

Osprey AutoHistory

FERRARI 308 & MONDIAL

308GT4, 308GTB & GTS, 'injection', Mondial 8

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Chapter 6

Mondial 8 - a significant addition

The 308 story, which started with the 2+2 GT4 in 1973 has, through the introduction of the Mondial 8 at the Geneva Show of 1980, come full circle. In naming their latest car, Ferrari departed from their normal method of type designation by the capacity of a single cylinder. They also reached back into their sporting past for the name 'Mondial' which had previously been used for a 4 cylinder sports racer built in 1954.

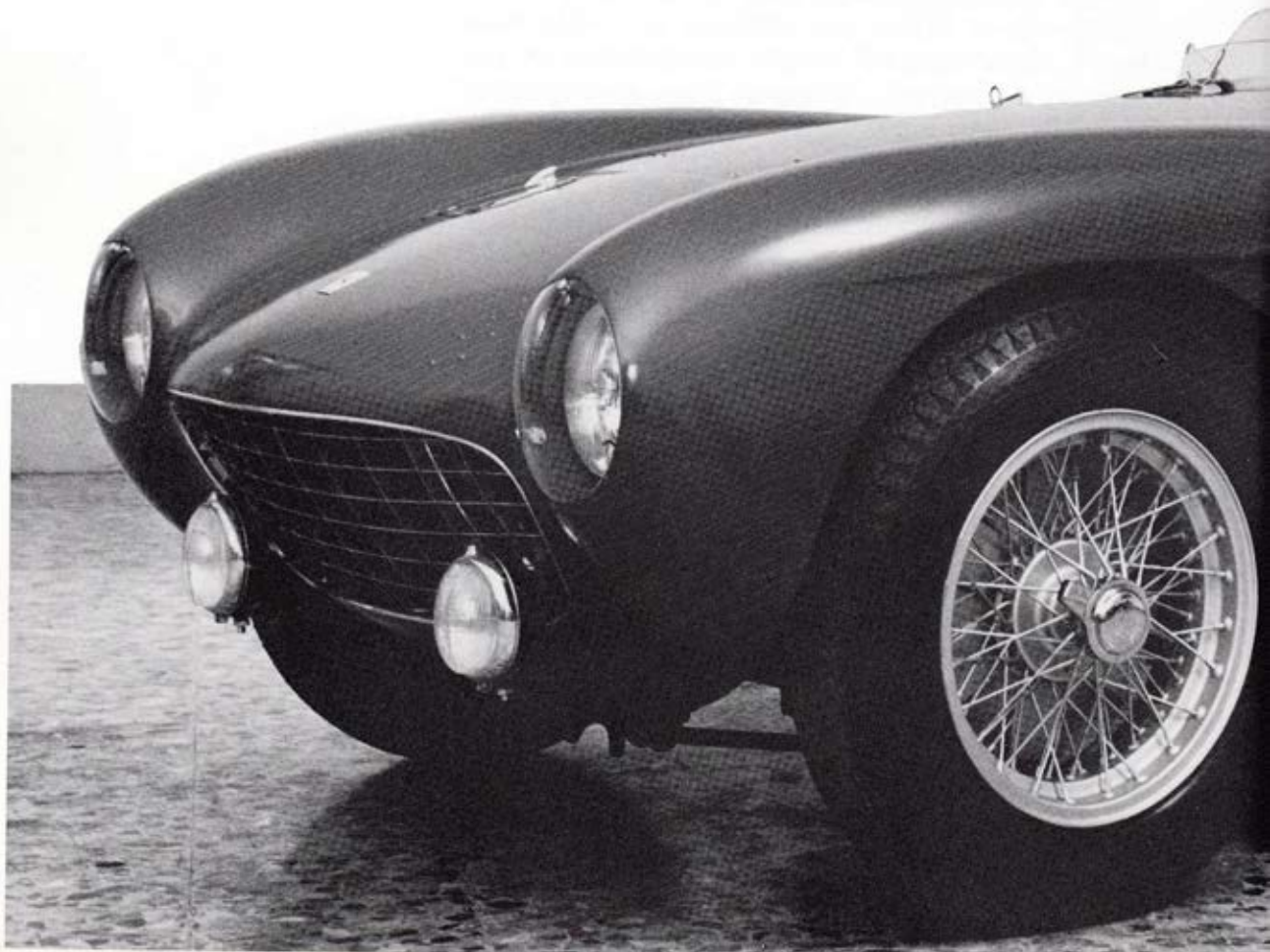
With the dropping of the type designation '308' it could be argued that the Mondial has no place in this book. But because mechanically the car is so closely related to the latest 308—much closer than was the GT4 to the Dino 206/246s—to ignore it would be to turn away from a model that may be looked upon as providing an interface between the GT Ferrari of the past and those of the future.

