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A photograph of three red Ferrari sports cars parked on a wet racetrack. The cars are a 288GTO, an F40, and an Enzo. The track is wet and reflective, and the background shows a green field and a cloudy sky.

# 2000BHP 810MPH FOUR TURBOS 40 CYLINDERS...

## ...AND ONE VERY WET TRACK

**Richard Heseltine** unleashes Ferrari's awesome 288GTO, F40, F50 and Enzo – and tries not to think about a combined value of more than £2m

PHOTOGRAPHY **TONY BAKER**



'THE GTO IS INTENSE IN A MANNER THAT  
WILL BE ALIEN TO THOSE USED TO MODERN  
SUPERCARS WITH THEIR DRIVER AIDS'



**Y**our mouth forms shapes but no words are forthcoming. You want to talk but your brain is reluctant to handle more than one cognitive function at a time. The neurons need time to cool down. Feeling the weight of stares, you begin uttering consonant-based opinions over the sound of hot exhausts crackling with spent energy. Words congeal into a random stream of consciousness, the upshot of it all being that the Ferrari 288GTO is a magnificent machine. One that in the dry flicks two fingers at the faint-hearted. And it's still raining. Hard. Just three more (faster) cars to go then. No pressure.

Backtrack to early spring and the notion that we could get the unholy quadrumvirate of Ferrari 288GTO, F40, F50 and Enzo together in one place seemed improbable. But here we are, huddling beneath umbrellas at a sodden Bruntingthorpe Aerodrome, cursing Mother Nature for putting a dampener on it all. An uncharacteristically chipper photographer insists it'll pass, the boys from DK Engineering merely smile and nod gamely. Rain won't end play so

long as there's a two-mile straight to savour.

Normally, hustling a supercar in the wet is like visiting a highbrow restaurant and ordering the most medically inadvisable dish on the menu: chances are it will look and taste amazing, but it may also induce a coronary. But venturing out on to the notoriously bumpy airfield circuit aboard the GTO, there's only one thing on your mind: so what if it wants to kill you, just look at it.

Built in the days before Ferrari opted for – cough – 'challenging' outlines, this was the automotive pin-up of all right-thinking young men in the mid-'80s. And it remains by far the prettiest car here, despite being conceived with motor sport in mind. Aesthetics were of secondary importance, but this being 'old' Ferrari it just couldn't help itself. There are faster cars – these days there are faster saloons – but mere stats really don't do the 288GTO justice.

If the factory figures are to be believed, it will reach 60mph from a standstill in 4.9 secs and go on to 189mph. When launched in 1984 it was the quickest production car in the world. But these are just numbers. They do not – cannot – adequately convey the groundswell of the Gran







Clockwise, from main: longer wheelbase gives the 288 a more aggressive stance than superficially similar 308; cabin is most conventional here, despite its homologation origins; tall mirrors to see over rear haunches; triple gills in tail a nod to '62 GTO; twin-turbo, quad-cam V8



## FERRARI 288GTO

**Sold/number built** 1984-'86/272

**Construction** tubular steel chassis, steel and glassfibre/Kevlar body

**Engine** all-alloy, dohc-per-bank, 32-valve 2855cc V8, with twin IHI turbochargers and Weber-Marelli electronic injection

**Max power** 400bhp @ 7000rpm

**Max torque** 366lb ft @ 3800rpm

**Transmission** five-speed manual, driving rear wheels **Suspension** independent, by double wishbones, coil springs, co-axial dampers, anti-roll bars **Steering** rack and pinion

