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MASERATI QUATTROPORTE

Italian exotic trident true



SADLY, THE MASERATI Quattroporte is one of the last of a disappearing breed of great cars. It is big, fast, luxurious and very expensive, and instead of being made from reaction-injection-molded urethane and reinforced polyester, or other peculiar materials, it is made of real steel in the best tradition of car building. Furthermore, it has a tough and chunky look to it that says don't mess with me or I'll blow your doors off and, if you drove it around its native Italy, it would cost about \$100 every time you filled it up. Obviously, it's a car for the chosen few.

It is perhaps impertinent to attempt to compare the Quattroporte with its peers, because cars of this nature don't really have peers. However, Aston Martin comes immediately to mind because both cars are similar in character even to their big, 4-cam V-8 engines. Then there is the Jaguar XJ-S, which is similar in performance but much softer in its general character. The Mercedes-Benz 380SEL must be included, but it is altogether a different car because of its almost harsh efficiency. Last comes the new Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit, which combines some of the features of the other three cars although, at \$109,000 for the short-wheelbase model and \$117,000 for the long wheelbase, it is set apart somewhat by its price. However, one wonders if the person who can come up with \$50,000 for a car can't just as easily come up with another \$50,000.

Even if one cannot, there's no reason to write off Maserati completely, though. The company, which is partly owned by Alejandro De Tomaso and partly by the Italian government, has come up with a new and smaller model to complement the

Quattroporte—the Biturbo. This nifty sports sedan is one of the hottest selling up-scale models in Europe, and it should be on sale soon here in America. Production is expected to run 7000–8000 cars per year, with half of those scheduled for the U.S. market.

One's first impression of the Quattroporte is that it is large by today's standards and it has all the traditional qualities of an Italian exotic car. Externally, it is a clean design and the styling tends to accentuate the size. However, its general appearance is marred a bit by a somewhat busy front treatment and high and squared off rear, although the latter feature does allow for a commodious 20.7-cu-ft trunk. Comparing it to the M-B 380SEL, one staff member felt the Mercedes is Wagner and the Quattroporte is Vivaldi, which is a good summation of the difference in character between the two cars.

Not only is the Quattroporte big, but it is also heavy at 4750 lb, which in turn means that it is extravagant and the fuel consumption figure we achieved in normal driving was 9.0 mpg.

Inside, the Quattroporte is the height of luxury and definitely in the Rolls-Royce class, although quite different in spirit. The Maserati is more feminine and less severe in its use of pleated leather and its light wood veneers, which are very much in the Scandinavian manner. Apparently, all the upholstery in the interior is real leather, whereas some luxury car manufacturers cheat by using matching vinyl for the odd bits they think you won't notice. Perhaps this use of leather is the most impressive feature of the interior and the seats are as functional as they are beautiful, which includes the rear seat, where the size of the car

allows for plenty of leg room.

The Quattroporte is certainly one of the most comfortable cars we have ever driven or ridden in, and one can describe the interior as being totally civilized and in the manner in which you would want to live if you were very rich. It contrasts in an interesting way with the interiors of German luxury sedans, which tend to be somewhat sterile and monotonous with a sort of high technology appearance in which function is paramount. The Quattroporte is exactly what the French would describe as a *voiture de grande luxe et de grande tourisme*.

The car is, of course, completely instrumented and the full complement of eight instruments is backed by a dozen warning lights. Among other features, we noted a useful padded console box between the front seats, containing switches to release the trunk lid and the fuel filler, and also an owner's manual bound in leather to match the upholstery.

As might be expected, the Maserati is as fully equipped as a luxury car can be, and one or two items are changed or added by the importers to meet American requirements. For instance, a cruise control is added and the Italian air conditioning is removed entirely and replaced with an ARA unit made in Texas. We've no complaints with the a/c on really hot days; the car is cold enough to freeze Jack Frost. But under some conditions we'd prefer being able to moderate the temp to less bone-chilling levels.

