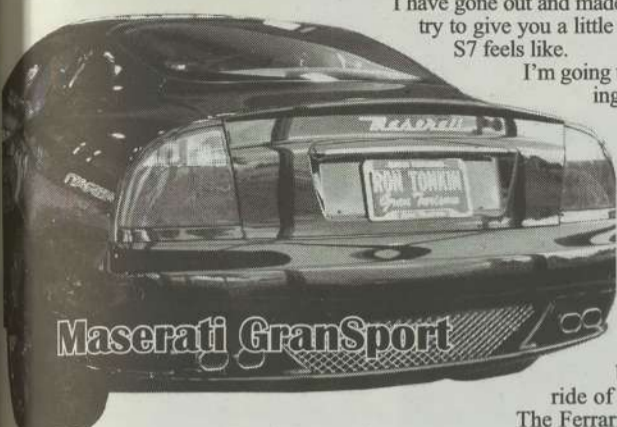


# Super cars unveiled

The Print's own Joe Piazzisi takes us where no college student has gone before

Most people have seen a Ferrari or Maserati at some point. In most cases you see them on the "big screen" or behind velvet rope at a car show. Very few people have had the chance to enjoy the feel and ride of one these cars. It's always a "you can look but don't touch" situation. Making your mind try to fill in the gaps of how the seats feel, how the engine sounds, and so on. None of your senses get attention except visual. I have gone out and made arrangements with Ron Tonkin Gran Turismo to be able to answer all the "I wonder" questions, to try to give you a little more insight to what a Ferrari Enzo or F-50, F-40, 288 GTO, Lamborghini Diablo GT, or a Saleen S7 feels like.



Maserati GranSport

I'm going to go over the Ferrari Enzo first just because it is the most expensive car out of the entire bunch, pulling in \$1.2 million per car. A lot of people wonder why it costs so much. There are a couple of reasons for that price tag. First being it is a limited production vehicle, with only 399 made. Only 70 of the 399 were brought to the U.S. Second reason is it's a Ferrari, people! It isn't just a car, it is *the* car.

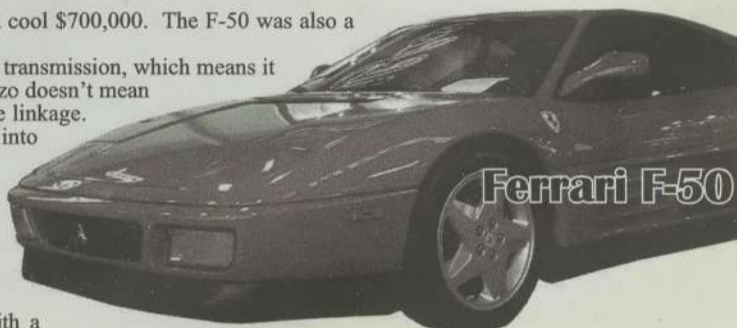
This car is what I would call a neck-breaker, throwing you back into your seat every time you touch the throttle. It also wants to launch out of your seat when you hit the brakes, so make sure you wear a seat belt in this car. With a Formula One style 6-speed gear box it shifts within 2/10 second. The gearbox literally snaps itself into gear. For those who don't know what a Formula One gearbox is, it acts as a sequential shifter; you pull back on the left paddle to go down a gear and pull back on the right paddle to go up a gear. The paddles are located right behind the steering wheel.

Don't make a mistake of thinking that this car is extremely comfortable or easy to drive. It's not a luxury car. Essentially it is a Formula One car that is street legal. It is very stiff and loud, what you would expect of a full-on race car. Not the most comfortable of rides, but the best adrenaline rush you can get. Being in it is like being in a rocket ship with wheels. It is the ride of your life!

The Ferrari F-50 made in 1995, pulls in a cool \$700,000. The F-50 was also a low production vehicle with a world production of only 349!

