

Tests: Toyota's NEW Corolla Liftback & fwd Tercel

ROAD & TRACK

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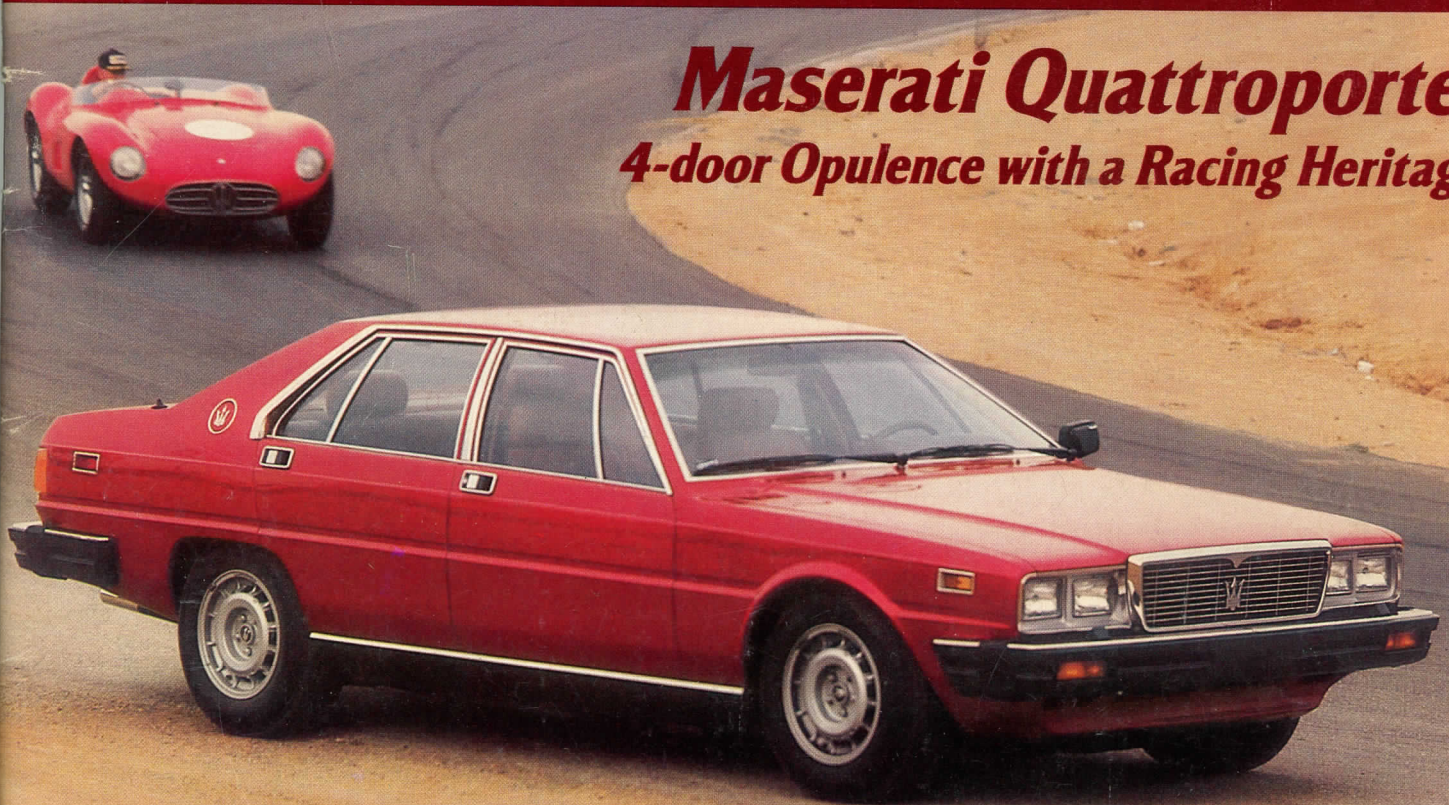
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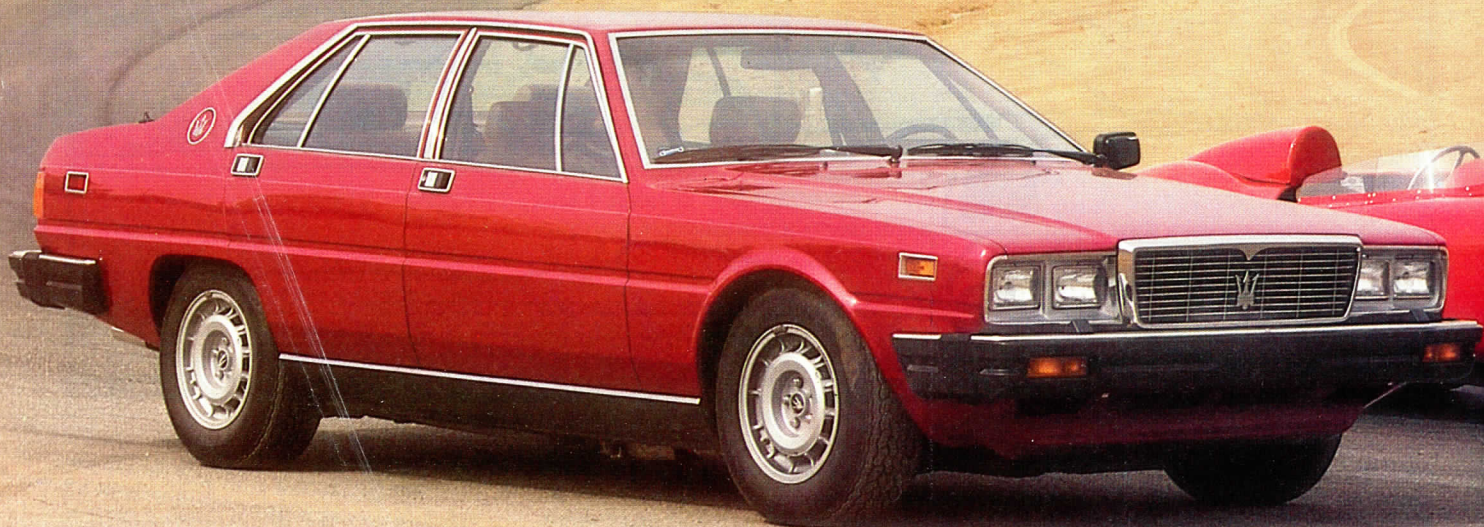
AIRBAG UPDATE: IS THE TRIAL BALLOON BURSTING?

