

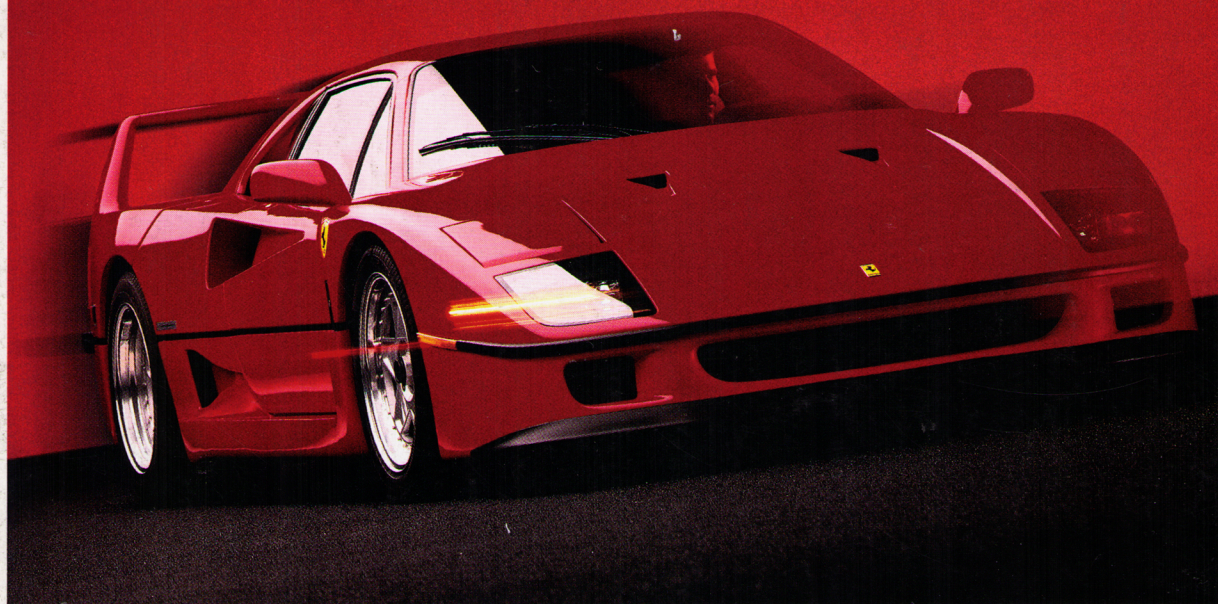
FIRST DRIVE: NEW HONDA ACCORD WAGON!

CAR **AND** DRIVER

FEBRUARY 1991 • CANADA \$3.95 UK £1.95 US \$2.95

THE FASTEST FERRARI!

The first full road test
— top speed and all —
of Ferrari's phenomenal F40.



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Saab 9000 Turbo. Mazda Protegé. A new Audi.
Rolls-Royce Heaven. Ford Crown Victoria.



Ferrari F40

It's the closest you'll ever come to experiencing a nervous breakdown.

BY RICH CEPPOS

Here are twelve things you should know about the Ferrari F40:

- Its sticker price is \$399,150.
- But dealers are getting about \$700,000 for one, a bargain from last summer's peak price of \$900,000 and change.
- The price does not include a spare tire or a jack. Neither is available.
- The price does include a free trip for two to the Ferrari factory in Italy for the purpose of showing the buyer how to drive it.
- It goes 122 mph in the quarter-mile.
- Flat out, it goes 197. You have our word.
- Insurance costs about \$15,000. *Every six months.*
- The F40 meets all U.S. emissions and safety regulations. In short, it's legal.
- As soon as he got his, Formula 1 driver Nigel Mansell sold it.
- It pulls 1.01 g on the skidpad.
- Financed over five years, the monthly payment on an F40 runs about \$12,000 a month.
- One buyer took no chances. Without even driving it, he sealed up his new F40 in the safest place available: his living room.

Here at *Car and Driver*, Rule 1 for test drivers is this: Be Cool. Rules 2 through 10 are equally simple: Remain Cool.

Sad to report, a wrecking ball called the Ferrari F40 has just put big crow's feet on our stony editorial face. Tough as it is to admit, the F40 has made our knees tremble involuntarily, our hearts do little stutter steps, and it made our palms disgustingly wet. Doctor, doctor! Maybe the editorial feet are touching ground, maybe not—we'll get back to you on that a little later.

