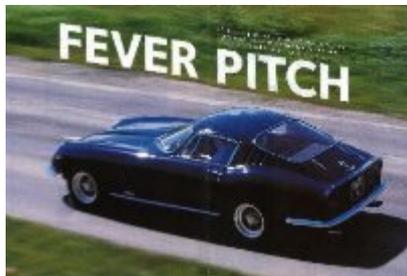




Classic & Sports Car - August 2005

FEVER PITCH by Martin Buckley

If Ferrari's first production quad-cam V12 doesn't turn you on, there's no hope, reckons Martin Buckley - the sensational 275GTB/4 could well be its best road car...



In this lucky profession, you encounter great, interesting or charismatic cars daily - and sometimes forget them just as quickly. But if you can't get excited by a car like this Ferrari, then what's left? Pop open the light door and slide into the restrained glamour of the 275's neat, narrow cabin. It is merely a car, yet it is hard not to feel reverential towards it, the front-engined Ferrari GT-12 cylinders, four camshafts and two seats - in perhaps its most essential form.



Stooping low under the hunched roofline and the narrow door opening, you swing hips-first into the soft leather of the bucket seat that gently holds your torso. Lean back and take in the graceful view through the shallow screen along the penetrating sensuality of bonnet and, before reaching for the key, take quiet communion with its aura of workmanlike '60s luxury. Notice how the big, cool Nardi wheel is slightly offset in relation to the pedals, feel the finger grips in the black plastic extremity of the chrome-shafted gearlever, finger the smooth action of the Ducelier electric window switches - revel in the bold instrumentation in this tactile cabin of well-judged expensiveness and perfect taste.

The rocker switch marked Autoflux primes the six Webers. When the ticking of the fuel pumps desists, twist the key, hear die furious whirr of the starter and then feel six-eight-ten and then the full dozen cylinders catch and form a busy idle under a carefully caressed throttle. Behind quad exhaust bark; in front that busy rustle of chains-turning-cams-pushing-valves blends with the breathy hiss of 12 chokes - open trumpets on this car - snatching air. Tickled and massaged into wakefulness like a sleeping lover, oil stirring in its big dry-sump tank, coolant coursing through its water galleries, Ferrari's first production quad-cam is exhilarating and expensive-sounding, with revs that pick up and shut down with the athletic efficiency of a race engine, which is really what it is.

Dip the hefty clutch, find the dog-leg first in the six-fingered gate - and register that the change must work better in a left-hooker like this because it stays this side on the rhd cars - and move away. The GTB/4 will potter if you must, but its long bonnet, heavy clutch and narrow glazing - and the fact that it rapidly gets stuffy inside - make it far from the ideal town carriage.

You need to be kind to the gearchange until it's warm - and fully disengage the clutch. But if it doesn't want to give you second at first, no matter: the V12 is flexible and generous, surging vigorously away from low revs in third and fourth. With oil warmed in the transaxle, it takes on the correct, deliberate, meaty feel - clicking around the gate with a metallic slap and rewarding a decisive but not impatient touch. The ride, like so much else about the four-cam, feels better with speed. Firm and flat, it doesn't set out to soothe you, yet nothing much catches it off guard.

The steering - low geared seemingly - feels slightly ponderous at first. Yet it comes to life at higher speeds, working wrists quite hard over irregularities but proving more direct than you'd have thought possible from a prosaic-sounding steering box, complementing the faithful neutrality of the chassis that's so wonderfully alive on tall Michelin rubber. It steers to your exact bidding, neither nose nor tail led, resistant to roll, sweeter and more communicative the harder you go.

And you can go hard. If the V12 feels strong up to 3000rpm, it fairly lunges for the red line after it, sweeping 100mph aside with a brawny shrug at 7000rpm in third, surging forward with barely restrained energy in fourth as it strides out to 120 or more.

Less effete than a Lusso, wieldier than a Daytona, the appeal of the 275GTB/4 as perhaps the ultimate Ferrari road car is fairly transparent. But, for those who don't know, there are several factors that put these cars at the top of so many people's lust-list.

Importantly for some, it's the last two-seater built under the purely Enzo regime, before Fiat began to



influence Ferrari's road-car building. As Ian Webb put it in his excellent 1981 Osprey book on these cars (I still have the copy I bought aged 15), the 275 was the car Ferrari thought you needed; the Daytona was the car it thought you wanted.

