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ONE FOR THE ROAD by Ian Kuah

John Mayston-Taylor loved his Lusso but wanted a better driver's car. His choice? A 275 GTB/4



John Mayston-Taylor's first Ferrari was a 250 GT Lusso. That car was featured back in FORZA #58's "More Than a Pretty Face," but those who have not read the story may already know that Ferrari from its concours success: In 2004, it received the prestigious Prix d'Elegance at the Louis Vuitton Concours.

Soon after the show win, however, Mayston-Taylor decided the car wasn't for him. "It handled extremely well, but was lacking in overall torque and a fifth gear for high-speed cruising," he explained. "I decided upon the 275 GTB, which, for me, is the ultimate expression of the 1960s GT Berlinetta, with a race-bred engine and well-balanced and refined handling. It's a purposeful, masculine style of car."



After much searching, Mayston-Taylor found our featured 275 GTB/4 (s/n 10017). "I was attracted to this car as it was an honest-looking example in very good overall condition," he said. "And it was available at the right time!"

The pristine, fully restored Lusso was sold to make way for the 275, which needed a bit of cosmetic work. "When I first saw the car it was painted in 'resale red,'" said Mayston-Taylor. "I was a little disappointed at the color, as I am not a big fan of red Ferrari road cars. But I had promised my wife, Susan, that this would be a car to drive and enjoy, rather than yet another restoration project."



"However, some of the body panels had been repainted in a slightly different shade of red, and there were also some blemishes that were to be rectified as part of the purchase," he continued. "To cut a long story short, the remedial paintwork turned into a much larger job than anticipated, so I decided to do it. Then, when I was researching the car's history with some help from Ferrari, I found that it had started life in dark blue, was resprayed yellow and then, finally, red. There was no question that I could leave s/n 10017 in this non-original color combination, and Susan just sighed in a resigned sort of way-as all long-suffering wives do!-at the news."



Mayston-Taylor owns Lynx Motors International of Sussex, England, best known for its work on classic Jaguars. The company had cut its teeth on his Lusso-its very first Ferrari restoration-and the GTB/4 looked to be a much easier job.

"When you are confronted with a 40-year-old time-warp car in original, unrestored condition like the Lusso, you find more problems the more you take apart," explained Mayston-Taylor. "The Lusso had plenty of rust in the lower bodywork, where the aluminum and steel had succumbed to corrosion over the years."



"The 275 GTB/4, on the other hand, was sympathetically restored during the classic-car boom days of the 1980s, when it was around 20 years old. That is when it had its second color change, to the red paint and black leather interior that everyone wanted at the time."

"When we took the 275 apart, it was primarily to return it to factory-original body and trim colors," he concluded. "However, since a proper bare-metal re-spray and re-trim involves largely dismantling a car anyway, we simply took the opportunity to attend to any details, like fitting the correct headlamp units, that we found."



The car's original interior color turned out to be quite unusual. "We found out it was originally a color called Pelle Orancia," Mayston-Taylor said. "In fact, when we stripped the car down, we found a patch of the original leather trapped in the frame of a seat, and used this as a guide for the restoration. Also, we were happy to see that the seat's original webbing was intact, and bore the build number 074. This confirmed that our car was number 74 of the 350 GTB/4s built."



The interior was re-trimmed using the correct specification and color of leather, which was supplied by Jonathan Connolly, who has restarted the family business which supplied Ferrari in the 1960s. Similarly, period-correct carpets were sourced in dark blue to match the bodywork.

Mechanically, the GTB/4 was already in very good condition. In addition to its '80s restoration, the 275 had recently been refurbished by Ferrari specialist DK Engineering, which had gone through it with a fine-tooth comb, overhauling the brakes, transaxle, clutch and other components in need of repair.

DK had brought the car to England in 2003, and soon sold it to film producer Eric Fellner. Fellner, whose credits include films as varied as The Big Lebowski, Bridget Jones' Diary and United 93, loves cars, but since he lives in Central London, the Ferrari proved impractical - he only covered 500 miles in the 275 before selling it to Mayston-Taylor.



"I believe DK spent over \$30,000 on the car the year before I bought it, so it was in tip-top condition mechanically," said Mayston-Taylor. "In a sense, all we did was freshen it up."



Like the Lusso before it, the 275 has appeared on the international concours scene. At the Ferrari 60th Anniversary celebrations in Maranello this past June, the car received the award for Best 275 GTB/4.

