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TOP 10 VINTAGE ROAD CARS



The Top Ten Road Cars, Part I

In the first installment, our experts select the ten landmark Ferrari road cars from the marque's first two decades.

PHOTOS BY WINSTON GOODFELLOW EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

Debating the "best" Ferraris is a time-honored tradition among *tifosi*. Is the SWB better-looking than the Lusso? Does the big Lampredi V12 sound better than the smaller Colombo? If you had to drive one every day, would you choose a 330 GTC or a Spyder California? Which model meant more to the company—the 166 Barchetta or the 250 GTO?

We decided it was time to get some real answers, so we assembled a panel of Ferrari experts to identify the ten most significant

vintage Ferrari road cars. Future panels will explore modern road cars, race cars, design, best driver's cars and more.

Before we reveal our first list, however, a few explanations are needed. We loosely defined "significance" as something that marked a milestone for Ferrari, whether in engineering, styling, performance, sales or another area entirely. "Vintage" refers to cars built before 1969, when Fiat purchased a majority stake in the company. The notion of a

"road car" is fairly flexible in early Ferraris—a few examples of the 250 LM, which won Le Mans outright in 1965, were regularly driven on the street—so we left it up to the experts.

Our panel includes Ferrari SpA Vice President Piero Ferrari (son of Enzo Ferrari) and Luigi Chinetti, Jr. (son of America's first Ferrari importer). We also invited historian David Seibert, Ferrari preservationist and concours judge Ed Gilbertson, and Ferrari Club of America co-

founder Dick Merritt. Last but not least, we turned to *FORZA* regulars Winston Goodfellow, Michael Lynch and Jim Sitz.

We were looking for a wide variety of views, and we got them—so be prepared for a few surprises. You won't find the Auto Avio 815, the first car Enzo built, or the 125, the first car to bear the Ferrari name. One panelist ranked the 250 GTE 2+2 as the most significant vintage Ferrari. And the legendary 250 GTO? Let's begin the countdown at number ten....





10. 250 GTO

FIRST RACED in 1962, the last of the 250 GT series took the racing world by storm: GTOs dominated the FIA's 3-liter GT class for three years, helping Ferrari to win three consecutive sports-car world championships. That record helps explain the cars' \$10+ million price tag today.

So why did the GTO only rank tenth? Primarily because the panel wasn't convinced it's a legitimate road car. Lynch describes the GTO as "the end of the tradition of road cars you could buy, drive to Le Mans and win your class and drive to Paris for a celebratory dinner at *Le Tour d'Argent*,"

while Gilbertson, who ranks the GTO number one, admits it's "more race car than road car." Most of the panelists, however, consider the GTO a race car, regardless of how many were driven on the street, and declined to include it in their rankings.

Interestingly, the car's evolution was more of a factor for Chinetti. He also left it off his list, calling it "nothing more than a derivative of the SWB."

9. 330 GTC

IN 1966, the 330 GTC replaced the ground-breaking 275 GTB. However, beyond a larger 4-liter engine and revised bodywork, the new car was very similar to

its predecessor. Around 600 GTCs were built before the model was replaced by a very similar, even larger-engined successor, the 365 GTC, in '68.

With that in mind, what's so significant about the 330 GTC? According to our panel, driving refinement. "Finally, a car you could drive every day, everywhere," says Chinetti. Adds Goodfellow, "It took the usability, comfort and drivability of Ferrari to an entirely different level." Gilbertson concurs, calling it "one of the best all-around driver Ferraris of the 1950s and '60s," while Piero Ferrari describes it as "elegant and compact—a very nice car to drive and see."

8. 250 GTE 2+2

THE CREATION of the 250 GTE 2+2 marked a seminal moment in Ferrari history: The builder of racing and sports cars was adding a four-seat "family car" to the lineup. (Interestingly, Ferrari debuted the machine as an officials' car for the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1960 prior to its launch in Paris that October.)

Mechanically, the GTE 2+2 is very similar to the rest of the 250 family, but building a production four-seater was revolutionary for the company. Ferrari knew he had to sell more cars in order to keep his small company solvent—and he succeeded. More than 1,000

9. 330 GTC



8. 250 GTE 2+2





7. 250 GT LWB

cars (around 950 GTE 2+2s plus 50 330 Americas) were built between 1960 and '63, the largest production run in Ferrari's history to that date.