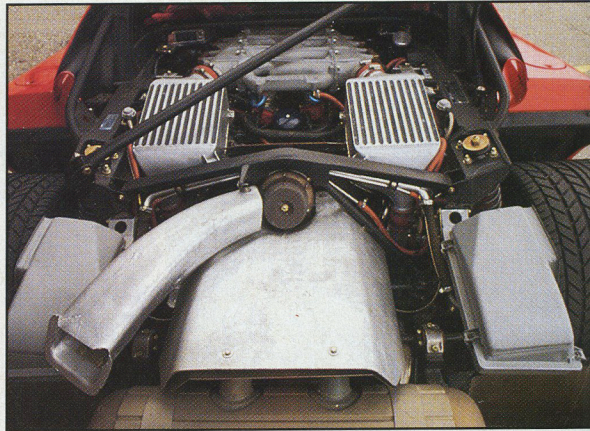
After two days on the road and an afternoon at the test track, we can report that nothing we've ever driven can match the mix of sheer terror and raw excitement of earth-scorching around in someone else's three-quarter-million-dollar toy. (Our privately owned test car came to us thanks to the kind assistance of Ferrari dealer Rick Mancuso, who owns Lake Forest Sports Cars, in Lake Forest, Illinois. Understandably, the F40's owner wants to remain anonymous—lest he one day arrive home to discover his family removed to a village in the Andes and

a ransom note for, oh, about the cash value of an F40.)

Piloting an F40 is like, well, imagine being blindfolded in a pitch-black closet with Michelle Pfeiffer, Cher, and Ellen Barkin and having to guess their identities without talking—but, sorry, you're married. Imagine standing alone in center field at Dodger Stadium while the crowd cheers. But also imagine riding around with a million bucks in your trunk and a three-foot neon sign on the roof reading: "Million Dollars in Trunk." That's what driving an F40 is like.

A deep breath here and we'll attempt to explain further. You see, a Ferrari F40 isn't like other current exotic cars. In the last twenty years, the cars with the mile-high price tags and headache-inducing acceleration have gone through a remarkable metamorphosis: they've become thoroughly domesticated. They have power windows and respectable air conditioners and enough room for six-footers now. You can see out of them well enough to change lanes without saying Hail Mary first. You can hop into al-





the Verdict:

Highs: The zenith of speed with a body like Venus.

Lows: Price tag causes heart flutters even when parked.

The Verdict: Religious experience.

most any of them and drive cross-country reasonably assured of emerging of sound mind and body.

Not so the F40. It harks back to a time—the late 1950s and before—when makes like Ferrari, Maserati, Jaguar, and Porsche built sports and GT cars for the road that could be raced with a minimum of modifications. Some started life as high-strung racers and were barely tamed for the street. We're talking about cars like the original Testarossa, the Jag C- and D-types, the Porsche 550 Spyder. The Ford GT40 Mark III is the lone American car that follows this blueprint. None of them were comfortable, tractable, or reliable. What they offered was unvarnished excitement—the raw, elemental race-car experience for the street.

The F40 is like that. It looks like a race car that made a wrong turn at the end of pit lane. Its nose droops to shovel air out of the way. Its Kevlar body is pockmarked with enough air scoops to inhale a flock of sheep. A wing fit for a Formula 1 car sprouts from the rear deck—no wimpy spoilers here. The F40's midship-mounted, twin-turbocharged 2.9-liter V-8 is on display under a lightweight plexiglass



rear window that's been slotted to allow hot engine-compartment air out. Know of any other street car with a rear window like that? The F40 has height-adjustable suspension, too. There are two positions, one about two inches lower than the other. You have to unbolt the entire suspension to move it but, hey, you have a pit crew, right?

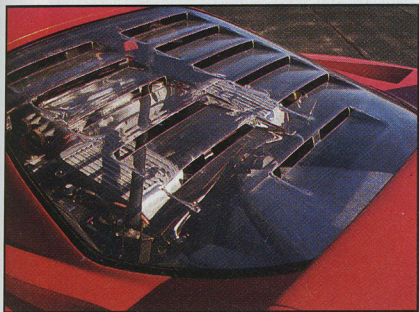
There's good reason the F40 could pass for a race car: it was designed to be raced without the need for a lot of modifications, like the dual-purpose Ferrari 250GTO of the early sixties. So far, though, only one team—Ferrari France—has fielded a competition-spec version. Its two race cars showed up at six IMSA GTO races last season, and you can't argue with their success: three seconds, a third, and a sixth place.

