

Blue

The first Ferrari coupé bodied by Pinin Farina breaks cover after a meticulous restoration in the UK. **Mick Walsh** examines the very special 166 Mille Miglia that started a legendary partnership

STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES MANN

VELVET





Left: magnificent 2-litre V12 was instigated by Gioachino Colombo. Above: basic needs and clear instrumentation. Below: trend-setting Pinin Farina styling



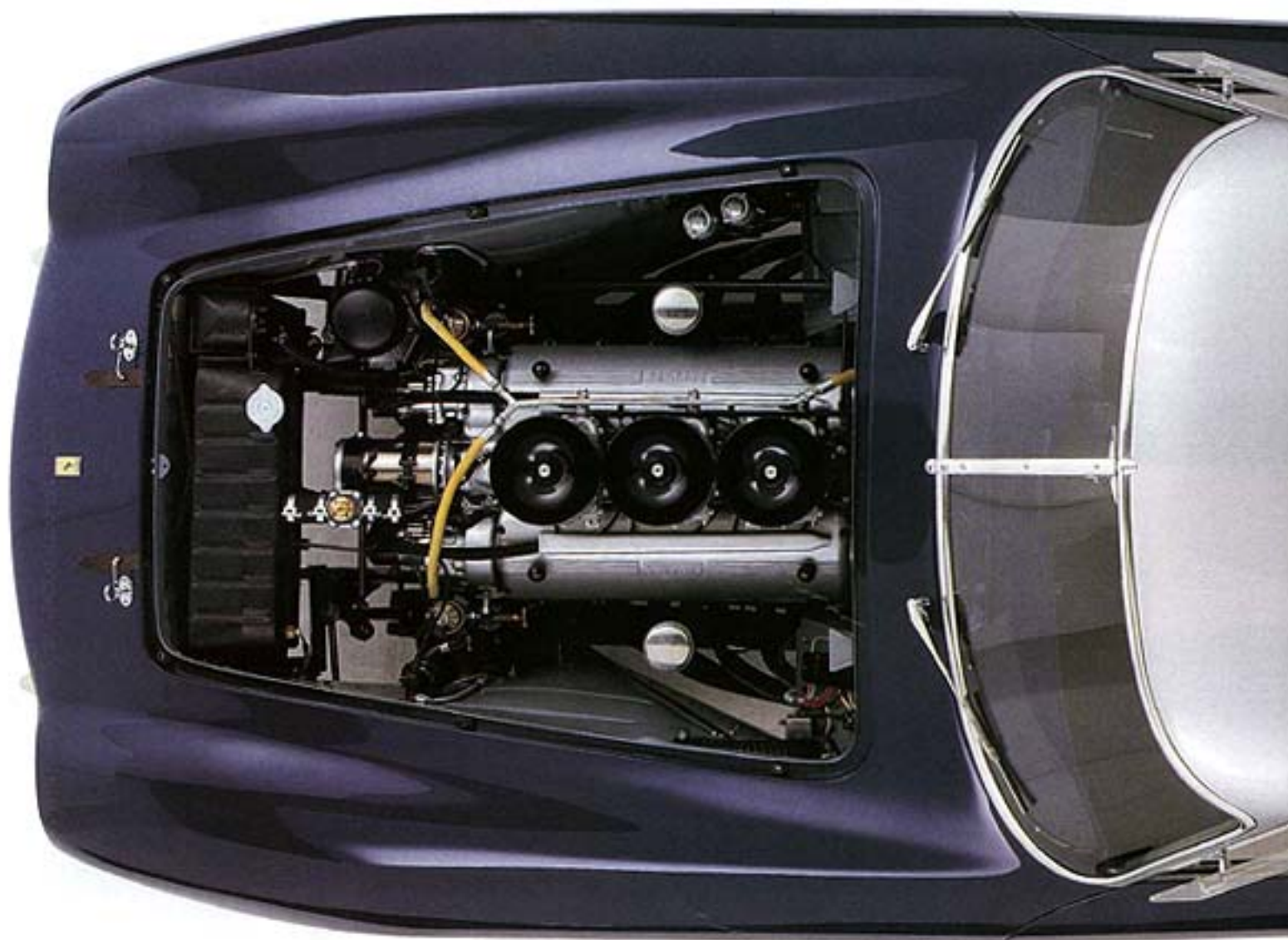
Fifty-three years after it first rolled out into the daylight on a Turin street for photography, a special Ferrari *gran turismo* wowed judges and visitors on 23 April at the oldest concours event in world. In the grounds of the former home of the Visconti family on the edge of Lake Como, stylishly dressed men enthused about this two-tone Ferrari's exquisite proportions as only Italians can. Thought lost for many years, here back from the near-grave was the first Ferrari Berlinetta bodied by the great Turin coachbuilder Pinin Farina, the design that evolved into a brilliant line of front-engined Ferrari GTs. The style of the 340, 375, 250 and 275 all evoke the original theme of this flawless beauty. Amazingly, this 166, the last built and the only one bodied by Pinin Farina, was once lost in the undergrowth in the backwoods of the American deep south. It took British specialist David Cottingham at DK Engineering to have the vision to return it to its former glory.