For that reason, Sitz ranks the 250 GTE 2+2 number one: "This four-seat coupe by Pinin Farina opened up an entire new market for the Ferrari marque, changing the face of the company forever." In addition to changing the company, the GTE 2+2 also likely saved it, notes Goodfellow: "It fattened the company's coffers unlike any model that preceded it, and vaulted Ferrari's sales into an entirely different league by doubling the company's production in four years."

7. 250 GT LWB (Europa GT, Boano and Ellena)

INTRODUCED IN 1954, the 3-liter 250 GT marked the beginning of Ferrari's experimentation with mass production. Although chassis were still bodied by various *carrozzerie*, Ferrari planned larger runs of cars with identical features than ever before. For example, the combined run of Boanos and Ellenas—essentially the same model built by the same company over a two-year period—reached more than 100 units.

"This was a milestone," notes Lynch. "Ferrari could finally claim he knew some-

thing about series production." The numbers continued to grow over the years—more than 350 of the Ellena's successor, the PF Coupe, were built between 1958 and '60.

The 250 was also "Ferrari's first real attempt to build a civilized road car rather than a racer that was to be tolerated on the road," explains Sitz. In addition to creature comforts inside, this meant more civilized mechanicals: says Merritt. "The Europa GT was the first Ferrari with good steering, a strong four-speed transmission and a rugged rear axle. It had 375 MM brakes, a solid, quality Farina body and fine fresh-air ventilation."

6. 250 GT Berlinetta "Tour de France"

ALTHOUGH THE 250 GTs were street cars, they, like just about every Ferrari before and since, ended up on the race-track. Maranello encouraged this with the 1956 introduction of a lightweight Berlinetta model, better known as the "Tour de France" in honor of Ferrari's wins at that auto race.

While mechanically the same as the Boano and Ellena, the TdF featured an aluminum body, Perspex windows, minimal trim and so on. (In addition, TdFs received odd serial numbers, a Ferrari tradition for race cars.) It was still easily driven on the street, however, and is therefore considered the first "dual-purpose" Ferrari—a car that could be driven to the track, raced and then driven home. "People had driven other race-winning Ferraris on the street, but for most the TdF was the first one that was really enjoyable," says Lynch.

The model set the stage for later, more famous dual-purpose machines, particularly the SWB (and perhaps the GTO). "But the TdF came first, so it's more significant," insists Chinetti. Merritt ranks the SWB higher than the TdF, but notes that both "really helped make Ferrari's reputation."

6. 250 GT Berlinetta "Tour de France"