In other words, if the Daytona and its successors were, to some extent, marketing-led designs, the 275 was the final product of a more arrogant and autocratic Ferrari. There is a rarity element. Fewer than 700 of all types of 275GTB were produced in a four-season run.

The look of the thing is significant. It is beautiful but in a voluptuous, muscular way that recalls the cars of the '50s. More aggressive looking than the almost excessively delicate Lusso, yet as sensual as the Daytona was brutal. The brief to Pininfarina was to style a car with visual connections to the

GTO and an earlier era of two-seater roadgoing Berlinettas that began with the 250 Tour de France. Standing 50in from road to roof, and weighing in at a modest 2500lb, the 275 was eager, toned, svelte and flab-free.

And if the 275 was the last of the old Ferraris, it was in many ways the first of a new order. In this car, art and science meshed in a really quick front-engined two-seater Berlinetta that any well-heeled connoisseur could drive on the street. Here was a Ferrari with, at last, a chassis worthy of its V12 engine for which no excuses need be made.



For many it would have been enough to learn that all four of its wheels were independently suspended but, in search of ideal 50:50 weight distribution, Ferrari went one better by mating the gearbox with the differential several feet further back in the chassis to make a transaxle. And it was a five-speed transaxle (or transsexual as my spellcheck insists on calling it) so there was no need to resort to dodgy overdrive units to give the car the kind of top-gear stride it deserved.

Not all 275GTBs were born equal, and the model had a distinctly chequered history. The first single-cam-per-bank 280bhp cars appeared in late 1964 and ran through to the end of 1965 with 'short-nose' front end.

These first cars - about 200 - suffered from front-end lift above 130mph but, more significantly, there was a serious flaw in the drivetrain. The propshaft, taking the drive from the conventionally positioned clutch and running at engine speed all the time, had no universal joints but did have a steadying bearing half-way along its length. This was not enough, however, to account for torque reaction under extreme provocation when the engine and gearbox could go out of line - resulting in nasty vibrations and the need for frequent bearing replacement.

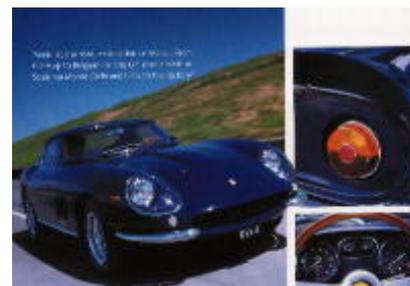
From the spring of '66, there was effectively a second series. Pininfarina elongated the nose so that it stayed on the road while, underneath, Ferrari adopted a torque tube to keep the engine and transaxle rigidly in line front-to-back. You can spot one of these torque-tube, long-nose 275s by its exposed boot hinges (from an Alfa and adopted to increase space) and a larger rear window.

By that time Lamborghini was beginning to assert itself in the Italian supercar milieu and, with its quad-camshaft V12, appeared to be getting the technological upper hand. Maranello pride was at stake and its powerful retort came with the quad-camshaft 275GTB/4 in the spring of 1967 - externally identifiable by the slight bonnet bulge.

Current for just over a year and a mere 280 cars, the six-Webered 300bhp Berlinetta is the pick of the 275 crop, no arguments. I have never heard anybody attempt to justify one of the earlier models as the 'clever' buy or a sleeper. Every two-cam owner would secretly love a four-cam; no four-cam owner would ever go back to a two-cam. The market says the difference between a short-nose and a quad-cam is as much as £100,000.

So alighting on this beautiful blue 275GTB/4 to replace his Lusso was not a difficult decision for John Mayston-Taylor. He was looking for something a little more aggressive to drive than the Lusso, more sophisticated than the DB4GT that had come before but a little more rarefied than the E-types that are, after all, his stock-in-trade at Lynx International in Hastings, Sussex.

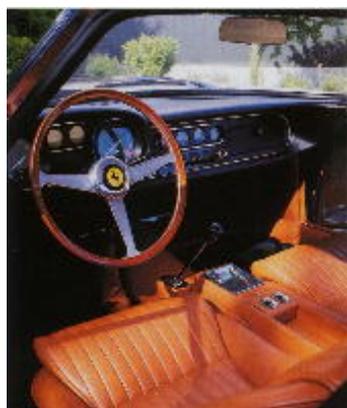
It had to be something that was still essentially a road car that could be used by himself and his wife Susan, but was also unusual enough to get them into the choicest events. Mayston-Taylor quickly identified the four-cam as the prime candidate: a '60s Ferrari - his favoured period - with more power and more gears than the Lusso. It was the next obvious step and the west coast of the States was an obvious place to start looking.



