

Ferrari Superamerica 400

There are Ferraris at the bottom of our garden

Start the engine, engage first gear, and idle slowly out of Bob Grossman's garage, desperately afraid that you'll stall the engine or do something dumb while you're still under the owner's scrutiny. Bob's last words to you were, "Please don't hit anything with it; it's practically the only one around, and if it gets

second just like the experts. As you press down on the throttle in second, a small boy at the side of the road spins around to watch you pass and does a near-perfect pratfall, being careful not to take his eyes off your disappearing car as he picks himself up and rubs the afflicted parts.

This is not unusual when one drives such a car. The Ferrari we tested is an exquisite blue, features the very best sort of Pininfarina coachwork, and has four exhaust pipes about as big around as Audrey Hepburn's throat and just as lovely. The combination of thrashing machine sounds up front and droning exhaust out back will fell full-grown male enthusiasts in windrows, like wheat. What it does to the guy driving is not for the emotionally immature to reflect upon.

We decided to test this car because it is the best example extant of the true GT car, in the traditional, or non-Detroit, non-FIA manner: a closed two-seater, slightly hysterical, and designed expressly for long-distance, high-speed travel. Owing one is, or should be, the goal of every automotive enthusiast anywhere.

There is absolutely nothing unusual or surprising about the car's controls or road behavior. It decisively explodes the myth that all Ferraris need extra-special driving skill. It is much like driving a fuel-injection Corvette, as far as the level of driving skill required is concerned. The clutch is lighter in action than many in our experience, and the shift lever moves briskly and unerringly to the slot selected. Only an utter idiot could look bad in this car. And then only with effort.

In its general road manners the car is very predictable. But one tends to be a bit surprised by the sort of deliberate, ponderous nature of its going. It is not, by any stretch of the imagination, light or quick. It accelerates from a standstill with the gathering rush of a jet plane taking off, and the gears are so long, the rear-end ratio so high, that one tends to shift well before peak revs

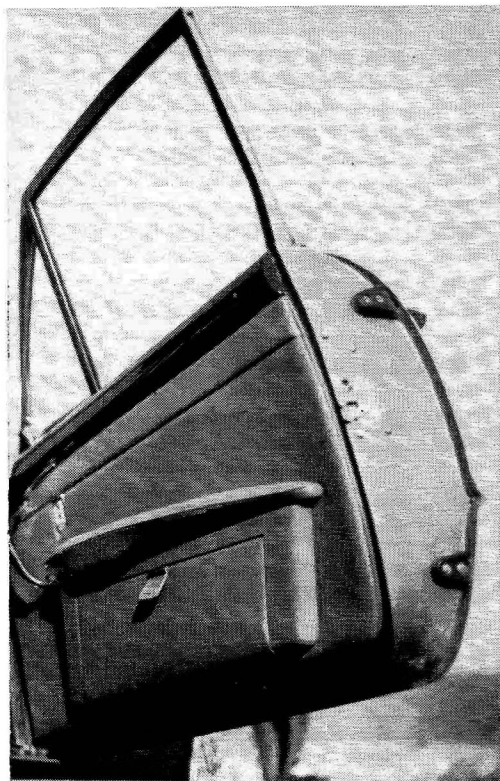
are reached. The result is that test, or drag-strip, acceleration is less spectacular than we'd expected, while the *sensation* of acceleration on the road is truly breathtaking.

We had several opportunities to sample this sensation—one in particular where we were able to share it with another enthusiast, who may never recover. We were leaving a toll gate on the New York Thruway when we spied a TR-3 not more than a couple of hundred yards ahead of us, accelerating briskly. We eased out of the toll gate in first and opened the Ferrari's faucet all the way. We caught fourth gear, 90 miles an hour, and the Triumph all at the same time. The mighty blast of those four exhaust pipes shouting hellfire and damnation must have seemed to the fellow as though he'd run over a land mine.

