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BRUCE MCLAREN—FROM THE COCKPIT ROAD TEST OF THE FERRARI 250GTE COUPE 2+2



**JOHN
BOLSTER**
tests
the

Ferrari

250GTE Coupé 2+2

To drive a Ferrari is always a rewarding experience. It was thus with great pleasure that I accepted John Dalton's invitation to put his Pininfarina 2+2 through its paces. This test was with the approval of Marzello Concessionaires, Ltd., and I collected the car from their workshops after a check-over.

This particular model is Enzo Ferrari's conception of a luxurious high-speed touring car. It has two front seats of the utmost comfort and rear seating for two people, which is entirely adequate for short journeys, and would be suitable for long trips if the passengers in the back were not excessively tall. To achieve this extra space the engine is mounted farther forward than in the Berlinetta.

The power unit is the well-known over-square 3-litre 12-cylinder, with a single overhead camshaft for each bank, driven by triplex roller chains. The cylinder head and block are of light alloy with wet liners, the crankshaft resting on seven bearings. There are three twin-choke downdraught Weber carburettors as opposed to the six instruments of the competition Ferraris, and the power output is 235 b.h.p. at 7,000 r.p.m. on a compression ratio of 9.2 to 1.

The engine is in unit with a four-speed close-ratio gearbox, with synchromesh on all gears. At the rear of the box, a Laycock-Normanville overdrive unit is fitted, which operates on the direct drive only. An axle ratio has been chosen which allows 7,000 r.p.m. to come up very quickly indeed on top gear, at 116 m.p.h. This renders

the car tremendously lively and is ideal for all but the fastest roads. Then the overdrive is switched in and the pleasures of 130 m.p.h. cruising may be enjoyed. This ratio is sufficiently high to prevent 7,000 r.p.m. being exceeded.

The open propeller shaft takes the drive to a hypoid rear axle, of which the light-alloy centre section has a ribbed oil sump. The semi-elliptic springs are reinforced with tubular radius arms. In front, there are forged wishbones with helical springs and an anti-roll bar. The steering is ahead of the wheel centres with a worm and peg box, slave arm, and three-piece track rod. The disc brakes are by Dunlop with Bendix servo operation and the wire wheels have three-earred knock-on caps. The steel tubular chassis is reinforced by the body structure.

To start the engine from cold the choke is never needed, three depressions of the accelerator pedal being sufficient to inject a little fuel into the manifold. An auxiliary electric pump is fitted and this may be used to fill the float chambers and ensure an instant start.

On moving off, the clutch is found to be smooth, and it is best to rev up the engine a little as the flywheel is very light. Extremely fast gear changes can be made, up and down, the ratios being unusually close and allowing 46 m.p.h. to be achieved in first gear, 68 m.p.h. in second, and 93 m.p.h. in third. It is rather easy to provoke too much wheelspin in starting, and one must acquire the knack of avoiding this

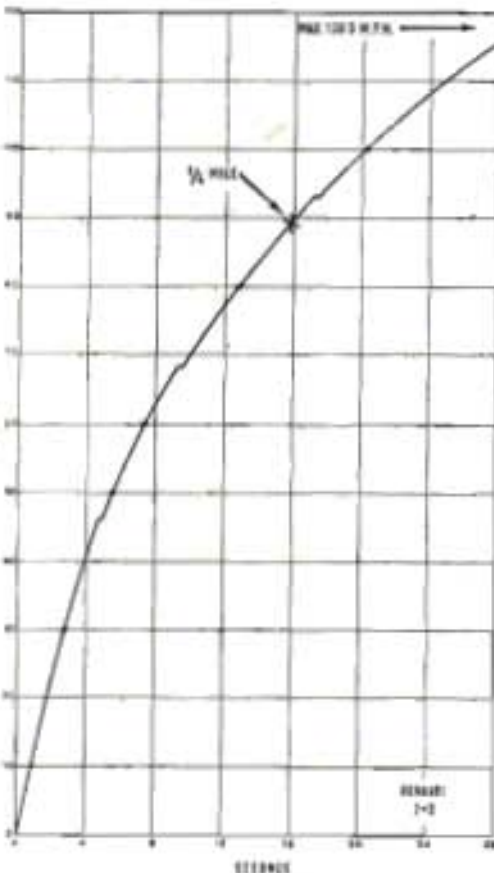
without losing too many revs, when taking performance figures.

