

FERRARI F40

Enzo Ferrari's last masterpiece
was built to thrill

Four decades of Scuderia Ferrari's success came down to the F40. Built to celebrate the company's anniversary, upon its debut in 1987 it was the fastest and most expensive Ferrari in history. Even the most steely-eyed race car drivers and automotive journalists found themselves humbled by its twin-turbocharged power, how utterly stark and thrilling it was to drive, and the most incredible fact was that all of this was street-legal. Sadly, it was also the beginning of the end of an era when you could buy a bona-fide race car for the road, without marketing hyperbole or exaggeration.

By the end of the 1980s, even the most high-strung supercars had advanced far enough that they were no longer fragile little playthings: what Ferrari learned from endurance racing could now match the differing demands of street driving. As early as 1984, chief engineer Nicola Materazzi appealed to Enzo Ferrari to develop a Group B race car. After two years, the 288 GTO Evoluzione was prepared for competition, arriving just as the FIA decided to conclude the series. Moreover, Enzo recently had faced criticism that his newer cars had become too soft, too comfortable for a company that prided itself on motorsports. He was 89 years old: to funnel all of the racing lessons that went into the 288 GTO, then the ultimate homologation special, entirely into a new purpose-built road car without losing anything in translation: This would encompass all he had dedicated his life to, effectively silencing the critics and solidifying his legacy.

With this objective, the F40's bodywork utilized carbon fiber, and its tubular steel spaceframe was reinforced

with Kevlar for optimal strength-to-weight ratio. With no leather, carpets, sound deadening, or even door handles, the F40's unadorned interior hid nothing from the senses. The 2.9-liter V-8 engine came from the 288 GTO but now took on an additional turbocharger. Pininfarina honed the F40's relatively minimalistic shape inside its wind tunnels, adding vents and NACA ducts where appropriate.

Ferrari officially stated its maximum speed as 197 miles per hour, but those who had nestled themselves in the F40's Nomex-fireproof seats knew that it could push to 201mph (323km/h)—the first production car to do so. Without electronic aids or even ABS driving the F40 was an old-school thrill at best, terrifying at worst.

Perhaps this was too scary for the public. Ferrari listed the F40 at \$400,000, five times the price of a 288 GTO, but customers paid upwards of \$1 million for one. Stories abounded of customers displaying F40s in their living rooms, of plastic sheets still on the dashboard. Before the early 1990s recession, the F40 began the current age we see of car collecting and speculation, especially for the history-minded: without the F40, nobody would have paid \$70 million for a 250 GTO.

They are often mentioned together as the greatest Ferraris ever built. The F40 debuted in 1987, at the Civic Centre in Ferrari's home of Maranello. One year later, Enzo passed away. Thus, the F40 and his personal touch are intertwined, adding to either's legend. Entering his ninth decade, Enzo now knew that his legacy was secure in an era when Ferrari ruled the world.

