

Better Late Than Never

HAVING ROCKED THE ITALIAN auto establishment with the dramatic, mid-engined Miura in 1966, Automobili Lamborghini was already at work on that car's replacement, the LP400 Countach, by the time Ferrari grudgingly accepted that its front-engine Daytona was outdated. Ferrari needed to get on board, and it did so in 1971 with the unveiling of its mid-engined 365 GT4 BB flagship at the Turin show.

The company's powerful, 4.4-liter flat-12 boxer engine was a perfect powerplant for the Berlinetta Boxer given that the design was proving enormously effective in Formula One racing. With horizontally opposed pistons that appeared to "box" when in motion, the layout provided a low center of gravity that aided handling.

Slotting Ferrari's race-proven technology into a road car was not easy. The engine was wide, and left no room for radiators to be fitted aft of the driving compartment. Eventually, radiators were installed in the front with coolant tubes running back to the engine bay. The five-speed transmission was mounted under the engine so that the mechanical components were kept within the Boxer's 98.4-inch wheelbase. It was unconventional—and gave away some of the advantage in the flat engine's low center of gravity—but the design would be used until 1995 when production of the 512M, the last variant of the Testarossa, came to an end.

Shaped by Pininfarina, the new car's design lived up to Ferrari masterpieces that had come before. The Boxer was a car of muted aggression compared to the space-

ship-for-the-highway Countach. Its trim lines hid a solid, heavy chassis constructed of steel tubing and a central steel semi-monocoque. Aluminum, steel and fiberglass were used for the exterior panels. The new Boxer would remain Ferrari's fastest, most expensive road car for the next decade.

The Boxer's official name was changed to 512 BB when a larger, 4.9-liter flat 12 replaced the original 4.4-liter in 1976. The new engine was down 20 hp from the 360-hp 4.4, but it had better torque, 331 lb-ft vs. 311, along with a dry-sump lubrication system. To meet European emissions regu-



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lations in 1981, the 512 BBI was fitted with Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection. The 512 BBI was even more tractable, making 340 hp at 6000 rpm and 333 lb-ft at 4600 rpm.

Berlinetta Boxers were never officially brought to the United States as Enzo found the new North American safety and emissions regulations too much of a hindrance to bother with. It was left to gray-market importers to federalize the 512 BBI for American customers.

This pristine 1984 example is owned by

Michael Barber of Rockland County, New York. It represents the final year of production for the 512 BBI before being replaced by the Testarossa. Showing a scant 2400 original miles, our featured car must be one of the best Boxers in existence.

Contemporary road tests pitting the Berlinetta Boxer against the Countach gave the Lamborghini an edge in performance, while the Ferrari made a better long-distance tourer. Barber can attest to this: "Ferraris of this era were never about 0-to-60 times," he explains. "They were about the 80-mph-to-120 feel, which can only be described as breathtaking."

And yet, with a 0-to-60 of around 5.5 seconds and a factory-claimed top speed of 180-plus mph, the Boxer was no slouch. Its double-A-arm suspension with coilover shocks (with dual units in the rear) was overengineered to keep the car's ride compliant. The Ferrari also offered better visibility and comfort than the Lamborghini.

Sliding into this model's resplendent tan leather seats, it is hard not to envision yourself late for a meeting in Rome, blasting down the autostrada and clicking the delicate chrome wand of a gear lever through the open metal gate, while savoring the banshee howl of the Ferrari 12 behind you.

A Berlinetta Boxer is a gentleman's supercar that went to finishing school in Formula One. And at about one-tenth the cost of a new Enzo, it is cheaper, not to mention more fun, to emulate Gilles Villeneuve, circa 1980, than Michael Schumacher today.

—NICK KURCZEWSKI

MARKET

**Bonhams Auction at Goodwood House
Chichester, England**

June 25

1959 Alfa Romeo 2000 Spider

Coachwork by Touring. Silver with black interior. Left-hand drive. Disc wheels. Twin-cam, 115-hp four-cylinder engine. Five-speed gearbox. Brought to England from the United States in 1989, completely restored in 1994. Said to have won prizes at several Alfa meets. **Sold at \$31,533**



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For those of us raised on little Alfas, like the Giulietta and the Duetto, these old spiders are really kind of goofy. They are supersized

in a very '50s kind of way, and have mediocre, at best, performance from a cast-iron block 2.0-liter engine. They are fitted with twin progressive Solex carbs that are notorious for sticking secondaries that lead to burned valves. They do make stylish cruisers, so long as the emphasis is to look good going 60 mph on the freeways rather than 80 mph through the turns. Prices on 2.0-liters have been rising; this would have been an outrageously high price two years ago, but now is simply top of the market.

—KEITH MARTIN