The character of the engine is exactly right, for although it remains smooth throughout its wide range it has just a suspicion of "hardness" about it. It seems quite "busy" even at 2,500 r.p.m., and yet it is utterly effortless when cruising at 6,500 r.p.m. The four exhaust pipes emit a deep note which rises almost to a scream but is never loud enough to cause offence. Above all, it is the marvellous responsiveness to the slightest touch of the accelerator that is so delightful.

As the weight distribution differs from that of the two-seater Ferraris, the handling is not quite the same. Nevertheless, the 2+2 can be taken through corners in a fast, effortless manner in spite of its fairly considerable weight. The suspension is firm but the car gives a level ride, the handling characteristic tending towards

SPECIFICATION AND PERFORMANCE DATA

- Car Tested: Ferrari 250GTE coupé 2+2, prior £5,606 16s. 1d. including P.T.
- Engine: 12-cylinder 71 mm. x 38.8 mm. (2,953 c.c.). Single chain-driven overhead camshaft for each bank of cylinders. Compression ratio 9.2 to 1. 235 b.h.p. net at 7,000 r.p.m. Three twin-choke downdraught Weber carburettors. Two coils and distributor. Pre-purge automatic fan.
- Transmission: Single dry plate clutch. Four-speed all-synchromesh gearbox with short central lever. Laycock-Normanville overdrive. Ratios 3.524 (overdrive), 4.37, 5.779, 7.769 and 11.412 to 1. Open propeller shaft. Hypoid rear axle.
- Chassis: Tubular chassis reinforced by body. Independent front suspension by wishbones, helical springs, and anti-roll torsion bar. Rear suspension by rigid axle on semi-elliptic springs with radius arms. Telescopic dampers all round. Dunlop disc brakes with Bendix servo. Borrani light-alloy wire-spoked wheels with three-ear knock-on hub caps, fitted Pirelli Cinturato tyres.
- Equipment: 12-volt lighting and starting. Speedometer. Rev counter. Ammeter. Water temperature, oil temperature, oil pressure and fuel gauges. Clock. Cigar lighter. Heating, demisting and ventilation system. Two-speed windshield wipers and washers. Rear window demisting. Flashing direction indicators. Radio.
- Dimensions: Wheelbase 8 ft. 6 ins. Track (front) 4 ft. 7 ins., (rear) 4 ft. 6 ins. Overall length 15 ft. 5 ins. Width 5 ft. 10 ins. Turning circle: 40 ft. Weight 1 ton 5 cwt. 3 lbs.
- Performance: Maximum speed 126.3 m.p.h. (overdrive). Speeds in gears: Direct top 116 m.p.h. 3rd 93 m.p.h. 2nd 68 m.p.h. 1st 46 m.p.h.
- Fuel Consumption: Driven hard, 16 m.p.g. (approx.).