Ferrari has played the dual-purpose aspect to the hilt. When you pull open the door, you are confronted with an interior as stark as any endurance racer's. Ferrari could have glued some leather to the door panels and put some carpeting

on the floor—it would have added only a couple of pounds. But that would have killed the racing ambiance.

Instead, what you see is the glare of nude black-and-tan Kevlar mat on the doors and floor. A thick bead of ugly green sealer runs along the fender-well joint. A single strap opens each door from the inside. The rudimentary dash is covered in gray flannel, apparently to cut glare. The pedals are drilled metal plates. A roll bar nestles behind the seats, hidden by some interior panels. Its Kevlar-covered support tubes run down between the doors and the seats, blocking easy entry. The mil-spec monotone is broken only by a pair of deeply contoured racing-style bucket seats with almost no padding, covered in iridescent orange Nomex fireproof cloth. Amid all of this go-fast seriousness, you'll find an air conditioner, which is standard equipment.

Everything about the F40 feeds your Mario Andretti fantasies. Driving a real race car is a big production; you just



don't hop in and buzz out onto the track. Same with the F40. You squirm your way past the roll-bar brace and twist and wriggle your legs around the front wheelhouse and under the steering column; only then—providing you haven't pulled any muscles—can you drop into the deep seat. Inevitably, you sit on the seatbelts. Our U.S.-spec car was fitted with a six-point racing harness that has to be dug out and clicked together laboriously. The steering wheel is up and away, requiring an awkward arm's-out reach. Your legs are cramped too close to your chest.

Turn the ignition key and . . . nothing. The F40 has a starter button. (It's a race car, remember?) When our test car did fire off, it belched clouds of oily smoke. "Something's wrong," said The Owner, blipping the throttle and looking concerned. "I think the plugs are fouled." He had his foot to the floor, but the engine barely oozed through the rev range, as if it were filled with molasses.

Phone calls on The Owner's mobile phone were placed to Lake Forest Sports

Cars. Could be fouled plugs, they said. It was also a 25-degree morning, and the F40 apparently doesn't cotton to that. It figured: normal cars don't foul plugs in these circumstances, and if they did they wouldn't pass the emissions standards. Race cars, on the other hand, eat plugs for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The Ferrari guys must have been very crafty to coax the F40 over the EPA's hurdles.

"Drive it for a while," Lake Forest advised, so we did. About ten miles into the trip, your faithful servant at the wheel, the engine decided to clear out. Make that *CLEAR OUT*—with a belch and a shudder and a pop. Then it lunged at a Corolla that tooled along in front of us like it wanted to ingest it. Oh wow. We backed off in second, then squeezed the throttle again. See that car up ahead? Zap, we were there.

The noise coming from behind our shoulder blades was deafening. You can't talk in an F40 in full assault mode—not that you'd want to. You want to look straight ahead—far ahead. The noise is deafening but magic. It growls, it whooshes, it whirs. The twin turbos add a jet-engine whistle. It has 478 horses back there, which feels, each time you poke the accelerator, like someone firing off a 5000-pound Roman candle strapped to the back bumper.

We headed for a two-lane road. The F40 responds like a race car: directly, instantaneously. The grip in the corners is tenacious—1.01 g, our skidpad test revealed, better than any production car we've ever tested. We pushed harder. It felt like the tires were rolling in foot-deep

grooves in the road; there was no side-slip, even at sensational cornering speeds. Where's the limit?

An F40 owner had told us, "When the gold-chain set tries to drive an F40 in the rain, it's all over." He made a spinning motion with his hand.

Better be careful in the dry, too. As we've noted, it is the most powerful American-spec production car we've ever tested. It's the quickest to 60 mph (just 4.2 seconds), the quickest through the quarter-mile (12.1 seconds at 122 mph), and the all-out fastest (197-mph top speed). Don't even think about giving it full throttle in first or second gear unless you're pointing straight ahead. Coming out of one 70-mph second-gear bend, the boost came up a little too fast and the tail stepped sideways in a blink. Big adrenaline rush. Okay, that's close enough.

This is an expert's car. It begs to be put on a racetrack, where you can work up to its limits gradually. The F40's massive power, sudden boost, and incredible grip make various things happen very suddenly on the road. The gold-chain set isn't ready for this car.

This F40 is best taken in small Sunday-morning doses. No one will mistake it for a long-distance cruiser. The car pounds across tar strips and takes the big swells stiffly. The steering hunts nervously on uneven pavement. The unassisted brakes require a hefty push. (Our test car's only shortcoming involved braking. Early rear lockup stretched its stopping distance to 218 feet. Since the average econobox can beat that, we must con-



clude that something was amiss.)