This car was built as a prototype for the present Superamerica series. It has a 3,967-cc V-12 engine that develops 320 horsepower at 7,000 rpm with three twin-choke Solex carburetors. On the latest production models the Solexes have been replaced with Webers and our test car's Bosch ignition equipment supplanted with Marelli. Horsepower figure for the new version is 340 at 7,000 rpm. Like all current Ferrari street machines, this one has the hydraulically operated fan that Peugeot developed for the 404. Nice bit of status for Peugeot owners.

This four-liter version of the 60° Ferrari V-12 engine is based on the highly successful three-liter which powers the 250-GT and in turn traces its origins straight to the Colombo-designed 1½-liter V-12 of 1947. Like the 250 series, the 400 makes do with pressed-in wet liners. It has, in other words, almost nothing in common with the 4.5- and 4.9-liter engines developed for competition regardless of cost, and using such refinements as cylinder liners screwed into the heads before bolting the latter to the blocks.

While Maserati and Alfa Romeo came out firmly in favor of the five-

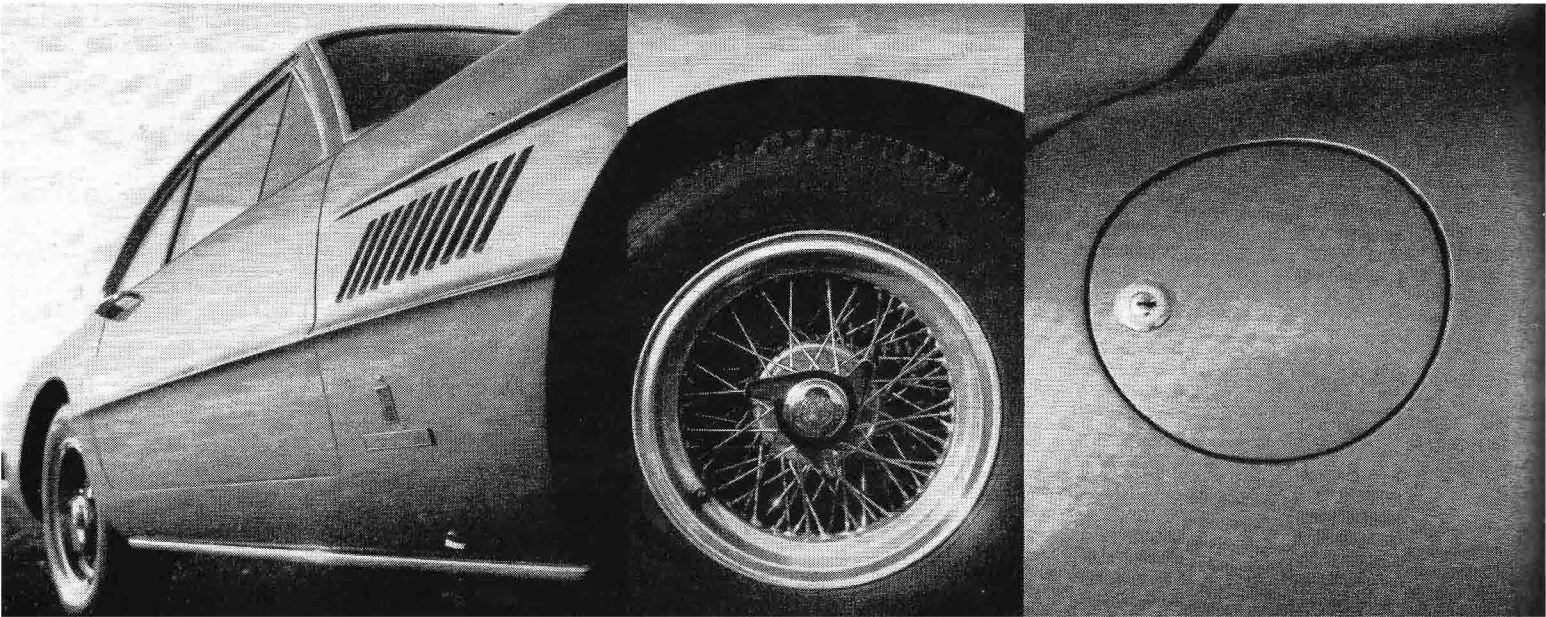


Door detail: the excellent fit and finish of the leather is typical of the car.

bent, we'll just have to throw it away." He watches you depart like a male parent watching a young daughter leave home with a clumsy, slack-jawed youth.