In an early brochure on the Mondial, Ferrari were specific about its purpose: 'The Mondial 8 is aimed at widening the scope of Ferrari's market by offering a package combining the features of a genuine sports car with a comfortable GT. In the last few years, the market for high performance cars has undergone major changes with those new models featuring enhanced versatility and reliability proving most successful. Today's motorists expect in a sports car the comfort and appointments of a de luxe saloon, in addition to

performance and style. The Mondial 8 while fully meeting these requirements is aimed at a much wider market. The results of a recent investigation have shown that buyers of a Ferrari model are extremely diversified and that they drive their cars daily with an annual mileage of even 30 thousand kilometres'

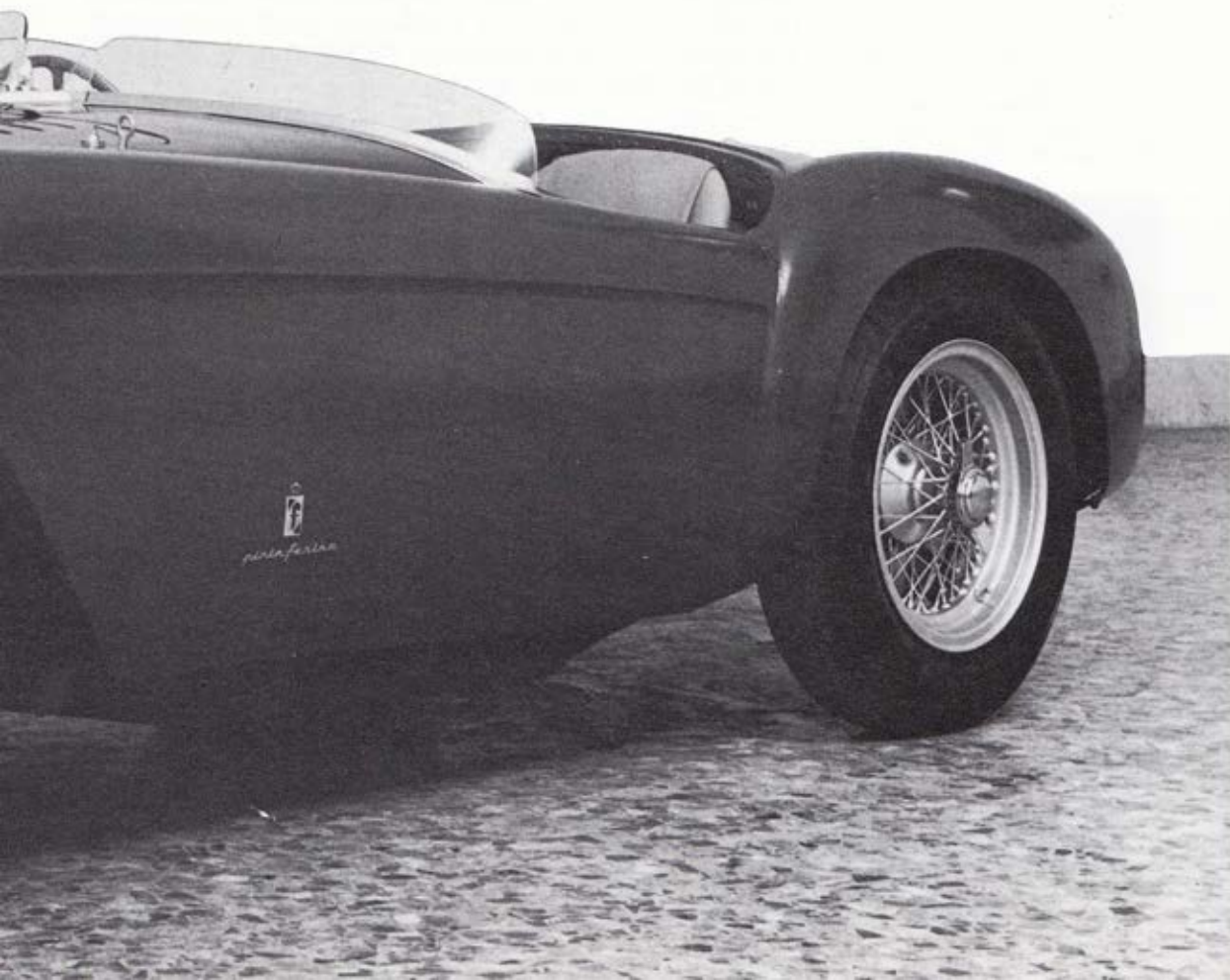
Early classic. 1953 Mondial 500. The body on this four cylinder competition sports car was both designed and built by Pininfarina