**Brakes** ventilated discs all round

**Length** 14ft 1in (4290mm) **Width** 6ft 3in (1910mm) **Height** 3ft 8½in (1120mm)

**Wheelbase** 8ft ½in (2450mm)

**Weight** 2557lb (1160kg)

**0-60mph** 4.9 secs

**Top speed** 189mph (claimed)

**Price new** £72,999

## FERRARI F40

*Where different to 288GTO*

**Sold/number built** 1987-'92/1315

**Construction** as before, with composite panels

**Engine** 2936cc twin-turbo V8

**Max power** 478bhp @ 7000rpm

**Max torque** 426lb ft @ 4000rpm

**Length** 14ft 6½in (4430mm) **Width** 6ft 6in (1981mm) **Height** 3ft 8in (1117mm)

**Weight** 2435lb (1104kg)

**0-60mph** 4.5 secs **Top speed** 202mph

**Price new** £160,000

## FERRARI F50

*Where different to F40*

**Sold/number built** 1995-'97/349

**Construction** carbonfibre composite monocoque, side-impact door beams, rubber bag tank **Engine** 4698cc 60-valve 65° V12, Bosch Motronic 2.7 multipoint fuel injection

**Max power** 513bhp @ 8000rpm

**Max torque** 327lb ft @ 6500rpm

**Transmission** six-speed manual

**Suspension** double wishbones, pushrod-operated coil over dampers, adjustable front ride height **Brakes** ventilated cross-drilled discs, four-pot calipers

**Length** 14ft 8½in (4480mm) **Width** 6ft 6½in (1986mm) **Height** 3ft 8½in (1120mm)

**Wheelbase** 8ft 5in (2580mm)

**Weight** 2976lb (1350kg) **0-60mph** 3.7 secs

**Price new** £329,000

## FERRARI ENZO

*Where different to F50*

**Sold/number built** 2002-'05/400

**Construction** carbonfibre monocoque

**Engine** 5998cc V12, four valves per cylinder

**Max power** 650bhp @ 7800rpm

**Max torque** 485lb ft @ 5500rpm

**Transmission** six-speed semi-automatic, with sequential paddle-shift

**Suspension** wishbones, pushrod links, coil springs, horizontal gas dampers, anti-roll bars

**Steering** power-assisted rack and pinion

**Brakes** vented carbon-ceramic discs, ABS

**Length** 15ft 5in (4702mm) **Width** 6ft 8in (2035mm) **Height** 3ft 9in (1147mm)

**Wheelbase** 8ft 8in (2650mm)

**Weight** 3009lb (1365kg) **0-60mph** 3.5 secs

**Top speed** 217mph (claimed)

**Price new** £420,000





Clockwise: although conceived as a road car, the F40 feels every inch the spartan racer from within; V8 is 81cc and 78bhp up on its forebear; classic six-fingered gate and ally gearknob; sharp outline is punctured with vents and ducts; F40 is an enthralling experience



Turismo Omologato as the revs rise. Hit 3500rpm in third and the boost-gauge needle dementedly flits back and forth as 85% of the car's power is delivered. It's intense in a manner that will be alien to those used to modern supercars with their driver aids. As DK's James Cottingham surmises: "It'll let you have your fun and then chew you up and spit you out."

The GTO was created with the sole purpose of contending for honours in the FIA's Group B category, whereby 200 cars needed to be sold before 20 'evolutionary' models with the same basic body shape and a minimum weight of 1097kg could compete. Sadly, while Group B rallying briefly flourished, the circuit-rooted side bombed due to manufacturer indifference.

Styled by Leonardo Fioravanti at Pininfarina, the GTO shared only its steel doors with the outwardly similar 308GTB. A longer wheelbase substantially altered the proportions. The GTO represented Ferrari's first hesitant step towards accepting composite materials for both body and chassis construction. The steel chassis – borrowed in part from the 308 – was strengthened by a rear bulkhead made of two layers of Kevlar/

glassfibre sandwiching an aluminium honeycomb core. The featherweight shell was moulded in Kevlar/Nomex: the front bonnet alone weighed just 3kg. A brace of IHI turbos were then fitted to a destroked 32-valve V8 from the 308GTB qv, boosting power from 240 to 400bhp. And here it was mounted in-line rather than transversely, with the five-speed transaxle slung F1-style behind it.