Anyway, here's the most fun thing you can do in an F40: Ease along in first gear at fifteen miles per hour, then squeeze the throttle down to the floor and hang on. Before you can count one-one-thousand, the boost kicks in, the rear tires break loose and the back end fishtails, and the F40 hurtles ahead. You know those in-car camera shots of Alain Prost smoking out of the Ferrari pits after a tire change? You just experienced it. We nominate first-gear blasts in an F40 as the drug of choice for the 1990s. It's certainly expensive enough.

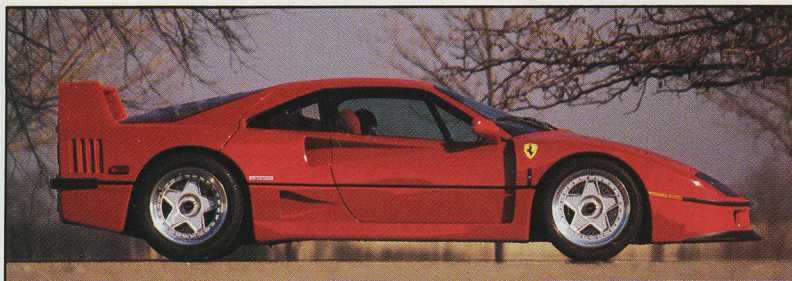
Here's the least fun thing you can do with a Ferrari F40: drive it 60 miles on a traffic-choked freeway. Pure terror. Since the rear cabin window is plastic, the view

is distorted, so you can't watch for cops, or see the crazies weaving in for a closer look. Rear-quarter vision is bad too, so lane changes require leaps of faith. The door mirrors are not much help; they're mostly full of rear fender. Seating is so low you look directly into the rear license plates of Taurus wagons. Other cars tower over this one, making it difficult to anticipate slowing traffic ahead. Prayers are offered that the driver of that semi in the next lane sees you and doesn't come over unannounced. And this certainty: every Porsche, Corvette, and Mustang driver will offer that silent challenge, so you will be called upon to ceremonially smoke them all off and you wrestle with the absolute, overmastering compulsion to dip into the *whoosh* every time the traffic

clears but you can't pass anyone too fast because they might pull out on you and you have to keep a vigilant eye for road debris because the front end is so incredibly low and don't forget to slow down for those steep driveways and keep the revs above 4500 so the plugs stay clear and don't do anything stupid because if you mess up *this is someone else's THREE-QUARTER-MILLION-BUCK CAR*.

Arrive, finally. Palms wet. Squeeze out of the cockpit. It's safe at last, safe at last. Glad that's over with. Gawd, how to get more? More!

Ferrari's best guess is that it will ship about 200 U.S.-legal F40s to America. That may be just about enough. There probably aren't a whole lot more people who can take this much pressure. ●



Vehicle type: mid-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2-passenger, 2-door coupe

Price as tested: \$399,150

Options on test car: base Ferrari F40, \$395,000 (includes \$1850 gas-guzzler tax); freight, \$4150

Standard accessories: A/C

Sound system: none

ENGINE

Type twin-turbocharged and intercooled V-8, aluminum block and heads
 Bore x stroke 3.23 x 2.74 in, 82.0 x 69.5mm
 Displacement 179 cu in, 2936cc
 Compression ratio 7.7:1
 Engine-control system Weber-Marelli IAW with port fuel injection
 Emissions controls 2 3-way catalytic converters, feedback fuel-air-ratio control
 Turbochargers 2 IHI RH853 LWs
 Waste gate Ferrari
 Maximum boost pressure 16.0 psi
 Valve gear belt-driven double overhead cams, 4 valves per cylinder
 Power (SAE net) 478 bhp @ 7000 rpm
 Torque (SAE net) 424 lb-ft @ 4500 rpm

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission 5-speed
 Transfer-gear ratio 1.33:1
 Final-drive ratio 2.90:1, limited slip
 Gear Ratio Mph/1000 rpm Max. test speed
 I 2.77 7.0 54 mph (7750 rpm)
 II 1.71 11.3 88 mph (7750 rpm)
 III 1.23 15.8 122 mph (7750 rpm)
 IV 0.96 20.2 157 mph (7750 rpm)
 V 0.77 25.4 197 mph (7750 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase 96.5 in
 Track, F/R 62.8/63.2 in
 Length 171.6 in
 Width 77.6 in