As you get out of sight, the engine starts to warm up and your courage begins to return. After all, it's only a Ferrari, a mere 17,800 dollars' worth of 320 horsepower automobile; why get excited? Accordingly, you leave the next traffic light with some verve, winding to 4,000 in first and hitting





speed gearbox, Ferrari has chosen to fit his 400 Superamerica (and the 250-GT 2+2) with Laycock-de Normanville overdrive in addition to the four-speed all-synchromesh gearbox. It is delightful to use and perfectly reliable even with the tremendous torque it has to transmit.

The chassis is not particularly exciting. It's big, strong, and unimaginative in the Ferrari tradition. And it gets the job done, which is also in the Ferrari tradition. Front suspension is the usual coil-spring layout with telescopic shock absorbers and a massive anti-sway bar. Rear suspension consists of a rigid rear axle with radius rods, semi-elliptic leaf springs, and telescopic shocks. Brakes are Dunlop discs on all four corners.

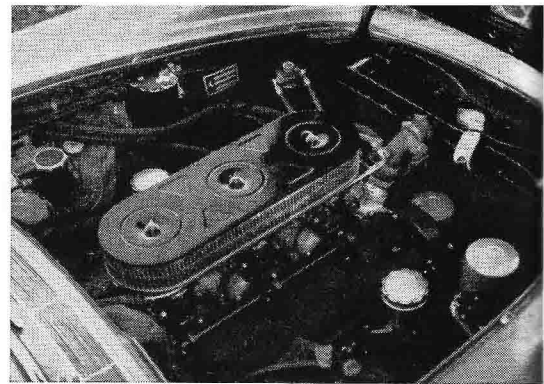
This is the most civilized Ferrari we have tested, and seems just the sort of car to switch a lot of wealthy sports to good machinery. Given nothing more than normal reflexes and coordination, the car is a piece of cake to drive. None of the con-

trols are difficult to use, although many of the myriad switches are unlabeled or, worse, marked with symbols so obscure as to take your mind off the driving while you're trying to decipher them.

All the instruments are refreshingly round. In fact, there is a feeling of roundness to the entire Pininfarina styling motif that sets the car apart from any of his previous efforts. The instrument panel is covered with blue leather that matches the upholstery, and the seams are wide and tough-looking, like something you might see on a good saddle. All this adds elegance.

The seating position is good, but leg room is insufficient. Any member of our staff taller than five feet ten started his drive in the car by searching for the seat-adjustment lever and throwing himself against the seat back, to no avail. The car cannot conceivably be driven Moss-style with arms outstretched, unless one has very little-bitty arms indeed.