More importantly to Mayston-Taylor, however, is that the Ferrari is regularly enjoyed on the road. "We have driven s/n 10017 on a number of events, including in Italy and Spain for many hundreds of miles," he said. "The car never ceases to impress as a very complete road sports car of the '60s.

"There are many great aspects to driving this car," he continued, "but I think one of my favorite parts is listening to the music of the V 12 quad-cam engine as you reach peak revs in each gear on a stretch of fast country road, with the window open to the sound of the exhaust note echoing from the surrounding hills."

I was lucky enough to drive s/n 10017, and have to agree that there's something magical about the song of a classic 1960s Ferrari V12 engine with six twin-choke carburetors. The experience begins when, with the ignition live, you pump the accelerator pedal a couple of times and then hold it halfway to the floor while turning the key. The starter whirs to life, and if everything is fine, the engine catches with a few splutters and a roar before settling down to a throaty tick-over.

While all of Maranello's V12s deliver a seductive and engaging soundtrack, the rest of the driving experience varies significantly depending upon which classic Ferrari you are sitting in. My favorite '60s Ferraris are the 250 GT SWB and the Daytona, so they served as a starting point for my assessment of s/n 10017.

After a couple of miles in the 275, it was clear there were very real differences between the engines, gearboxes, suspension and steering of these three cars-and interestingly, the GTB/4's driving characteristics were almost exactly midway between those of the other two.

For example, the steering of the SWB is light and precise at all speeds. The GTB/4's steering is a tad heavier, but it still has a lightness to it that makes it easy to drive in all conditions. The Daytona, on the other hand, steers like a truck at parking-lots speeds, requiring a lot of effort to manoeuvre.



(Its steering does lighten up dramatically at speed, however, and is a real pleasure to use on the racetrack in particular.)

Where the Daytona wins hands-down over the two earlier cars is grunt. Its 4,390cc four cam engine makes 352 bhp at 7,500 rpm and 318 lb-ft of torque at 5,500 rpm, which was as good as it got in '68. Despite a hefty 3,528-pound curb weight, the Daytona impresses with its raw power and boundless torque. This oomph also helps to overcome the balky when-cold shifts of the dogleg five-speed transaxle; there's more than enough torque to skip second gear entirely until the gearbox oil heats up.

With just 3.3 liters, the 275's engine isn't as lusty as the Daytona's, but it's far more torquey and flexible than the SWB's. The GTB/4's V12 makes 300 bhp at 8,000 rpm and 202 lb-ft of torque at 5,500 rpm, enough to smartly move the car's 2,930 lbs., though the gearbox is still an impediment when cold.

The 2,595-lb SWB's engine displaces just 3 liters, and delivers only 240 bhp at 7,000 rpm and 183 lb-ft of torque at 5,500 rpm. This means you have to rely more on revs and rowing the gearbox than in the other cars, but, luckily, the four-speed transmission is sweet as a nut, light and precise, thanks in part of its location at the back of the engine (as opposed to the transaxle layouts of the 275 and Daytona). The gearbox offers the best shift action of the three cars, and feels much like a slick, modern unit.

The SWB is also undoubtedly the sweetest of the three Ferraris to drive. It offers terrific chassis balance and one of the most delightful and communicative helms of any car I've ever driven. It's easy to see why the model was so successful in competition.

The GTB/4 feels more like a road car, as its chassis, especially the back end, does not relay information as crisply as the SWB's. On the other hand. The 275's added torque makes it more usable in today's traffic.

The Daytona is the biggest handful to drive quickly, both because it gets up to speed that much faster and because it is the heaviest of the three, which means more effort to manhandle it around. In addition, Ferrari's advances in horsepower weren't matched by improvements in braking; the Daytona is the scariest of this trio when you need to stop quickly. The extra commitment required to get the best from the Daytona narrows its audience considerably. In some ways, it is a step backward for a road car.



Balanced between the SWB and the Daytona, the 275 GTB/4 is the best of the three for road usage, the ideal compromise for most people. "The car is very easy to drive, and responds and handles like a much more modern sports car," said Mayston-Taylor. "The response and torque of the engine always impresses, and the engineering completeness of the car is very evident. The



ownership experience has surpassed my expectations."