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Maserati Quattroporte:
4-door Opulence with a Racing Heritage





MASERATI QUATTROPORTE

Four doors opening onto a fine Italian racing heritage

FOR THOSE OF you who possibly missed the last episode of *Un Peu d'Histoire*, Maserati is one of the oldest names in motor sport annals and at one time fought tooth and claw with all the greats in Grand Prix racing. The Maserati brothers sprang from that same fertile district around Bologna that has nurtured so many specialist factories and after a period of apprenticeship with Fiat and others, were invited to Isotta-Fraschini to trick up some special competition models. Their work was soon favorably noticed by the folks at Diatto, who commissioned a straight-8 supercharged 2-seater in the mid-Twenties which performed well enough but proved to be too much to handle, financially, and Diatto went under. The brothers forthwith moved over near Modena and commenced to set up shop in a general way, at first making sparkplugs and batteries plus attending to customers' cars. This enterprise proved to be successful so they eventually began to produce various capacities of racing cars, all supercharged I think, which not only were freely sold to all and sundry (unlike general practice of the day) but could be maintained by the factory under contract. Many of these *monoposti* found their ways to far corners of the earth (see past and future Salons) and in fact this practice continued after World War II, for 12 years or so. The marque has won more races than there are tortellini in any Modenese restaurant so the tradition is there.

As with all racing enterprises there was a general shortage of real money, especially before big sponsors like tobacco companies got into the act, and the cost of running a GP program, not to mention design and development, was staggering even then. Noticing that everyone around Modena was producing sports cars and selling them to eager customers, Maserati decided to diversify as well. Commencing in the late Forties, a series of nice little 2-seaters (which could also run fenderless in Formula races) were starting to roll out of the shop and appearing in large numbers especially in the Mille Miglia, THE race to Italians. These well engineered little demons, usually updated versions of former single or twin-cam racing machines, worked their way up

through capacity classes to the classic 300S and 350S roadsters, which shared their engines really with the immortal 250F Maserati beloved of Juan Manuel Fangio, Stirling Moss and many other famous drivers.