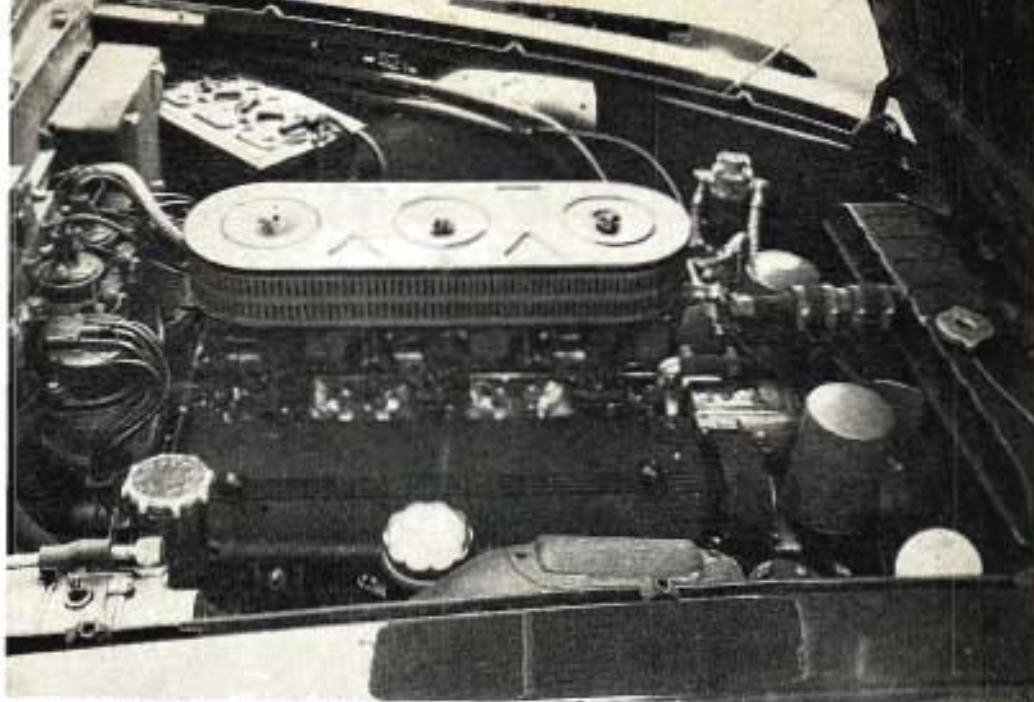
ACCELERATION GRAPH

under-steering. One soon feels fully in command of the machine and, though the steering is light, it is completely accurate. It goes without saying that the Dunlop disc brakes are very powerful and free from fading.

The seats are remarkably comfortable, giving support right up to the shoulders with perfect lateral location. The controls are all well arranged, the wooden steering wheel being placed for straight-arm driving and the pedals correctly set for heel-and-toe. Only the gear lever is rather far forward, causing the driver to stretch a little. The absence of wind noise is remarkable and the driver's window may be opened fully without causing a draught inside the car.

Because the gear ratios are close, one seems to have a gear for every situation and rapid overtaking is a potent safety feature. I was able to record a mean timed speed of 136.3 m.p.h., but this was with the tyres at normal touring pressures.

A QUICK PEEP inside the Ferrari (above) shows the comprehensive instrument panel, laid out very neatly indeed, and the wooden steering wheel. INTERESTING INNOVATION is the red light at the bottom right-hand corner of the door which is illuminated when the door is opened (below, right).



The makers claim 143 m.p.h. and I feel that, with harder tyres and perhaps a longer straight road, this very high speed could probably be attained. As this is a substantial car with full luxury equipment, the

performance must be rated as excellent. The acceleration is really fierce right up past 110 m.p.h.

The Ferrari is a wonderful combination of luxurious touring and super-sporting characteristics. It feels utterly safe and makes all the right noises in a way which encourages any keen driver to give of his best. In competition tune, the Ferrari has proved that no other car exists which can be driven so fast for 24 hours. As the 2+2 has basically the same power unit, there is no danger of over-driving it on the road, however hard one tries. All the performance is there to be used, all the time. Under these circumstances, a fuel consumption in the region of 16 m.p.g. is by no means unreasonable, and the tank holds about 20 gallons.

The Ferrari is entirely tractable and could be driven by anybody as a shopping car. Nevertheless, only a good driver with an appreciation of fine machinery will get the very best out of it, and the man who drives a "Detroit-Automatic" can never know why enthusiasts like ourselves would give almost anything to own such a car. Every journey is a delicious experience, and the very high quality of the construction, coupled with the exceptionally low stresses of the 12-cylinder engine, ensure absolute reliability during an extremely long life.

Having regard to the advanced design and the standard of workmanship, the Ferrari is by no means an expensive car. Indeed, for the relatively few who can afford the best, it must be regarded as remarkable value for money.