Also made clear was the importance attached to the American market where, it was stated, 35 per cent of production went. To that end the Mondial had been engineered to meet federal requirements for active and passive safety as well as for



environmental protection. The latter process had actually started with the fuel injected 308s.

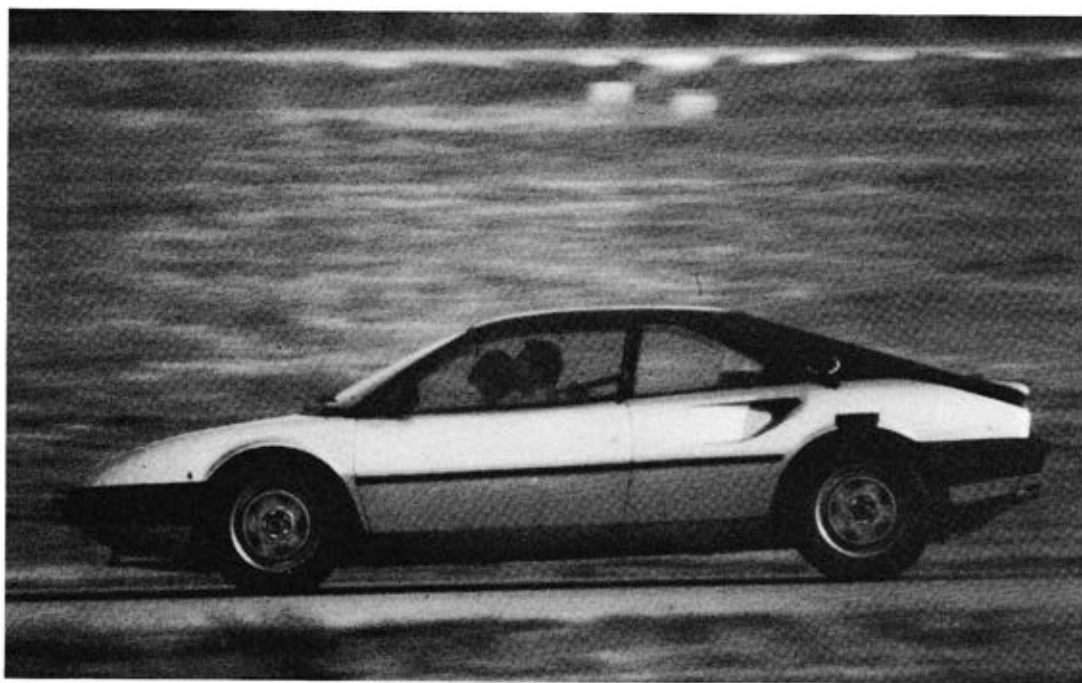
In an interview for *Symbol* magazine, Leonardo Fioravanti, director of the Pininfarina Research Unit, discussed his objectives thus: 'It was a very difficult project. We had to design 2+2 bodywork for a vehicle with a central engine; in other words, we had to accommodate real space for four people according to specific mechanical conditions that made the overall space solution a somewhat delicate matter. This had to be without, obviously, forgetting that the vehicle had to have



the long, sleek styling typical of all Ferrari cars.'