The farouche battle with Ferrari, however, was beginning to turn in Enzo's favor so after much to-ing and fro-ing (Maserati had moved in with Orsi's big machine tool factory in Modena by this time) Ing Bellentani was asked to design a larger, stretchable engine for forthcoming seasons, this being in 1954 I think. The result was the first V-8 that Maserati had built since the war (although they had done some unusual things before like a sixteen) and wound up being a 90-degree, twin-cam monster of 4.5 liters approx, putting out 400 bhp approx at 7200 rpm. The Le Mans disaster in 1955 sort of put the dampers on development but an inquiry from Californian (via Sicily) Tony Parravano about a couple of V-8s to power an Indy car started the wheels turning again. After some more development, somewhat eased by the use of proven concepts from the earlier sports-racing Masers in the design, the oversquare V-8 (93.8 x 81.0 mm) was stuffed into a recently crashed 350S roadster and taken to the races in late 1956. Luigi Bellentani had left by this time, seems to me, so new engineers Giulio Alfieri, Valerio Colotti and perpetual works tester Guerrino Bertocchi were there to supervise. The car went like anything in a straight line but was far from being up to Maserati roadholding standards, always a strong point of pride. The next year, therefore, a new design of chassis, the whole car being called the 450S, took the field and it is safe to say that when it didn't break, it won. Only a comedy of errors (see Joel Finn's Maserati book for the whole grisly story) kept Maserati from winning the Constructor's Championship handily and it is ironic that, generally speaking, the breakdowns came from overstressed U-joints and the like. The engine was as strong as an iron stove.

What with recurrent financial crises, political shenanigans, and a change of formula for Appendix J, the 450S found itself out of the picture until about 1959 when its V-8 appeared in a nice



BY HENRY N. MANNEY III

PHOTOS BY MARA POPOVICH

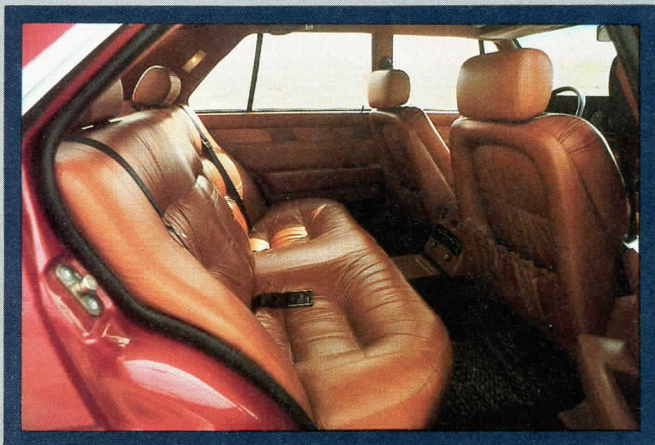
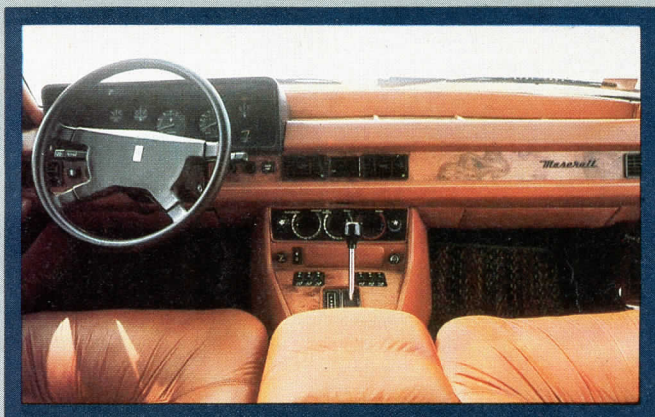
Carrozzeria Touring road coupe at the Turin Show, supplementing the line of 2.0- and 3.5-liter GTs that Maserati was manufacturing to keep their heads up. Termed now the 5000GT, the engine was detuned a bit but at 4950 cc the b x s now measured 94.0 x 85.0 (some have been out to 6.4 liters) giving 385 bhp SAE at 6200 through a 4-speed box to a normal back axle, no less, the chassis being that of the 3500GT. These 5000GTs were still being made, clothed by Allemano, although in what numbers I don't know, when at the Turin Show of 1963 Maserati presented the first daddy car of their career, the Quattroporte or "four-door." *Nouvelle berline d'élite a haut rendement* sang the press reports, adding that it had a handsome body by Frua with square headlights no less, gently rounded contours that presaged the Jaguar S saloons, and of course the now familiar all-aluminum dohc V-8, reduced to 4136 cc (88.0 x 85.0 mm) and giving 260 bhp DIN at 5200 rpm. There was a choice of 5-speed ZF gearbox or Borg-Warner slush pump, the wheels sported discs all around, and there was a De Dion back end to keep the manners nice. Truly an enviable package. I remember going to the factory in Modena with Pete Coltrin and being taken to lunch by works tester Guerrino Bertocchi—yes, the same one—in the new Quattroporte. Any Italian town just before lunch is a hive of activity with Mice, bicycles, scooters, those 3-wheeled Guzzi trucks and pedestrians forming a sort of king-size weaving chicane. Bertocchi achieved 90 mph within a block of the factory and dived straight toward the narrow and arcaded Via Emilia, nicely paved with polished stone flags as befits the ancient Roman main street of Modena. Naturally a copper stood there waving on cross traffic and just as naturally Guerrino continued unabated. Italian coppers around these parts develop a sixth sense and resignedly he turned to block the side road and let us blast through, gently waving one white-gloved finger in admonition, while the seething mass before us parted as the waters of the Red Sea. Everybody in Modena knows Bertocchi.

