

It's Showtime!

At Concorso Italiano, one FCA judge switched hats and presented a car for judging.





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Early this spring I got word of a car collection being sold by an estate in Carmel Valley, California, right in my backyard. After reviewing the list of around 15 automobiles, which spanned nearly four decades, I decided to go see if there was anything of great interest. Little did I know that a car left off the list would make its way into my hands and onto the lawn at Concorso Italiano.

Most of Carmel Valley looks the same: Ranches on each side of the road, followed by a string of grape vines, small roads, and even smaller mailboxes. I almost missed the driveway I was looking for, but was soon standing in front of the garage doors, eager to see a car the seller had just told me about: a 1985 Testarossa (s/n 59501). It was an early *monospecchio*, a.k.a. single or flying mirror, model.

After removing a very thin car cover, I discovered the Testarossa's body was very straight, with factory-tight panel gaps, and that the paint, even under a couple layers of dust and years of amateur detailing, promised vibrancy. Inside, I could smell the essence of Connally leather, which appeared to be in excellent condition for its age aside from some cracks on the driver's seat outside bolster, armrests, and steering wheel. The carpet also looked well preserved.

Based on the Ferrari's condition, the odometer's 10,250 miles were easily believable, and I was able to confirm further via the dealer-stamped service books. Digging deeper, I discovered the previous owner had purchased the car in 1992, when it had around 7,500 miles—which meant that, over the last 26 years, the car had been driven an average of just over 105 miles annually.

Occasional usage is common in the Ferrari world, of course, and most cars require servicing based on time rather

than mileage. Luckily, this Testarossa had been maintained locally by Forza Motors and master technician John Bagioli. A quick call to my old friend got me both the car's records and his recollection of its life on the Monterey Bay.

Although the Testarossa was due for another time-defined major service, there were no surprises, and the car was quickly purchased by my friend Martin Lauber. But now what?

When buying a classic Ferrari, the standard wisdom is to set aside 15-20 percent of the purchase price for repairs and service, even if everything appears to be in order. In addition to hiring a professional for a pre-purchase inspection, you'll want to make a list of every issue you see, review all the car's records, and go online to check out services bulletins and other owners' experiences. Then it's time to sit down with your mechanic and make a game plan.

In this case, the plan included taking the Ferrari to one of the largest Italian-car concours in the United States during the largest car week on the planet. For the first time in its life, s/n 59501 was going to be shown and judged at an official Ferrari Club of America concours.

I've been an FCA judge for the last five years (and wrote about judging the 275 class at the 2018 Cavallino Classic in issue #167's "Day in the Sun"), but this would be the first time I'd been on the other side of the clipboard. Based on my experience, I created a list of items I figured could be fixed in the three months before Concorso.

The easy stuff was just that, and a few phone calls sourced items such as new deck-lid struts, windshield-wiper blades, and a handful of interior and exterior light bulbs. I went through the tool and jack kits to make sure everything was



present and accounted for—it was—then turned my attention to a few larger issues.

The previous owner had fitted a Tubi exhaust, which would be an immediate three-point deduction. Luckily, the original exhaust came with the car, and was easily reinstalled.

More challenging were the hood pads, five decorative leather trim pieces that line the underside of the front deck. The pads' glue and foam are notorious for deteriorating, and that was the case here. The leather was still in good condition, however, and when replacement material proved difficult to find and, ultimately, too expensive, I stripped out

judge it first, before I would head off to perform my own judging—it was showtime.

Soon, seasoned judges Timo Tanskanen, Steve Mraovic, and Stuart Fields greeted me then got down to business. They worked their way around the car, making notes along the way and holding quiet sidebar chats with each other. I had done this dozens of times myself, yet I still wondered what they could possibly be discussing. Was something wrong? Did I overlook anything obvious?

The worried voices inside my head were interrupted by Fields asking me to open the doors and deck lids. I did, and

have fun with the process—exactly what I preach to owners when I'm judging.

After the tool roll and jack kit were thoroughly inspected, and the headlights, turn signals, and air-conditioning checked off their lists, it was over. Now, all that was left to do was wait.

I went off to judge my own class, and later, after making the rounds up and down the fairways, checking in on fellow entrants, clients, and friends, I finally made it back to s/n 59501—where I found a yellow tag on the windshield. It had won an award! I had asked the car be considered for a Preservation award, but the tag

and engine/chassis (three points). Some of the engine deductions came from a set of blue aftermarket coolant hoses and chipped valve covers, both of which will be addressed during the needed engine-out service. There was a small deduction for stone chips on the nose and around the driver's side door, which can easily be touched up. The half-point interior deduction was for the original front carpet being a little battered (another half-point came off for a slight engine hesitation during the cold start), although that raises a bit of a conundrum; if the carpet is replaced, it will no longer match the aged appearance of the rest of the interior.



ABOVE, L-R Concours judges Timo Tanskanen, Steve Mraovic, and Stuart Fields (in blue blazers) inspect the Testarossa's exterior; author Kittrell drove to the podium to accept the Ferrari's first-ever concours award—a Silver.

the mess and had a local upholstery shop attach the OEM material to new backing.

With that, time was up. After a concours-level detailing, the Testarossa was ready for its big debut.

I pulled the Ferrari onto the lawn early on the morning of the show. It fit right in with the crowd of Berlinetta Boxers and Testarossas, but stood out for being the only *monospecchio*. In addition to showing the car, I would be judging the 599/612 class, so I quickly checked in with the group that would be inspecting the Testarossa. They decided to

the three judges moved onto their specific areas. Tanskanen pulled me to the engine bay to ask about an unusual texture on one of the cross members—I believed it was original, and after he touched and closely inspected the area, he agreed—Mraovic requested I show him the owner's pouch—which contains the owner's manual, warranty information, and so on—and Fields had some questions about the cabin.

While the process hadn't yet lasted 10 minutes, it felt like it was taking forever. I realized my nerves were getting the best of me, which is when I laughed and decided to just

didn't indicate it had received a major or specialty award, which meant it had won Platinum (100-97 points), Silver (96-93 points), or Gold (92-89 points).

After hours of anticipation, my name rang through the PA system. I inched the Ferrari towards the presenter, past grandstands full of people, and received this Testarossa's first-ever award: a Silver.

Where did s/n 59501 come up short? I asked for the judges' score cards to find out. It turns out the car had received six points in total deductions, spread among the exterior (two points), interior (a half-point),

Overall, given the limited time I had to prepare, I felt the car showed very well. Most of the faults are items that can and will be addressed, and this is one reason I tell clients to take their cars to concours—there's no easier way to get expert feedback on how to make your car correct. Personally, I was very pleased with the award, as well as happy I had done my part in honoring this car and expanding its history. ●