SHOWCASE - GTB/4 Memories

JOHN ANNIS of Tampa, Florida is one lucky individual. Our featured 275 GTB/4 was his third Ferrari; his first was a Lusso, bought new in 1964 when he was just 19 years old!



When it was time to replace the Lusso, Annis contacted U.S. Ferrari importer Luigi Chinetti in New York City. Chinetti persuaded him to trade in the car for a 275 GTB/4.

Unfortunately, the new Ferrari emitted a trail of white smoke from the exhaust. Annis contacted Chinetti, who asked him to bring the car to the 12 Hours of Sebring in March 1967, where one of his race mechanics would take a look.

The mechanic confirmed there was a serious problem with the engine, and Chinetti suggested installing a replacement. Annis didn't want anyone outside the factory doing this, so Chinetti agreed to replace the car with a new one.

In late May, Annis was informed that his car was ready in Italy. Because of the timing, it seemed like a good idea to combine a trip to the factory with a visit to the 24 Hours of Le Mans, along with a jaunt around the more interesting bits of Southern Europe.

Flying over with school friend Jim Marsicano, Annis arrived at Modena on Friday, June 2, only to be told that it was a public holiday and the factory was closed. However, a helpful employee soon opened the doors to reveal a row of around 20 GTB/4s-still on the production line.

Things were not that well organized at Ferrari in those days. The factory had not informed Chinetti of the replacement 275's color or specification, so the three men had to visually inspect each car to find chassis number 10017, the only clue to the new car's identity.

Annis liked the orange interior color, though he was not that keen on the darkblue exterior. As the car wasn't yet completed, various things could still be added. For example, it had manual windows, and since he had encountered problems with his Lusso's manual window winders, Annis asked Ferrari to install electric lifts. He had seen competition 275s with outside fuel-filler caps and rearfender louvers, and wanted those items, too.

Unfortunately, there wasn't time to incorporate the competition cues; Le Mans was fast approaching. Annis spoke no Italian and there were no English speakers at the factory, but somehow he was able to convey his request that Ferrari make the car roadworthy by the Wednesday before the race.

The 275 was finished on time, and after an overnight trip to Switzerland to purchase tourist license plates from the Italian consulate there, Annis and Marsicano were on their way to Le Mans. There, they watched the race and compared notes with Colonel Ronnie Hoare, owner of UK Ferrari importer Maranello Concessionaires, who had also arrived in a 275 GTB/4.

Next up was a trip to Belgium, where they went to Ecurie Francorchamps to visit Christian Phillipsen, who Annis had met while collecting parts for his Lusso. From there it was on to Spa Francorchamps to watch the Belgian Grand Prix, then south to visit with friends in Spain for a few weeks.

With no time pressure, the return journey to Modena was done at a leisurely pace. But their seemingly casual arrival back at the factory took a dramatic turn when a man in a white coat, armed with a clipboard and a token for the nearby autostrada, strode up and announced he was going to test the car for any faults. After he terrified Annis with the Italian interpretation of a test drive, the man pronounced the car to be in good health apart from the brakes, which he said were pulling to one side.

A job list, which included fitting the aforementioned electric windows, was compiled, and Annis left the GTB/4 at the factory. It arrived in Florida in late August 1967, and was pressed into service as Annis' daily driver. He eventually put around 20,000 miles on the car.

Annis was soon drawn more and more into the family cigar-making business, and found less and less time to enjoy his Ferrari. In 1968, he accepted a job in California and asked his friend Sam Durrance (later a NASA astronaut) to drive the GTB/4 out from Florida.

Half a year later, Annis returned to Tampa and left the Ferrari in Los Angeles. Soon thereafter, with marriage and a full-time job pending, he reluctantly decided to sell his beloved Ferrari.



Annis was reunited with s/n 10017 in 2006, after current owner John Mayston-Taylor finished the car's restoration. "It was quite an emotional day," said Mayston-Taylor. "He appeared to have a mixture of nervous excitement together with a little trepidation upon seeing the car after such a long time.

"We drove away with him at the wheel, and within a mile, he was driving s/n 10017 with silky-smooth gear shifts, using plenty of revs and heeling and toeing as if he had driven the car the previous week.



"We started comparing notes and asking each other who was luckier when it came to the car: myself for being the fortunate current owner or him for having owned and driven it in period when it was new," concluded Mayston-Taylor. "We both agreed that he was the luckier, as he recalled stories of driving it back to the factory in 1967 at speeds and in conditions that today would not be possible."