But, of course, the GTO never raced. Which is of no real consequence because it remains a toweringly capable road car. Your initial impression on falling into the hip-hugging seat is one of familiarity: it's much like any other mid-engined Ferrari of the era, with a slightly skewed driving position. More telling are the orange-on-black gauges: the speedo reads to 199mph, the rev counter red-lining at 7800rpm.

And the GTO does like to rev. As the boost hits 0.8bar, both turbos spool up and the tyres scabble desperately to find purchase on the drenched blacktop. In the dry, a GTO is a delight, thanks largely to its unassisted steering and pliant(ish) suspension that isn't discombobulated by every dimple in the road. It has poise

## Michelotto F40

Mention of the name Michelotto outside Ferrari circles is likely to elicit Gallic-style shrugs all round. But Padova's Michelotto Automobili is famous in a localised sense for making F40s go that bit faster – and with factory blessing, too. Having worked hand-in-glove with Maranello on the success-eluding 512BB LM and Group 4 308GTBs, its cabal of horsepower fiends extracted as much as 720bhp from the F40's 32-valve V8, running up to 2.6bar in competition trim (compared to 1.3 for the regular road car). Jean Alesi and Jean-Pierre Jabouille raced the first example in '89, a run of 19 F40LMs being built in total. This in turn led to further evolutions, most memorably the F40-GTE, and the Michelotto GT that DK Engineering currently has for sale.

Built over the winter of 1992/93, the car received GT-spec upgrades when new, including revised wishbones, adjustable dampers, beefier anti-roll bars, LM wheels, larger Brembo brakes and a remapped ECU. Putting out 600bhp-plus, and weighing some 125kg less than a standard car, it requires an act of will not to start laughing each time you even half-plant the throttle.

Once you've overcome the initial shock, the acceleration blows your mind and assails your ears; God, it's loud. It starts frenetically and gets faster, squirming as it hunts for traction, the rear boots failing to hold up their end of the bargain in the wet. All of which serves to halt your fun: when you hedge your bets, you always lose.

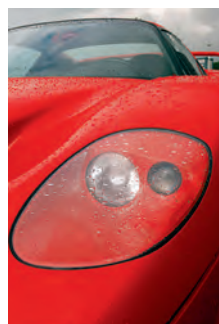


Ferté/Thévenin/Leboissetier F40LM, La Sarthe, 1996





**Clockwise:** simple cockpit with wind-up windows and neat Momo wheel; nothing simple about engine bay, dominated by quad-cam, 60-valve V12 which acts as a stressed member; viewing panel in engine lid; like F40, F50 has covered lights; even in the wet, this Ferrari doesn't intimidate



and balance, the dogleg gearchange has appropriate heft. Nor is it belligerent, as long as you don't drop your guard. Apply too much power too early out of a corner and the nose will push wide shortly before the tail sidesteps as the turbos wake up. You can still drive quickly in the wet, but you're mindful that it will commune with nature should your attention wander.

Yet the GTO was just a dummy run for the F40. It's hard to believe that barely three years separate the two cars' launches. As geometric of profile as its predecessor was curvaceous, the F40 isn't remotely pretty but it is compelling. Another Fioravanti production, it was the flip-side of the GTO coin in that it was designed as a road car rather than a track-biased homologation special; the GT motor sport renaissance was still some years off. The irony is that it did go on to find success trackside, much of it after production had ended in 1992. In fact, it was still giving the McLaren F1 a bloody nose as late as 1996.

Not that there was anything particularly special about the car's make-up, just the hardy twin-turbo V8 enlarged by 81cc (to 2936cc) allied to a more aerodynamically efficient body

with plenty of accompanying downforce. Even now it looks like a glammed-up competition tool; a sense that also pervades the cabin with its proper racing buckets, in-line driving position, non-reflective dash covering and cable door-pulls. It's genuinely comfortable, too: you sense that actual thought went into the ergonomics.