Early history and photos of the last 166MM are scarce. Gentleman racer Kurt Zeller ordered chassis 0346M early in 1953, but there seems to be confusion about his nationality. Ferrari books and website chassis registers list him as German, which tallies with the bold chrome D originally fitted to the shapely rump of his new Berlinetta. Cottingham maintains that he was Austrian but had the 166 registered to drive on the road in Germany with the number AB 39-4060. Historians and Ferrari collectors have tried to locate Zeller, so far without luck.

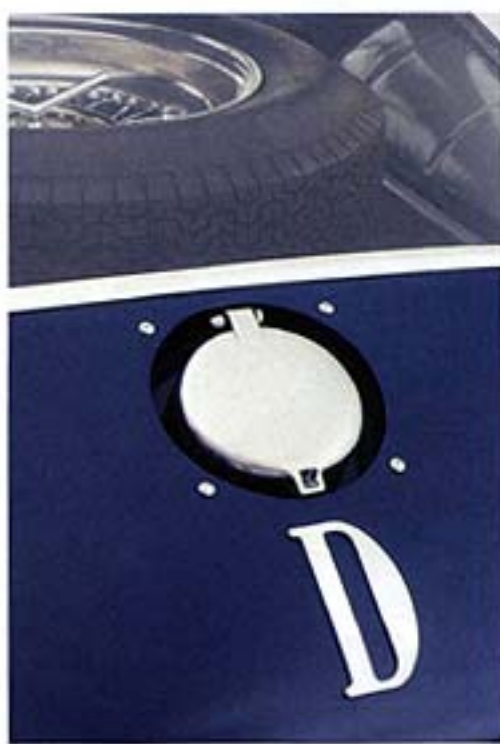
Zeller also did some competition with 0346M. With spotlights fitted under the headlights, it was entered on the Tour de Belgique and, later, with his brother Walter, he braved the Nürburgring 1000km in August for a round of the World Sports Car Championship. Lining up with Modena's new big guns, a trio of muscular 375MM driven by GP aces including eventual winners Alberto Ascari and Giuseppe Farina, the compact 166's styling looked modern but the chassis was outdated. The Zellers are recorded as a late retirement after running out of fuel. Imagine buying a rebodied '02-spec Audi R8 to run at Le Mans this year in your first season, and you get the idea how the Zellers must have felt as the likes of Hawthorn and Maglioli muscled past through Flugplatz or Pflanzgarten.

Maybe intimidated by motor racing, Zeller entered one last event in April '54, the Tulip Rally, before moving the car on to a German dealer who immediately sold it to an American officer stationed in Europe. The Ferrari was eventually shipped across the Atlantic when the soldier returned from service, but then its history gets vague. After a series of owners, the car ended up with Georgia-based Greg Miller who discovered it in 1974, with a 250GT engine installed. The broken car was set aside in the open at his home in Lawrenceville just east of Atlanta where, over the next four years, small trees and bushes sprouted up around the sad-looking 166.

In September 1979 respected Ferrari collector Gerry Sutterfield found the car and moved it to dry storage at his home in West Palm Beach, Florida. Sutterfield saved several historic '50s Ferraris, and the 166 was one of a group that never quite found a slot in the restoration line. At some point the car was stripped and the chassis part-restored, but maybe the fact that 0346M lacked the correct motor discouraged Sutterfield. The turning point came in May 1999 when Wayne Sparling decided it was time that the historic coupé was reunited with its original engine and gifted the tired block to Sutterfield.



