result generated enough enthusiasm around the works to bring about the next step, which was to forward the project to Pininfarina to try a production design. That went over big, too, so big that even though Ferrari's master plan for

new models never included a convertible, one ended up on the menu anyway. Probably the market's ambivalence toward the hard-roofed Mondial helped the project along. Now, a year and a half after the experiment was started, 100 Cabriolets are scheduled for the U.S. market, which is the lion's share of the factory's 160-car plan.

Folding back the Cabriolet's top is a manual operation. First, the rear quarter-windows (power-assisted) must go down. Then release the two toggle clamps at the windshield header. At this point a helper makes the folding easier, though one person can do the job. Just remember to lift the keystone: there is one rib that has to be picked up out of the way of the folding arms; forget this step and you end up with a two-foot-high stack of junk at the back that the snap-on boot has no hope of covering. The rear window, by the way, is flexible plastic permanently bonded into place.

The usual convertible niggles apply to

Vehicle type:	mid-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2+2-passenger, 2-door convertible
Price as tested:	\$65,000
Engine type:	V-8, aluminum block and heads, Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection
Displacement	179 cu in, 2927cc
Power (SAE net)	230 bhp @ 6800 rpm
Transmission	5-speed
Wheelbase	104.3 in
Length	180.3 in
Curb weight	3600 lbs
EPA fuel economy, city driving	11 mpg

this Cabriolet. The body is noticeably flexy; bumps give it the quivers. Air rushing over the roof adds to the interior sound when the top is up, but it's nothing compared with the engine ruckus. In a marque famous for its vocal engine, the combination of a slotted engine cover and a fabric top—a very ineffective barrier against airborne noise of any sort—means there is no such thing as a quiet journey in this car.

As you would expect, the Cabriolet enjoys all of the Mondial updates for the new model year. The console has been restyled so that it doesn't look Ferrari anymore, not that it ever really did, what with the tenidiot-light "Check Control Monitor" keeping track of liquid levels and other minor details (in Italian, yet). And the automatic temperature control (operational when the top is up) was always a surprise in this brand. But even the knobs and the switches are de-Ferraried now.

The lighter, on the other hand, has been turned into some mechanical weirdness that will not accept a radar-detector plug. That's going *too* far. Particularly when the new four-valve-per-cylinder quattrovalvole V-8 gives to the Mondial the essential Ferrari oomph that was lacking with the two-valve engine. This is an easy Ferrari to drive: the clutch is soft, the shifter is relatively smooth, the steering doesn't kick back. Except for the lack of a radar-detector plug, there's no reason not to get on down the road.

Open-air motoring costs a bit extra from Ferrari, just as it does from any other maker. The Cabriolet is the most expensive Ferrari in the U.S. line, up about \$5500 from the coupe to \$65,000. But for a Ferrari with sunshine injection, what the heck.

—Patrick Bedard