The funny thing is, for all the NACA ducts and air-vent signifiers, the racer side of the F40's character is easily subdued. Experience informs you that, off-boost, it's easy to drive in town despite the heavy clutch and it proves less of a handful than the GTO on a circuit. Naturally, the small matter of 478bhp and 426lb ft of torque makes life interesting in the wet, and it will break traction in fifth, but its steering is simply the best of any car, ever, while the ventilated discs have infinitely more bite than those of the older car. The F40 isn't a monster. Sure, it'll spin like a top if you can't differentiate between steering and braking, but it's just so precise, so alert, that most of the time you'd have to do something pretty stupid to come undone. It's utterly beguiling.

All too often, familiarity breeds indifference but, no matter how many times you drive an F40,

you always exit grinning like a loon. The car that followed in its wake represents the opposite pole technology-wise. The F50 is from another age, eschewing spaceframes for Ferrari's first composite monocoque – complete with inboard, pushrod-operated suspension – and a turbo V8 for a naturally aspirated, F1-derived 4.7-litre V12 with five-valve heads. Yet hacks were resistant to the F50's charms when it was introduced in March 1995. It didn't help that it wasn't classically beautiful, or any other kind of beautiful. Yet with the passing of time it appears less peculiar. It is big, though. It also has a lift-off roof panel, but looks better with it in place. For all the brickbats that were levelled at the car in period, the F50 has presence.

Inside, the simply styled cabin is awash with carbonfibre – the real thing, not appliqué. Even the gearknob is made of it, while the digital/analogue instrument binnacle offers all the right racer reference points. Everything else, from the switchgear to the heater controls, appears as an afterthought. But you feel at home, here. The floor-hinged ally pedals are adjustable, the Momo steering wheel isn't – but then it's perfectly positioned where it is, thank you.

The F50 was trumpeted by its maker as being capable of delivering 'the emotion of Formula 1' for the road and the 65° V12 dominates proceedings. While you'd never know that it's bolted to the tub (there's only a little vibration), this quad-cam jewel delivers iron-fist-in-an-iron-glove levels of horsepower. Acceleration is brutal, but driving an F50 is such an immersive experience that the speed element isn't really the big draw. There's no ABS or traction control here, but even in torrential rain, with rooster tails fountaining upwards out back, it's disarmingly nimble and confidence-inspiring for its size. The unassisted rack-and-pinion steering is super-quick, direction changes being just a wrist-flick away.

While those comfortable with oversteer may still be intimidated by the GTO or the F40, the F50 flatters those of us hobbled with less god-like reflexes. It isn't scary. As one of our number correctly opined, if you can drive a Lotus Elise quickly, then you can handle one of these. It's epically fast – 0-60mph in 3.7 secs, on to 202mph




– but it's not a fizz-bang, all-or-nothing rocket-ship. The F50 is the biggest surprise here.

The Enzo, in contrast, isn't remotely surprising. It more than matches the hype. When the car broke cover in 2002, the reaction among most arbiters of beauty was one of horror, but up close its brutish aesthetic is undeniably striking. And the edgy silhouette is so shaped to be effective at speeds north of 200mph. Unlike the F50, there's no huge rear spoiler to keep it planted, just a small flip-up lip. The really clever part is the under-floor airflow management, the partially sculpted underbelly and none-too-subtle venturi tunnels keeping it grounded.

Pull down the dihedral door, snuggle into the Sparco seat – with side glazing at ear level – and the effect is of surreal detachment. It has a wheel, home to all manner of colour-keyed buttons and a row of up-shift lights, but there's also a definite fighter-plane vibe. Then there's the white-on-red 10,000rpm rev counter and 400kph speedo. Not forgetting the wraparound windscreen and supplementary switchgear in the roof-mounted nacelle, which serves only to reduce visibility. It's a strange office, but one that makes you feel like a hero just sitting stationary. All very *Top Gun*.