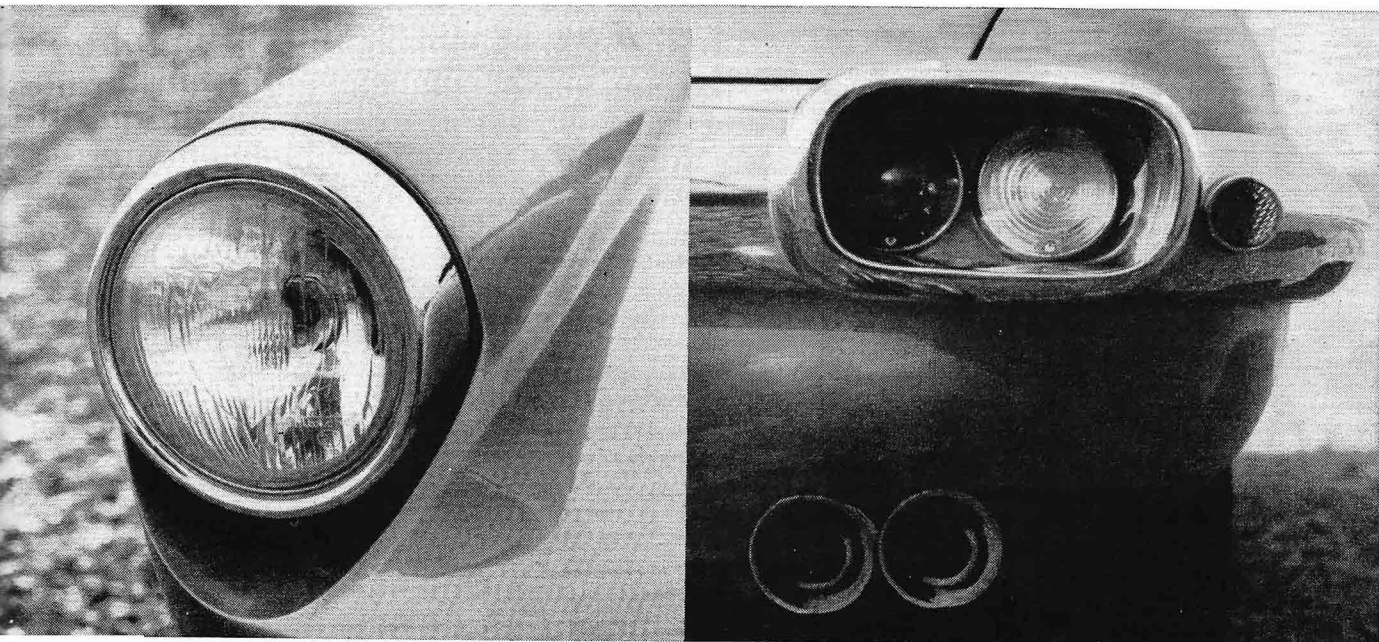
The ride is best described as harsh and choppy. It never really gets annoying, but in a year's time it might. We found that, without conscious effort, we maintained better averages over the same back roads in a Mercedes-Benz 220-SE coupé. This is attributable either to our advancing age or our fear of Mr. Grossman's



Three carburetors, two camshafts, twelve pistons, and 320 horses are hiding here.



Unlike almost any car in the world, the Ferrari could be entirely devoid of identification and there'd be no doubt of its pedigree.



Farina endows the Ferrari Superamerica with contours of soft, almost feminine roundness. Freudians please note.

wrath if we were to run the little dear off into the trees.

Any adverse comment about this car's harsh ride must, however, be tempered by two factors. First, the test car was a prototype and its wheelbase is shorter by eight inches than that of the current production Superamerica, which is 103 inches.

This extra length should also have a salutary effect on the lack of leg room and seat adjustment. The second and perhaps most important factor is that Ferrari's harsh 40-mph ride becomes immensely smooth and stable at a hundred or so. Conversely, many cars that offer pillow softness at normal cruising speeds are vir-

tually unmanageable at speeds above the century mark.

Grossman has driven this car daily for long enough to learn all of its secrets and idiosyncrasies, and he says that its charm never wears off. He says absolutely that it's the most tractable Ferrari he's ever driven, and the ones he hasn't driven aren't worth discussing. His enthusiasm for the car seems boundless, and he appeared to want us to drive it just so we could get in on a good thing.

Our experience with the four-liter, in the three days we spent with it, pretty well parallels his. We were amazed by the car's good humor. During the time that was spent shooting our cover picture, the Ferrari had to be stopped and reversed for about 150 feet every time Tom Burnside took a picture with his giant Matthew Brady-like view camera. Not once during this time did it exhibit a trace of irritation or malfunction. A real trouper.