Anyway I don't recall having much appetite for lunch but afterward we had an exhilarating flit down the Mouse-filled

autostrada before letting me take the wheel on a road up in the hills. I recall the Quattroporte as being an extraordinarily nice car, lovely and solid, with very good manners, although Guerrino mumbled something about "*vecchio prototipo*," and quite a decent performance in spite of a dry weight of about 3600 lb. Race breeding does tell, especially when the breeding goes further than the advertising brochures. Sales went on steadily if not spectacularly, a few examples I think even getting over here, but business affairs always are a trifle difficult for specialist manufacturers and in 1970 the whole shooting match was sold to Citroën, who wanted a real prestige car and got it in the nice, but controversial, Citroën-Maserati. The V-8 lived on, clothed in various disguises. A new/or revised Quattroporte with body by the ubiquitous Ital Design and looking very much like the one we have here was introduced at the 1976 Turin Show, the engine opened up to 4930 cc (93.9 x 89.0 mm) again along with other changes. Control of Maserati had passed in the interim to the so-called De Tomaso group which also owns Moto Guzzi, Benelli, Innocenti, etc. Maserati being what it is, high finance ditto, and the rate of development to please USA-type bureaucrats ditto ditto, the new Quattroporte under discussion may be the 1976 Turin car just getting into proper production but that doesn't make it any less nice.

This new Quattroporte surfaced in the U.S. not quite a year ago at the Greater New York Automobile Show and later at the other side of this vast continent in an LA doodah. Each time it's shown there is much talk of imminent availability and the like, with import numbers of several digits banded about not to say a price of a couple digits more. If all goes as Maserati Automobiles Inc plans (call them—301 760-1813—not me) figure around 1000 per year at \$50,000 per copy, but these are just guesses made by our Engineering Editor and what does he know?

Generally speaking, the basic car remains much the same as the original one with a platform body-chassis unit featuring hefty square section tubing outriggers to carry the suspension front and back. The spaces between the tubing are filled in with, at a guess, ➤