5. 275 GTB/4

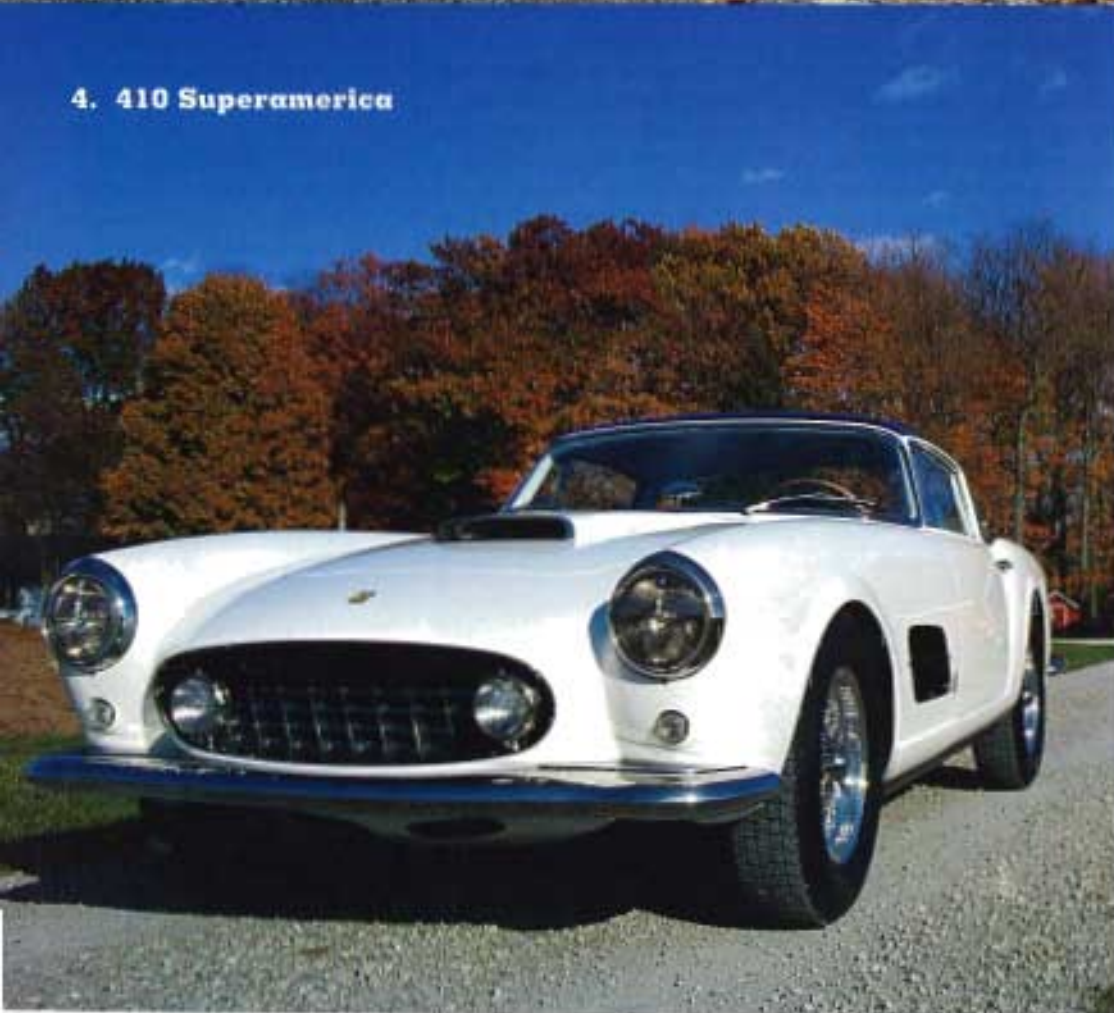


5. 275 GTB and GTB/4

FERRARI NEEDED something special to replace the legendary 250 series, so at the 1964 Paris salon it debuted the 3.3-liter 275 GTB (along with a spyder sibling, the GTS). The 275 introduced a number of Ferrari's racing technologies to the street, such as four-wheel independent suspension, a five-speed transaxle—the 250's transmission was mounted up front with the engine—and, with the later GTB/4, a four-cam engine. "Besides being an icon in terms of styling, the 275 was a wonderful blending of ideas from competition cars as the dual-purpose era came to a close," says Goodfellow.

Despite being faster than its predecessor, the 275 was also more comfortable—thanks in large part to more modern rear suspension—marking a further division between Ferrari's road and racing cars. That added refinement made the 275 more pleasurable to drive; according to several of our panelists, it's one of the best "drivers" of the vintage era. "Gorgeous style, and it's fast and responsive," says Merritt.

4. 410 Superamerica



4. 410 and 400 Superamerica

THE 410 SUPERAMERICA debuted at the Brussels Salon in 1956. Over the next eight years, a total of 82 cars in 5-liter 410 and 4-liter 400 guises would be built. All but a few were bodied by Pininfarina, and each one was different, custom-tailored for its affluent owner. "Ferrari's own literature said it was destined for industrialists, film stars and heads of state, and it became a self-fulfilling prophecy," says Lynch.

The big Superamericas were designed for touring, not racing. Seibert calls the model "a different Ferrari for a different market, a big-engine super tourer for top clients."

Chinetti sees the SA's significance differently. "In the 1950s, Ferrari tended to go in two directions: big engine

3. 250 GT Short Wheelbase Berlinetta



(375, 410) and little engine (250)," he explains. "The big-engine cars are exclusive and beautiful, but not initially known for chassis refinement or brakes! The 400 Superamerica is probably the one type that blends the essence of the 'big bores' with the agility of the 250s."

3. 250 GT Short Wheelbase Berlinetta

BUILT FROM 1959-'62, the 250 SWB expanded upon the TdF's tradition as a car for both road and race. "The heir to the TdF kept Ferrari on the magazine covers as well as in the

winner's circle," says Lynch. Goodfellow calls it, "the ultimate dual-purpose Ferrari," while Chinetti notes, "Bob Grossman drove his car to the track, raced it and drove it home again for a whole season in the U.S.—and he won the SCCA championship!"