Essentially the Mondial's mechanics are those of fuel-injected 308s, apart from some detail changes, and one important chassis difference which breaks new ground for Ferrari. For the Mondial a separate chassis sub-frame at the rear carries the engine, transmission and suspension. This sub-frame assembly can be unbolted and removed from the car as an aid to easier servicing. The fuel tanks have been removed from the engine compartment and placed underneath the rear seats. Modifications have been made to the front suspension to reduce steering kick back and introduce a degree of anti-dive under braking. The tyres are now Michelin TRX 240/55 VR 390 on 180 TR x 390 rims. In the construction of the car more use has been made of ribbed and boxed steel stampings, and very much more attention

Prototype Mondial 8 on test



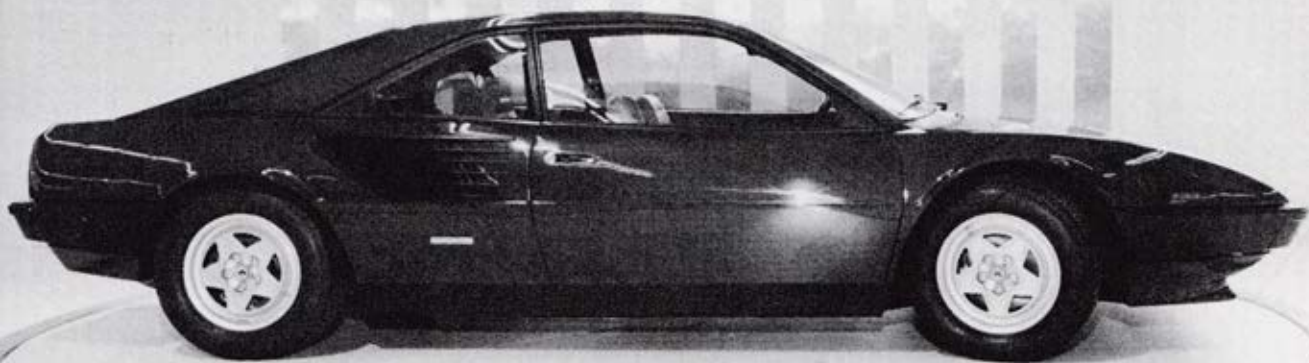
paid to corrosion prevention.

Pininfarina styling, subject to the usual reservations that accompany 2+2s has been well received. Most now recognise that this type of body offers the stylist little room for manoeuvre if serious consideration is given to accommodating four people in comfort. In profile the Mondial is both striking and well proportioned. Most criticisms made have been directed against the large air intakes on the sides. Originally accentuated by being picked out in black, they now match the surrounding paintwork and are a little less noticeable. A happier solution may come along in due course.

At the rear of the car there is a return to separate covers for engine compartment and boot. The rear light clusters are the same as for the 308GTB/GTS, but let into a skirt below the rear

*Geneva Show 1980.
Presentation of the Mondial
8. It comes in the year that
Pininfarina celebrates 50
years of design*

50 pininfarina



bumper are a pair of rectangular shaped red fog-lights. At the front, flashers for daylight use have been worked into the bumper. The pop-up main lamp units have reverted to the twin light arrangement of the 308GT4.

A real attempt has been made by the Pininfarina designer to seat four people comfortably. The Mondial is much roomier inside than its GT4 predecessor. This is the result of skilful exploitation of modest additions—100 mm wheelbase, 280 mm overall length, 80 mm overall width and



30 mm overall height—to the GT4s dimensions.

Before lengthening the wheelbase, the assurance of Ferrari engineers that this would not adversely affect the car's handling was sought.