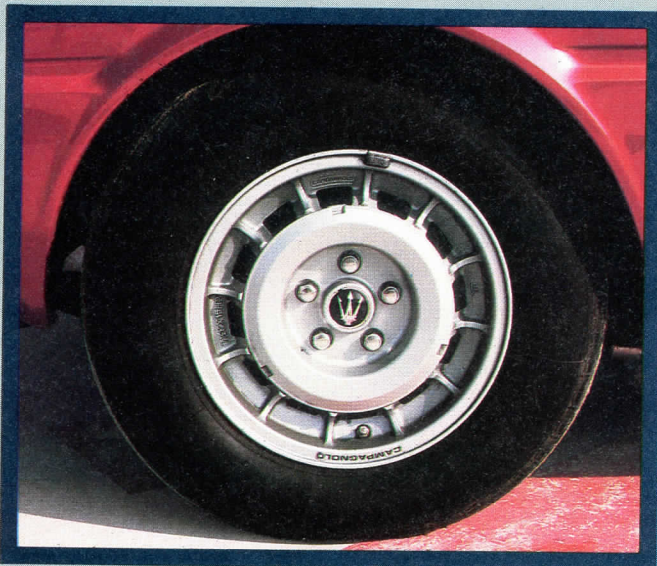
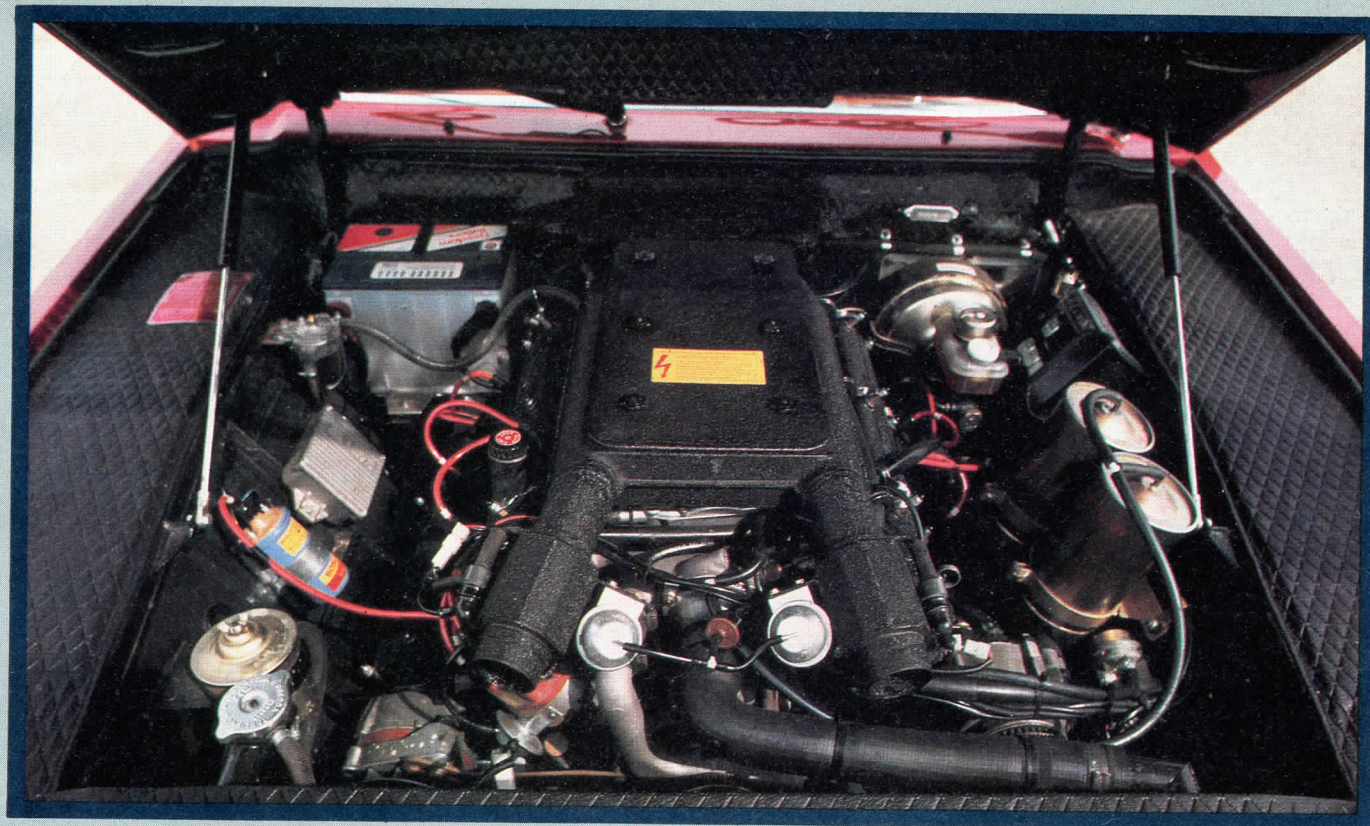