Unlike the TdF, Ferrari built steel-bodied road and aluminum-bodied racing SWBs, and both versions saw tarmac and track use. Mechanically, the SWB is an evolution of the TdF, but it features significant improvements over the earlier machine, including a shorter, stronger chassis, disc brakes and a more powerful engine.

The SWB is also highly regarded for its beautiful lines. "It's the car that Sergio Pininfarina calls 'our first quantum leap in Ferrari design,'" notes Goodfellow.

2. 250 GT Spyder California

THE CAL SPYDER is unquestionably one of the best-loved cars to ever emerge from Ferrari's stable. The LWB (1958-'60) and SWB (1960-'63) Cal Spyders are mechanically identical to their berlinetta siblings, but their wonderful Pininfarina-penned styling sets them apart.

While some panelists dis-

miss the car's significance, citing it as just another pretty face among many, others choose it for exactly that reason. "The relation between size and style, the proportions are still perfect today," says Piero Ferrari, who ranks the car number one.

Lynch agrees: "This looker still defines a Ferrari street car for some, and both versions had the car books falling all over themselves to declare them the greatest sports cars of the day." Ferrari also built aluminum-bodied versions of the Cal Spyder for racing; LWBs finished fifth overall at Le Mans in 1959 and won the GT class at Sebring in 1960.

2. 250 GT Spyder California





1. 166 MM Touring Barchetta

THE 2-LYER TIPO 166 appeared in 1947, then stormed across European race tracks in 1948, with wins at the Mille Miglia, the Swedish Grand Prix, the 12 Hours of Montlhéry and elsewhere. The Barchetta version debuted at the 1949 Mille Miglia, scoring a one-two finish, then went on to win outright at Le Mans.

Beyond being the sporting

pinnacle of the 166 series, the Touring-bodied Barchetta introduced, for the first time, a clear Ferrari identity to the race-winning cars. Earlier 166s came in all shapes, sizes and configurations, including some that were, says Sitz, "merely a racing fuselage with skimpy cycle fenders."

The Barchetta also influenced the world of automotive styling at large. "The design influenced God knows how many other cars, from the 289

Cobra to the Disco Volante," notes Goodfellow, who ranks the car as number one. Lynch adds, "It established styling cues that continue to this day."

It's interesting that our panel gave the 166 Barchetta the top spot while relegating another racing superstar to tenth. It's a matter of timing: The differences between Ferrari's road and racing cars in the 1940s weren't nearly as pronounced as they were by the early '60s.

In the end, the 166 Barchetta wins because it's where it all began. "This is the car that truly started the Ferrari legend," says Goodfellow; "It's the cornerstone of the Ferrari mystique," quips Lynch; "It put Ferrari on the map," says Gilbertson. What more is there to say? ●

We can hear those keyboards clicking! Send your comments and lists to editor@forza-mag.com.

PANELISTS' RANKINGS

	Ferrari	Chinetti*	Seibert	Gilbertson	Merritt	Goodfellow	Lynch	Sitz	SCORE
166 Barchetta	4	1	2	2	-	1	1	2	59
250 GT Spyder California	1	-	-	4	2	3	3	3	48
250 GT SWB	6	-	4	3	1	2	6	8	47
410/400 Superamerica	5	1	7	7	7	8	4	9	36
275 GTB, GTB/4	2	-	8	6	8	9	-	3	31
250 GT TdF	-	1	-	5	3	-	5	-	25
250 GT LWB	-	-	3	-	6	-	7	4	24
250 GTE 2+2	-	-	5	-	-	7	9	1	22
330 GTC	3	1	6	10	-	10	-	-	20
250 GTO	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	19

The table on the left lists each panelist's picks and assigned rankings. A "-" denotes a panelist did not vote for a given car.

The table on the right shows the collective ranking. To arrive at it, we assigned point values: A number-one pick was worth ten points, second was worth nine points, all the way down to tenth at one point. More points meant a higher rank in our top-ten listing.

* Chinetti felt it was impossible to rank one car as more significant than another, so we assigned each of his picks a number one but only 5 points.