Great from every angle.
Below: original steering
wheel and painted dash;
chrome D requested by
first owner Kurt Zeller



FERRARI 166 MILLE MIGLIA

Sold/number built 1949-'53/46 total: 3 Series 1s, plus 13 Series 1Is (nine spiders and four coupés; three Vignale and one Pinin Farina)
Construction ladder-type chassis with elliptical-section steel tubes, aluminium body
Engine all-alloy single-overhead cam per bank, 1995cc 60° V12, bore and stroke 60x58.8mm, with two valves per cylinder, fed by triple-quad-choke Weber 32 IF/4C carburetors, ignition by twin magnetos, 12v electrics
Compression ratio 9.5:1
Max power 160bhp @ 7200rpm
Transmission five-speed non-synchro manual
Suspension: front independent, by unequal-length wishbones, transverse leaf springs and coil springs
rear live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs, twin parallel trailing arms each side; Houdaille hydraulic lever-arm dampers, anti-roll bar front and rear
Steering worm and sector
Brakes drums all round
Wheelbase 86 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (2200mm)
Weight 1433lb (650kg)
Wheels RW Borrani wires with 6.40x15in
Maximum speed 137mph



Below: no '50s Ferrari would be complete without a set of Borrani wires. Classic-style bonnet catch carried through to 250GTO



Again the rebuild stalled, possibly because Sutterfield discovered his tall frame struggled to fit into the 166, and around 2001 word was out that the project was up for sale, for a rumoured \$900k. Early Ferrari restoration projects have virtually dried up and, when an important car such as this comes on to the market, demand is high. When Cottingham heard the car was available, he immediately started looking for a partner to help sponsor the restoration. "The thought that this could be the last barn-find Ferrari we might do really motivated me," he says. "I'd always thought the car was very pretty and these projects just aren't around anymore."

In August 2002 his son Jeremy flew out to Florida to detail exactly what survived. "Although everything was stripped off the body and stored in boxes," recalls Jeremy, who produced a detailed inventory of the project before flying home, "it was clear the car was remarkably complete and very original. Even the Pinin Farina job numbers were still stamped or chalked on many of the parts including petrol tank and inner panels. The chassis had been painted the wrong colour, but had clearly never been in an accident. All the original instruments, switchgear, wiring loom and even the steering wheel were there. Remarkably, all the inner panels, which are almost always missing, were complete." The engine looked the biggest challenge with sump, cam covers and many internal parts gone: "When an engine has been in pieces for so long, it's always difficult. The cylinder heads had been welded up in the US at some point and various reports said they were scrap. These six-port heads are impossible to find, but with our experience we were confident about getting them repaired."

Inspired by the challenge, a deal was eventually struck with Sutterfield and the part-complete 1:1 Ferrari 166 kit without instructions was soon heading for DK's Watford workshops.

A key reference for the project was a set of photographs taken of the freshly completed 166MM outside the 1930s Pinin Farina factory at 107 Corso Trapani in Turin. Archivists at the famous styling house discovered original negatives and large prints of various angles were produced for David Cottingham. Once the car had been stripped it was sent to Shapecraft for bodywork. David has great respect for the work of Clive Smart and his team, but this project stretched the body specialist's patience: "I spent a lot of time with Clive, and probably drove him mad trying to get everything exactly right. The nose needed repair and the missing grille took three attempts until I was happy. These early Ferrari bodies, both by Vignale and Pinin Farina, were quite crude, particularly the body frame welding. The aluminium work is well done but they always needed a fair bit of filler to finish the bodywork. They are always a challenge due to the light construction and lack of rigidity. You can tell they are hand-made because they're never symmetrical. With this car the bonnet wasn't in the middle and the doors were different shapes."

Once the body was finished, the next challenge was replacing the missing windows and frames. Having an early PF-bodied 340 MM in the shop as a guide, plus those factory photos, all helped to shape the formers and fabricate the new frames before Pilkington was commissioned to form the front screen, while the side and curved rear were Perspex. "I particularly liked such distinctive details as the side wind wings and the bonnet fly screen," says David. "These extra touches really give the car character."