about 2-mm gauge sheet steel which makes for a very stiff structure, especially with the high side sills in the engine compartment. Suspension is wishbone at front, sort of S Jag type trailing arm at the rear to make all corners independent. In an unladen state the Maserati is a trifle tail-high but part of this stems from two adjustable RIV shocks per side back there to cope with fuel and passenger loads, not to mention all the Louis Vuitton suitcases that Milady will pack in the capacious trunk.

Ing Giordano Casarini, who has replaced Ing Giulio Alfieri as chief engineer, was on hand when I drove the car at Riverside International Raceway, and was happy to state that this was a "simple" car and easy to get at or fix. A nice touch is having all the electrics split into three independent departments for front, middle or cabin, and rear, each section having its own enclosure full of detachable plug-in components, just like a modern television set, including 14 warning light detectors to pinpoint any malfunction. Having seen some examples of the electrical devils inhabiting a Roller system and how long it takes to find the trouble, I think that this is a marvelous idea. Especially since the electrics are by Bosch.

With this new design, more like a new car than a re-do according to Ing Casarini, at least they got rid of the Borg-Warner automatic box and switched to a Chrysler TorqueFlite which should ease some service problems anyway, as any car is only as good as the dealer, isn't it? Final drive unit is supplied by Salisbury (3.31:1) which does a lot of big cars like Jags. At the present moment only the *automatische Getriebe* is furnished to the USA as they had trouble enough getting it through the smog people, what with hemispherical combustion chambers and four Weber double-throat 42 DCNF 87 carbs, as evinced by some odd vacuum-operated flaps and canisters at the air cleaner entries. The engine compartment itself is a joy to behold with quilted-effect sills and everything, including the big V-8, black crackle finished. Neat, too.





In April 1968 we said the Quattroporte had more glamor, character and excitement than any other 4-door sedan in the world.

The engine itself has been updated through the years (it doesn't have mousetrap valve springs any more) without leaving out any of the good things like roller cam followers and in spite of having a bottom end, with its five mains, like a Bolinder diesel, that has been modified a bit to improve lubrication and cooling. The crank has been redesigned, along with the whole oiling system, mostly by reducing the width of the journals a trifle and changing the radii, although the overall shape has been streamlined a bit on the throws to cut down churning losses. Consequently Maserati feels that an oil rad is no longer needed; customers living in the desert may think differently, however. Likewise with attention to porting they don't envisage any problems at 8.5:1 or with any of the lousy gasoline these days, which says a lot for the basic design.

I had a short run in the Quattroporte around Riverside, as driver and as passenger, and can report that the deep leather seats are as plush as those in an Englishman's club plus giving good support. The interior is trimmed with the same beige leather and selected briarwood which looks handsome indeed but will require a bit of care to hold up in some semi-tropical climates. The big V-8 shows little sign of being smogified, barring the two rather unsightly catalytic mufflers under the door sills, firing up easily and running cleanly throughout the range thanks to Edoardo Weber. Like most Italian cars, the Maser is quite long-legged and thus doesn't exactly snap one's neck off on acceleration, but after getting on the cams manages to give a good account of itself. With 4000 lb to move along, dragster performance isn't expected and in any case this is a big quality sedan. Where the Maserati heritage shows up is in the overall feel of preciseness and absolute placement on cornering. Everything is stiff and the steering and suspension work. On this early model, the shock absorber design has not been finalized and at low speeds there is a certain amount of stiffness and tumble off bump, an effect magnified by the Michelin 225/70VR-15 XWXs on their Campagnolo wheels. The Maser, naturally, shows a little body lean on corners, a phenomenon familiar to Alfa owners everywhere. Like most Italian cars, the lean doesn't count (there is an alternative anti-roll bar) and the suspension smooths out admirably at higher velocities. Forward, those sick of overadvertised and nastily-made tin boxes! Viva Italia!