"I nearly bought one at the RM auction at Monterey," he says, "and was quite excited about it. I bid and went up to the figure I had in mind but ended up walking away. I didn't want to set any new world records..."

Back in the UK he found a couple of left-hookers through DK Engineering. One was a rather "clinically restored" black example, the other a red car - chassis number 10017- that was the better of the two but didn't come with much early history. It had been sympathetically restored in the '80s but needed paint. Mayston-Taylor did a deal on the red car but ended up repainting and retrimming it when evidence emerged of its original dark blue livery, with orange leather.

With the help of American Ferrari cognoscenti, the car's history began to come together. It had gone through several hands and stayed in America - more or less - until 1992 when it found its way to Japan. There it remained until 2003 when it was bought by London-based Eric Fellner.



The most intriguing name to emerge was one John Annis of Tampa, Florida, which rang bells with JM-T's American gurus after he'd mentioned that one of the seats was marked 'destinazioni Annis'. Before long JM-T had been furnished with a phone number and an e-mail for the American - still only in his late '50s - who had bought the car brand new in 1967, aged 22.

A remarkable tale unfolded. It turned out that, even then, the car was Annis' third Ferrari. He'd traded in his gold Lusso in 1966 against a new \$14,300 four-cam supplied by Luigi Chinetti. Even if you were well off, owning such an exotic car in America in the '60s was a brave move. Expert help was so hard to come by that, when a problem emerged, sorting it could be a logistical nightmare.

So, when white smoke began to pour from the exhaust of his four-cam in March '67, Annis had to take it to a meeting at Sebring to get it checked out by Chinetti's racing mechanics.

They pronounced it poorly but, when Chinetti suggested a new engine, Annis wasn't having any of it. If the Ferrari factory was not going to be doing the work, he wanted a new car. Chinetti agreed and it was arranged that Annis would collect his new four-cam from Modena in June. He flew out to Italy with a high-school chum and arrived at Maranello on 2 June, only to discover that the factory was closed for a public holiday.

He got lucky though: a helpful Mr Manacardi opened up the plant where 15-20 four-cams were in production. At that stage Annis didn't even know what colour his replacement car was. Having identified 10017, he was disappointed to find it was dark blue - but liked the orange hide.



He wanted electric windows, though, having had trouble with the manual winders in his Lusso, so 10017 had to go back to Scaglietti to have them fitted with other bits such as a shroud around the gear linkage. After some fuss over 'ee' plates that involved an overnight trip to Switzerland, Annis and his pal hit the road, destination Le Mans, where he took in the 24 Hours and even met up with Colonel Ronnie Hoare from Maranello Concessionaires, who was also driving a four-cam. From there it was up to Belgium for the Grand Prix, popping in to see Christian Phillipson at Ecurie Francorchamps and then a blast down to Spain - via Monte Carlo - to stay with friends before returning the car to the factory for a list of jobs.

The 275 arrived in Florida in August 1967 but with no paperwork, customs wouldn't let him take the car. It turned out Ferrari had sent all the documentation to his bank, which was customary at the time.

Annis only owned the Ferrari for about a year. The time had come to focus his energies on the family cigar business and, after accepting a position in California, he felt it was time for the four-cam to go.

He got a friend called Sam Durrance - later a NASA astronaut - to drive the car out to LA. But, when Annis returned to Tampa, it didn't go back with him. He was due to be married, so he asked a relative living in LA to sell the four-cam for him.

That was the last Annis heard of the blue Ferrari until John Mayston-Taylor called him earlier this year. Not only did the remarkable story of him buying the car emerge, but it turned out that Annis and his friend had taken a Super-8 cinefilm of their European road trip. Even better, he still had the wobbly 20-minute reel of film, with a stack of documentation - correspondence with the factory and Chinetti, brochures, invoices, swatches of leather and other memorabilia of his time with the blue 275 four-cam. Like a true gent, he felt the history should go with the car and was happy for Mayston-Taylor to have it.

Suddenly a car JM-T already regarded as something very special — even among the exotica he has access to - took on a magical quality. If his Lusso and DB4GT were sold without too many lingering regrets (the money helped) there's a feeling that the beautiful blue four-cam is the car of his life. Unforeseen financial crisis excepted, this car ain't going nowhere.

After all, if you own a 275 GTB/4, what do you buy next?