Once the bare metal body and chassis were



Perspex headlamp covers were signature of Pinin Farina's greatest GTs; stylish push-button door handles and rear ducts to cool the tyres not the drum brakes; indicators set inside of main lights



'Amazingly, this 166, the last built and the only one bodied by Pinin Farina, was once lost in the undergrowth in the backwoods of the American deep south'

back at DK's workshop, Stuart Castle and Tom Ransome could start the assembly. The engine was rebuilt by Chris Reynolds. "We like to give the original castings a longer life so there are small modifications inside that can't be seen," says David. "With better connecting rods, pistons and rings there's less risk. We also swap the old hairpin-type valve springs with a coil type, plus we fit a lighter flywheel." Sourcing the missing fuel pump proved expensive but eventually a spare was found at auction. Early original Ferrari parts are now rare and coveted.

A special feature of the second-series 166MM was the three quad-choke downdraught Weber 32 IF/4C carburetors that needed precision work to remake the missing internals, but it was worth the effort because they transform the Gioachino Colombo-designed 2-litre V12, increasing revs to 7200rpm and boosting power to 160bhp. Maximum speed was up to 137mph, a big jump from the early 166 Inters at around 110mph: "Those four-barrel carbs with huge 40mm choke tubes were a challenge to sort and initially the engine's power was all or nothing. Once sorted it felt amazingly responsive. The revs really race up, which makes gear changes a challenge." Further revisions to the Series IIs were at the rear suspension, with the addition of twin parallel trailing arms on each side, which really helped to control that live rear axle.

The choice of colour was tricky, but thankfully some of the original blue was discovered around the interior. The car's distinctive two-tone livery with lighter roof was down to guesswork and Cottingham eventually went for silver because it looked a light metallic in the old photos. As with all DK's restorations, the paintwork was trusted to Adrian George at Spraytech. A final touch was a remade chrome serif D to go back on the tail.

The initial surprise when you first set eyes on this gorgeous machine is the size. Having only seen those historic shots plus big-bore 375MM and 250 Europa GTs, it appears as if it has shrunk, so compact is its shapely form. Few other than Ferrari aficionados would guess this is only a 166, and for 1953 it looks so clean, taut and aggressive compared to the fussier work of rival Vignale, which until then had been Enzo's favoured coachbuilder. The last 166 built would change all that and begin an amazing tradition with the Pinin Farina family that would result in some of the most beautiful GTs ever built.

Better still, the car drives as well as it looks, yet initial impressions weren't so positive. "Those big gears in that close-ratio non-synchro gearbox take some getting used to, particularly with such a fast-revving engine," says Jeremy Cottingham. "At first I thought it was horrible but once you get the revs right and the changes come clean, you start to appreciate how quick it is. With straight-through pipes it sounds wonderful, and it becomes very noisy inside when you get it wound up. It feels like a go-kart. It's very taut because there's hardly any give in the suspension. The front is virtually solid-bushed, and the twin-trailing arm set-up seems to make it feel stiffer than earlier 166s. Due to the shorter wheelbase, I reckon things would happen quickly with little message when it does break away. The *barbetta* always feel easier to drive than coupés, but that may be just a psychological thing because it's so much noisier inside. You also feel as if you're sitting higher. I'm 5ft 11in tall and for me there's not much room, but it's a really cool car to drive. You can just imagine doing the Mille Miglia in it. I wish we'd been able to keep it. I even tried to talk dad into selling the 500 TRC."

Few people saw the finished 166MM before it moved on to Dutch collector Henk Koel, who had the treat of taking it back to Italy for the Villa d'Este concours. The DK team didn't get to see this important car garner awards at its first public event in 50-plus years, but at heart they prefer driving old Ferraris. Let's hope that one day we see and hear that gorgeous blue coupé roaring over the Futa and Raticossa passes bathed in Tuscan twilight. As beautiful as it is, these great cars are only truly appreciated on the move. ■

Clockwise, from below: Veglia rev counter, power peaks at 7200rpm; factory-fresh on Turin debut at PF; restored bodywork; fitting up at DK; lost in the Georgia woods in the 1970s