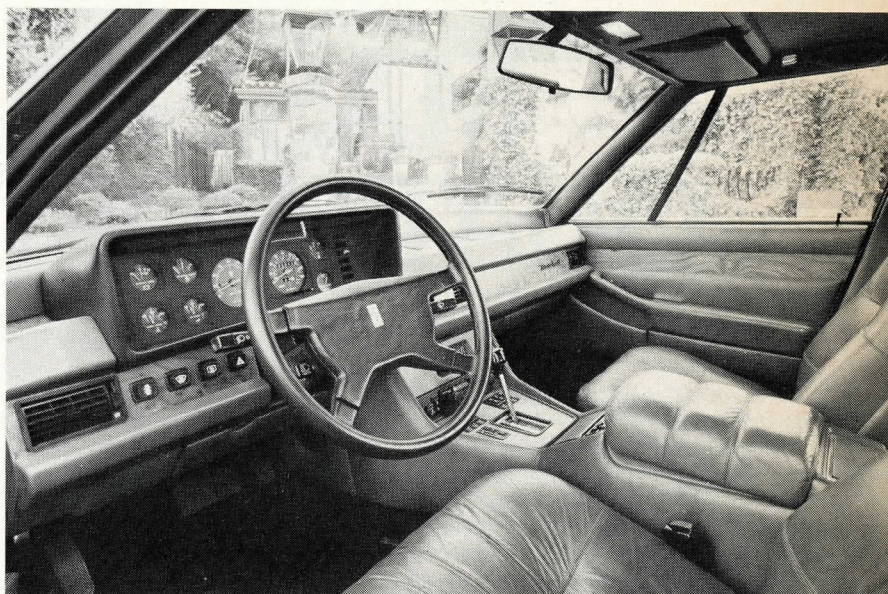
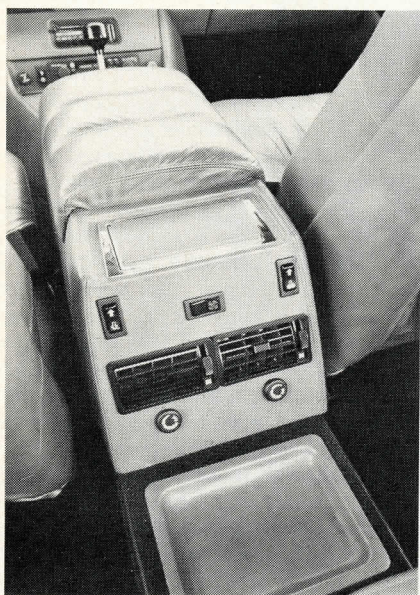
An unusual feature of the car is that it has a heated windshield.

However, this drew criticism from some staff members, particularly those who wear glasses, because under certain conditions they found they could see the squiggly lines of the heating element, which were distracting.

Mechanically, the Quattroporte is built in the best Maserati tradition. By today's standards, the engine compartment is relatively uncluttered and the engine itself has a beautiful black crackle finish. Although it has been around since the mid-Fifties and has been used in a variety of competition cars and even in boats, it is still an excellent power unit for a luxurious sports sedan. With a capacity of 4930 cc and with a pair of overhead camshafts for each bank of the V-8, it puts out 288 bhp at 5600 rpm, and it mates well with the Chrysler TorqueFlite automatic transmission.

A surprising feature of the engine is that it uses four 2-barrel Weber carburetors instead of the fuel injection one would expect. But there is method in Maserati's madness because, first of all, Weber would disown Maserati after such a long association if they were not used, and, second, Maserati is able to use Weber's laboratory for emissions testing without charge, thereby saving a considerable amount of money.

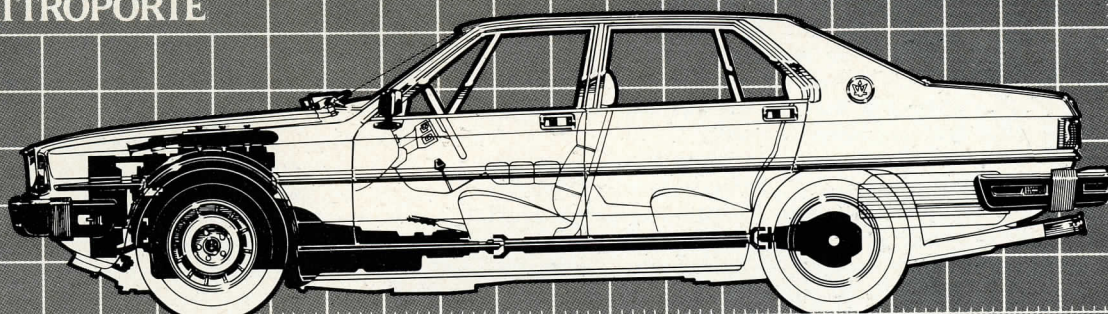
The front suspension is quite conventional with unequal-length A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks and an anti-roll bar. The independent rear suspension is a pretty fair copy of the Jaguar unit, although built on a much more robust scale. This arrangement has lower A-arms, trailing arms, dual coil springs and dual