Height 44.3 in
 Frontal area 19.9 sq ft
 Curb weight 3018 lb
 Weight distribution, F/R 38.9/61.1%
 Fuel capacity 26.4 gal
 Oil capacity 9.5 qt
 Water capacity 18.0 qt

CHASSIS/BODY

Type plastic panels bonded to steel-tubing space frame
 Body material Kevlar- and carbon-fiber-reinforced plastic

INTERIOR

SAE volume, front seat 46 cu ft
 luggage space 4 cu ft
 Front seats bucket
 Seat adjustments fore and aft, seatback angle
 General comfort poor fair **good** excellent
 Fore-and-aft support poor fair **good** excellent
 Lateral support poor fair **good** excellent

SUSPENSION

F: ind, unequal-length control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar
 R: ind, unequal-length control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar

STEERING

Type rack-and-pinion
 Turns lock-to-lock 2.9
 Turning circle curb-to-curb 38.1 ft

BRAKES

F: 13.0 x 1.2-in vented disc
 R: 13.0 x 1.2-in vented disc
 Power assist none

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size F: 8.0 x 17 in, R: 13.0 x 17 in
 Wheel type Speedline 3-piece modular aluminum, center-lock hubs
 Tires Pirelli P Zero, F: 245/40ZR-17; R: 335/35ZR-17
 Test inflation pressures, F/R 44/44 psi

Modulation poor fair **good** excellent
 Fade **none** moderate heavy
 Front-rear balance **poor** fair good

HANDLING

Roadholding, 300-ft-dia skidpad 1.01 g
 Understeer **minimal** moderate excessive

COAST-DOWN MEASUREMENTS

Road horsepower @ 30 mph 5 hp
 50 mph 14 hp
 70 mph 30 hp

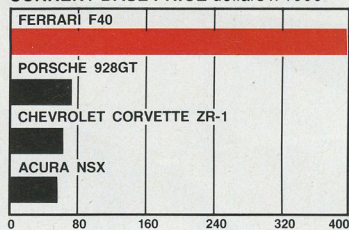
FUEL ECONOMY

EPA city driving 12 mpg
 EPA highway driving 17 mpg
 C/D observed fuel economy 9 mpg

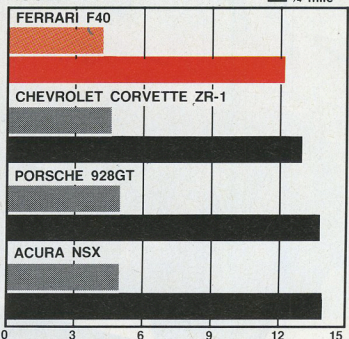
INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL

Idle 78 dBA
 Full-throttle acceleration 95 dBA
 70-mph cruising 89 dBA
 70-mph coasting 88 dBA

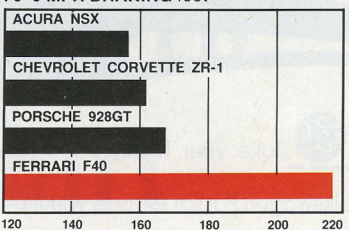
CURRENT BASE PRICE dollars x 1000



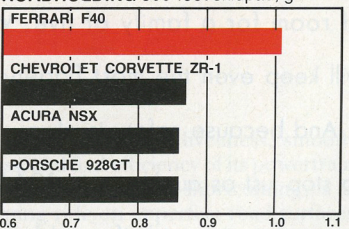
ACCELERATION seconds



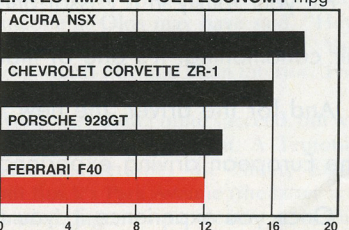
70-0 MPH BRAKING feet



ROADHOLDING 300-foot skidpad, g



EPA ESTIMATED FUEL ECONOMY mpg



CAR AND DRIVER TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

Seconds
 Zero to 30 mph 1.8
 40 mph 2.5
 50 mph 3.6
 60 mph 4.2
 70 mph 4.9
 80 mph 5.7
 90 mph 7.2
 100 mph 8.3
 110 mph 9.5
 120 mph 11.0
 130 mph 13.5
 140 mph 15.6
 150 mph 18.0
 160 mph 21.3
 170 mph 26.3
 Top-gear passing time, 30-50 mph 12.1
 50-70 mph 12.2
 Standing 1/4-mile 12.1 sec @ 122 mph
 Top speed 197 mph

BRAKING

70-0 mph @ impending lockup 218 ft