The only time we noticed a trace of temper was on a long run through rural New Jersey at about 70 mph. It was cold and the Ferrari refused to get up to normal water temperature. Consequently, it gave an irritated cough whenever we called for a sudden blast of acceleration.

One can question the value of a two-seater costing this much money, but it really seems like kind of a moot point to us. If you *have* that kind of money, why *not* spend it on a Ferrari 400 Superamerica? There are an awful lot of luxury commodities around that cost a lot more and aren't nearly as much fun. Just ask Tommy Manville.

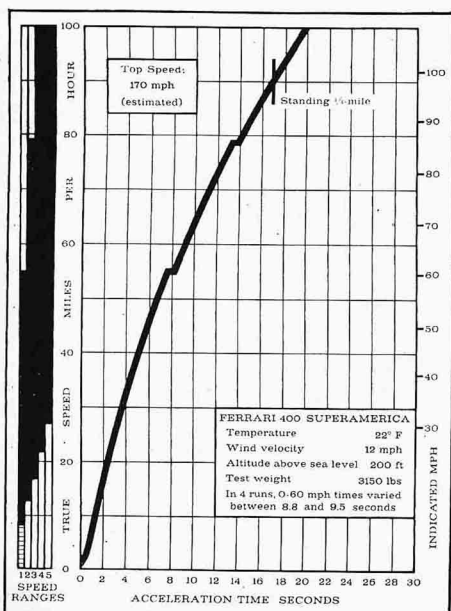
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FERRARI 400 SUPERAMERICA

Price as tested: \$17,800
 Importer: Luigi Chinetti Motors
 780 Eleventh Avenue
 New York, N.Y.

ACCELERATION:

	Seconds
Zero to	
30 mph	3.5
60 mph	9.2
90 mph	16.9
Standing start 1/4	17.0



ENGINE:

Displacement 242 cu in, 3,967 cc
 Dimensions . . . 12 cyl, 3.04-in bore, 2.80-in stroke
 Valve gear . . . Single chain-driven overhead camshaft per bank
 Compression ratio 8.8 to one
 Power (SAE) 320 bhp @ 7,000 rpm
 Torque 235 lb-ft @ 4,500 rpm
 Usable range of engine speeds . . 1,000-7,000 rpm
 Carburetion Three four-throat downdraft Solex carburetors
 Fuel recommended Super premium (98-100 octane)
 Mileage 12-20 mpg
 Range on 31.5-gallon tank 375-630 miles

CHASSIS:

Wheelbase 95 in
 Tread F 54 in, R 53½ in
 Length 178 in
 Ground clearance 5.5 in
 Suspension: F: Ind., wishbones and coil springs, anti-roll bar, telescopic shock absorbers.
 R: Rigid axle, lower semi-elliptic leaf springs and upper radius rods, telescopic shock absorbers.
 Steering ZF worm and wheel
 Turns, lock to lock 3½
 Turning circle diameter between curbs . . 39 ft
 Tire size 6.50/6.70 x 15
 Pressures recommended F 32, R 30 psi
 Brakes . . . 12-in Dunlop discs front and rear, 560 sq in swept area
 Curb weight (full tank) 3,000 lbs
 Percentage on the driving wheels 48

DRIVE TRAIN:

Clutch 10-in dry multi-plate metallic

Gear	Synchro	Ratio	Step	Over-all	Mph per 1,000 rpm
Rev	No	2.60	—	9.80	—8.0
1st	Yes	2.54	49%	9.58	8.2
2nd	Yes	1.70	45%	6.40	12.6
3rd	Yes	1.26	26%	4.75	16.5
4th	Yes	1.00	22%	3.77	21.3
4th OD	Yes	0.78	—	2.93	26.7
Final drive ratio				3.77	to one