AT A GLANCE	Maserati Quattroporte	Jaguar XJ6 Series III	Mercedes- Benz 380SEL
List price	\$56,250	\$30,500	\$47,870
Curb weight, lb	4750	4070	4070
Engine	dohc V-8	dohc inline-6	sohc V-8
Transmission	3-sp A	3-sp A	4-sp A
0-60 mph, sec	9.3	10.6	10.1
Standing ¼ mi, sec	17.1	18.2	17.7
Speed at end of ¼ mi, mph	85.0	78.5	77.5
Stopping distance from 60 mph, ft	182	162	167
Interior noise at 50 mph, dBA	68	67	62
Lateral acceleration, g	0.742	0.704	na
Slalom speed, mph	55.2	51.9	56.3
Fuel economy, mpg	9.0	13.5	18.0
Issue	7-81	9-80	1-81



ROAD TEST MASERATI QUATTROPORTE



SCALE: 10 in. (254 mm) DIVISIONS

PRICE

List price, east coast	est \$63,000
List price, west coast	est \$64,000
Price as tested	est \$64,000

IMPORTERS

Maserati Automobiles Inc, 1501 Cayton Ave,
Baltimore, Md. 21227
Maserati Import Co, 19100 Susana Rd,
Compton, Calif. 90221

GENERAL

Curb weight, lb/kg	4750	2157
Test weight	4940	2243
Weight dist (with driver), f/r, %		53/47
Wheelbase, in./mm	110.2	2800
Track, front/rear	60.0/60.0	1525/1525
Length	196.0	4980
Width	74.4	1890
Height	53.1	1350
Ground clearance	4.5	114
Overhang, f/r	36.2/49.6	920/1260
Trunk space, cu ft/liters	20.7	587
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal./liters	26.4	100

INSTRUMENTATION

Instruments: 85-mph speedo, 8000-rpm tach, 99,999
odo, 999.9 trip odo, oil press., oil temp, coolant
temp, voltmeter, fuel economy, fuel level
Warning lights: oil press., oil temp, coolant temp,
voltmeter, low fuel, door ajar, rear-window heat,
windshield heat, seatbelts, hazard, high beam,
directionals

ENGINE

Type	.....	dohc V-8
Bore x stroke, in./mm	3.70 x 3.50	93.9 x 89.0
Displacement, cu in./cc	301	4930
Compression ratio		8.5:1
Bhp @ rpm, SAE net/kW	288/215 @ 5600	
Equivalent mph / km/h	119/192	
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft/Nm	308/418 @ 3000	
Equivalent mph / km/h	64/103	
Carburetion		four Weber (2V)
Fuel requirement		unleaded, 91-oct
Exhaust-emission control equipment:	catalytic converters, air injection	

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	.....	automatic, lockup torque converter with 3-sp planetary gearbox
Gear ratios: 3rd (1.00)	.....	3.54:1
2nd (1.45)	.....	5.13:1
1st (2.45)	.....	8.67:1
1st (2.45 x 2.00)	.....	17.35:1
Final drive ratio	.....	3.54:1

ACCOMMODATION

Seating capacity, persons	.....	5
Head room, f/r, in./mm	37.0/37.0	940/940
Seat width, f/r	2 x 22.0/60.0	2 x 559/1524
Seatback adjustment, deg	.....	50

CHASSIS & BODY

Layout	.....	front engine/rear drive
Body/frame	.....	unit steel
Brake system	11.3-in. (288-mm) vented discs	
front, 10.8-in. (274-mm) vented inboard discs rear;		vacuum assisted
Swept area, sq in./sq cm	268	1729
Wheels	.....	cast alloy, 15 x 7½
Tires	.....	Michelin XWX, 225/70VR-15
Steering type	.....	rack & pinion, power assisted
Overall ratio	.....	na
Turns, lock-to-lock	.....	3.5
Turning circle, ft/m	41.1	12.5
Front suspension: unequal-length A-arms, coil springs,		tube shocks, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension: lower A-arms, trailing arms, dual coil		springs, dual tube shocks