Opinion naturally varies as to whether the car is a true 2+2. Undoubtedly there is now sufficient room for two adults—'above average size' reports say—to sit in tandem on the passenger side of the car. On the other side, the comfort of the fourth person will very much depend on the positioning of the driver's seat. To help the driver, the



Publicity shot for the Mondial 8 shows amongst other features the reversion to twin light pop-up units

steering wheel is adjustable for both reach and tilt.

All necessary instruments are grouped together in a rectangular shaped binnacle directly ahead of the driver. Their exact disposition depends upon whether the car is left or right hand drive. On the latter, the rev counter is to the left with the speedometer on the right. Between them is a vertical, double banked display of the usual warning lights. To the right of the speedometer a group of six switches operate the front and rear fog lights; the engine, boot and front bonnet covers and the heated rear window. To the left of the rev counter are the four dials covering engine oil temperature and pressure, water temperature and fuel level. Between these and the rev counter there is a digital read-out clock. The controls for heating and ventilation are in a separate panel to the left of the driver and below the fascia.

Mondial 8. This three quarter rear view shows the general appearance of the car quite well. Apart from the air intake grilles there has been little criticism of Pininfarina's design. Most people now recognize the limitations placed on the stylist by practical 2+2s





Above Mondial 8 open for inspection



Left Difficult to judge from this photo, the interior is much improved from earlier cars in the 308 series. Rear seating is also much more comfortable

Five switches on the central console behind the gear lever gate raise and lower the windows, switch on the parking lights, adjust the outside mirror and open the fuel filler cover.

In what some consider to be an excess of electronic gimmickry—although there are more complaints about execution than concept—electronic monitoring of certain vital information has been introduced.

This operates through sensors to illuminate a series of warning panels. These cover low coolant level: failure of the brake fluid level warning light: unlocked bonnet or boot: low level of engine or transmission oil: low level in screen-wash; car overdue for next service: stop light failure: failure of driving lamps: and lack of freon in the air conditioner. These operate each time the engine is switched on. A red panel lights up if a failure is recorded of one of the first four items: other failures are recorded by the illumination of a yellow panel. A green light shows if all is correct. The main complaints about the system are that it is awkwardly situated. Thus in some daylight conditions it is very difficult to be sure whether a fault is being indicated or not.

Acceptable as the car generally is from styling and finishing standpoints, it has come in for considerable adverse comment—particularly from American testers—on its acceleration capabilities. But in many other respects it is obviously much better suited to its expected mode of use.

With the introduction of fuel injection, the power and torque realised from the 308 engine dropped for the GTBi/GTSi versions to 214 bhp/179 lb ft in Europe and 205 bhp/181 lb ft in America. The Mondial uses the same engine. The drop in power is up against, on the one hand, an increase in weight and on the other, increased



Above Note that on this US registered Mondial 8 the air intake grilles are the same colour as the body. There are also some differences below the bumper



Left Mondial 8 cockpit. Instrumentation is a little mundane

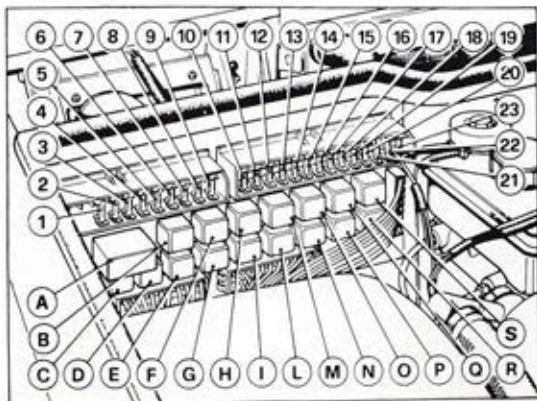
frontal area resulting from the additional width and height. The weight increase is in the region of 400 lb plus. The Americans are having to settle for a 0–60 mph figure of 8.20 sec best (9.3 average) and a 0–100 mph in the region of 28.0 sec. In the UK corresponding figures are probably between 7 and 8 and just over 21 seconds. In these legislation infested days, comfort and extremes of performance are not good bedfellows.