This Ferrari is very similar to the Enzo in feel, however it has a standard 6-speed transmission, which means it has a slower shift time than the Enzo. Just because the shifting is slower than the Enzo doesn't mean it shifts slowly. It has a gated shifter; you literally hear the shift rod snap into all the linkage. Once you start moving the stick, it feels like the Ferrari grabs the rod and throws it into gear for you.

This car is also a rough ride. The F-50 doesn't have a chassis in the way you would think of one. The engine and transmission are bolted to the monocoque, and the suspension is bolted to the transmission, making for a very stiff ride. Don't think of that as a bad thing, because once you are in it, you're not too worried about how stiff the suspension is; you are just enjoying the speed, handling and roar of the engine as you fly down the strip.



Ferrari F-50

The Ferrari F-40 simmers down a bit with a price tag of only \$400,000! Production started in 1987 and got the name F-40 for 40 years of Ferrari.

This car is incredibly fast but it doesn't really kick in until 4000 rpm; that's when the twin turbos spool up.

Most people that like to build up imports are a fan of turbos, intercoolers and carbon fiber. The F-40 is the perfect car for those people. The F-40 has intercooled IHI turbos, a full carbon fiber body and the list goes on. Once again, we aren't looking at a luxury car. The F-40 doesn't even have door handles on the inside of the car; it has rip cords for you to open the door.

This is the "Manager's" personal favorite, because it is easy to drive. It's smooth and nimble when going down the road, feeling a lot like a normal car. Once you want the "Super Car" feel, you just hit the throttle and let the turbos spool and off you go.

Ferrari 288 GTO is the worlds first branded "Super Car." Made back in 1984 it is the car that started it all, and pulls in a nice \$350,000.

When Ron Tonkin first got this car at the dealership, Mr. Tonkin took this car out for a test drive. This is as quoted from his own staff. "Once Mr. Tonkin got out of the car he said, 'This car scared the shit out of me, you really need to know what you are doing behind the wheel!'"

Since it is the car that started it all, it is the roughest ride of them all. It does have a lot to offer though: all-steel tube chassis, full carbon fiber body panels, Koni shocks, and all that you would expect from a Ferrari. Over the years, technology progressed and the Ferrari got more user-friendly, trying to minimize the rattling and stiffness of the ride.

My personal favorite is the Saleen S7, with only 45 made so far. It pulls in \$440,000 if you are lucky enough to buy one.

Unfortunately they keep this car locked up. Even when people are looking at it to buy, it stays locked. I was lucky enough to see as much as I did. It has a nice plush leather interior, chrome accents, oversized wheels, gull wing doors and the list goes on. It has the best of everything you can buy.

I was not able to experience the Lamborghini Diablo GT, however it was at the car show at the Convention Center two weeks ago. It costs a mere

\$300,000. It produces 495 hp with a top speed of 205 mph. The one at the show is the only one in the U.S. It is No. 18 of a production of 80. 50 were made for the road and the other 30 are just race ready. I asked why it was the only one in the U.S. and the reply was, "It's not U.S. legal. It cannot be driven on the streets, but we do it anyway."

Those of you that went to the show with the Diablo also saw the Lotus Elise as you entered the Super Car room. This is the most affordable of all the cars there that day. With a price tag of \$42,000-\$48,000, a lot more people can afford it. It drives like a little go-kart on the road. It seems that way because everything is bigger than you. It comes with a full composite body and a 190 hp Toyota MR2 engine. It has thin seats, no door panels nor carpet, so I wouldn't suggest going on a long trip in this car but it is definitely fun. As it is small and nimble, it is a very good-handling fun car.

As I left Ron Tonkin Gran Turismo, the sales manager left me with, "Italians have a passion for autos. When you are in their cars you get a feel that no other car gives you. It doesn't feed your senses like Japanese cars. Japanese cars are just appliances, quiet and smooth. Most of the time you cant even tell that you are driving in them. If you are in a Ferrari there is no doubt that you are driving. The rush overcomes all your senses, leaving a smile on your face and every other car on the street in your dust."



Ferrari Enzo



Saleen S7