It's not *that* much quicker than its predecessors (0-60mph in 3.5 secs, 0-125mph in 9.5 secs), but there's a feeling of uncharted territory here. That 6-litre V12 with variable valve timing produces a *blitzkrieg* of dissonant sonic spasms as it hurls itself forwards. At first, you're genuinely taken aback, as each flip of the paddle-shift ushers in more commotion. In an instant you're travelling at twice the legal limit and still picking up the pace, to the point where suddenly the two-mile straight doesn't seem quite so long any more. Fortunately the carbon-ceramic Brembos offer rib-crushing levels of retardation.

The Enzo redefines your perception of speed, the lack of a regular gearlever or clutch adding to this initial sense of detachment. It's not exactly effortless, but once you've adjusted to the colossal pace and accepted the information proffered by the super-sensitive rack, you feel at one with the car. In fact, you're almost disappointed that it doesn't make you work harder. That's progress for you. Cornering is a case of mental programming; with the wheel-sited driver-aid doohickey on the 'dear Lord save me' setting, its limits are cartoon-like, even in monsoon conditions.

Ultimately, there's no winner or loser here. Piloting a 288GTO with any degree of conviction is like hooking up with the world's sexiest woman, only to discover that she's a cannibal. The F40 is sublime if slightly scary, leaving you clinging to the memories while desperately craving more. The F50 is that rarest of things – an underrated Ferrari. It's still jogging on the sidelines, awaiting its big chance, but its time will surely come. Then there's the Enzo. It looks like it emerged from an art-therapy programme, but there's little that can match it for crazy performance. Yet if push comes to shove, the F40 still steals the show. Against a backdrop of grey-grim skies, and surf's-up levels of standing water, it still has the ability to astound. Most supercars fade over time, their spell at the top being all too fleeting, but the F40's magnetism grows with every passing year. It just goes to show that complicated isn't always better. 

**Thanks to** Jeremy and James Cottingham at DK Engineering: 01923 287687; [www.dkeng.com](http://www.dkeng.com)



Clockwise, from main: Ken Okuyama's Enzo design still polarises opinion, but set the template for the modern generation of Ferraris; 650bhp V12; hidden handles aid airflow; duct draws heat from the carbon-ceramic brakes; fiendishly complex helm in carbon-wrapped cabin





'THE V12 PRODUCES A BLITZKRIEG  
OF DISSONANT SONIC SPASMS AS  
IT HURLS ITSELF FORWARD'



## How to join the zoomph club

Having sold more than 100 F40s, some more than once, DK Engineering's Jeremy Cottingham (on right) is well versed in the market. "Right now, it's very strong indeed," he claims. "This year the F40 has broken through the £300k bracket, where a year ago you would have paid maybe £230,000." Brother James adds that history and mileage are all-important. "Mileage is everything with standard road cars," he says. "It never used to make much difference, but the value of one with 10,000km compared to another with 30,000km or more could be as much as £70k. A very-low-mileage car may cost closer to £400,000."

And the Michelotto cars? "It depends hugely on whether or not it's a genuine car or has been uprated later," adds James. "In some cases a modified car can be worth less than a regular one. And competition cars with exceptional history can be as much as seven figures, but you have to remember that most LMs were never raced in period. Perhaps the most unusual car we've sold recently was a right-hand-drive car, one of six or maybe seven built for the Sultan of Brunei."

"There were also at least two right-hooker F50s," he continues.

"As for a regular car, you're looking at £350k upwards for a tired one, but the best are as much as £450,000. The key with F50s is that they can be costly to put right if they haven't been looked after." Jeremy interjects: "Interest is definitely on the rise. It's an underrated car and people are beginning to realise this."

But top of the tree is the Enzo. When launched in 2002 it cost £420,000. "Now you're looking at £800k or more," says Jeremy. "We have some customers who have the complete set." And what of the car that set the template? "288GTO prices were static for a long time," says James, "but they've been rising for a while now. You'll pay £400k-plus – and you can't find them. The demand is there and I don't think this is a crazy price."