If there is disappointment with the traffic light GP potential there are compensations in more important areas. *Motor* in their report of December 5 1981 noted: 'Where the Mondial really shines is in its chassis. Like the GTB and the GT4 before it, the steering is initially unendearing, managing to feel low-g geared yet excessively heavy at parking speeds. Through tight, low speed corners taken gently, the Mondial seems to understeer too, calling for a degree of wheel twirling that hardly augurs well for when you start trying. How misleading those initial impressions are! When you corner quickly, particularly on fast curves, when the car is developing some real weight transfer, the feeling of understeer all but disappears, the chassis becomes alive with feel—it almost seems as if the car can defy the laws of motion, so great is the lateral acceleration that can be developed. The revisions to the front suspension certainly have reduced steering kickback from the thumb-cracking level though there's still a little too much on really bumpy surfaces. But the kick back does help endow—and the TRX tyres too, no doubt—the Mondial with a feel of a quality (dare I say Porsche-like quality?) hitherto lacking in Ferraris. On a twisting country road, the steering writhes gently in your hands, letting there be no doubt of the state of the road under the front wheels.

Above right *Mondial 8*
bodyshell starting to pick-up
vital hardware

Below left *A degree in*
electronics may help. Fuses
and relays you may have to
cope with one dark night

Below right *Interior shot on*
Mondial 8 suggests much
improved room in the back



'Enter a corner too quickly and lifting the throttle produces a mild tightening of the line—enough to scrub speed off without requiring a specific steering correction— and even if you're forced to brake in mid-corner, hard, the Mondial slows without an excessive change of attitude. This stability is one of the Mondial's fortes and the Ferrari engineers deserve the greatest compliment for managing to blend such good high speed stability (even at 120 mph on a bumpy country road with the wheels pounding up and down like pistons the Mondial feels rock-solid on line) with a lack of understeer and neutrality in strong cornering.

'The scale of the Maranello chassis team's achievement becomes even more evident when the excellent ride is taken into account, and the unusually good (for this class of car) suppression of road noise. The Mondial does feel firm and jiggly at low speed, though never uncomfortable as any vertical jarring has been cunningly removed by subtle tuning of the dampers. At speed, over all surfaces, the ride smooths out to become more than acceptable—on motorway and smooth A roads it almost qualifies for the magic carpet class.

'The only time where caution is needed is on slippery surfaces such as damp leaves (it didn't rain during our test) where excessive throttle can make the tail step out of line very smartly indeed. You have to be very quick and accurate applying opposite lock, though just the right amount of castor action is a considerable help.

'Matching this superb road behaviour is a braking system that must be as good as that of any road car in the world today. Massive ventilated disc brakes larger at the rear (11.78 in.) than at the front (11.0 in.) in deference to the car's rearward weight bias and a vacuum servo provide

a progressive and positive pedal action, whether the brakes are hot or cold.'

It is always difficult to sum up a 2+2 Ferrari, but perhaps *Motor Sport* were near the mark when they said; 'It's not the quickest car available for the money, but it's about as well finished as you could wish and offers the indefinable magic of Ferrari motoring as an every day experience rather than as an occasional treat.

The 308 series of cars has considerably broadened the appeal of Ferraris and by so doing kept the name of the marque well to the fore of those constructors who specialise in the building of high performance GT cars. During the years that have elapsed since the introduction of the 308GT4 in 1973, the influence of Fiat upon the design and construction of GT Ferraris has considerably increased.

This became inevitable from their formal involvement in that side of Ferrari production in 1969. The process has been hastened and made the more necessary by the amount and nature of the technical effort that now has to be expended in dealing with legislation from without the industry that seeks to control automobile design and performance.

Much as one may admire and hanker for the past, change is inevitable. The 308 series of cars has been instrumental in rendering that change acceptable and in introducing it at a more or less acceptable rate.

Whether you like or dislike the current Ferraris, there can be no denying the all-round excellence of those now made by a strongly individualistic company that has been brought out from its past by Fiat. Hopefully there remains enough of the old Ferrari heritage and expertise to ensure that the past will not be entirely swallowed up or forgotten by the future.