MAINTENANCE

Service intervals, mi:		
Oil/filter change	.....	5000/5000
Chassis lube	.....	3000
Tuneup	.....	15,000
Warranty, mo/mi	.....	12/12,000

CALCULATED DATA

Lb/bhp (test weight)	.....	17.2
Mph/1000 rpm (3rd gear)	.....	21.4
Engine revs/mi (60 mph)	.....	2800
Piston travel, ft/mi	.....	1650
R&T steering index	.....	1.44
Brake swept area, sq in./ton	.....	109

ROAD TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

Time to distance, sec:		
0-100 ft	.....	3.7
0-500 ft	.....	9.5
0-1320 ft (¼ mi)	.....	17.1
Speed at end of ¼ mi, mph	.....	85.0
Time to speed, sec:		
0-30 mph	.....	3.8
0-60 mph	.....	9.3
0-80 mph	.....	15.2
0-100 mph	.....	25.4

SPEEDS IN GEARS

3rd gear (5800 rpm)	.....	123
2nd (6500)	.....	96
1st (6500)	.....	53

FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving, mpg	.....	9.0
Cruising range, mi (1-gal. res)	.....	229

HANDLING

Lateral accel, 100-ft radius, g	.....	0.742
Speed thru 700-ft slalom, mph	.....	55.2

BRAKES

Minimum stopping distances, ft:		
From 60 mph	.....	182
From 80 mph	.....	316
Control in panic stop	.....	good
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop, lb	.....	30
Fade: percent increase in pedal effort		
to maintain 0.5g deceleration in 6		
stops from 60 mph	.....	33
Parking: hold 30% grade?	.....	na
Overall brake rating	.....	good

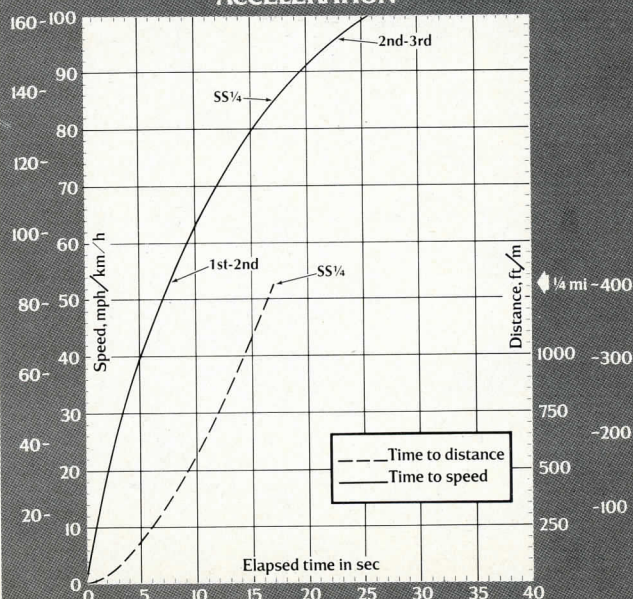
INTERIOR NOISE

Idle in neutral, dBA	.....	58
Maximum, 1st gear	.....	78
Constant 30 mph	.....	65
50 mph	.....	68
70 mph	.....	74
90 mph	.....	81

SPEEDOMETER ERROR

30 mph indicated is actually	.....	28.0
60 mph	.....	57.0
80 mph	.....	75.0

ACCELERATION



tube shocks, and it works just as well on Maseratis as it does on Jaguars. The brakes are big vented discs front and rear and the rears are mounted inboard in the Jaguar manner. The tires are Michelin XWX 225/70VR-15, which are well able to withstand the weight and sustained high speed without excessive harshness. We found they gripped well in the wet and they seemed well matched to the firm suspension damping.

On the road, the Quattroporte is a joy to drive. At first, the sheer size is a bit daunting to someone who is unused to big cars, but one soon becomes acclimatized. The performance is magnificent and the kickdown will get you into low range at 50 mph in the automatic with a resulting boot in the back that is a rare treat in today's cars. Actually, the car works best without a lot of shifting because, in company with the Jaguar XJ-S, the big engine that puts out 308 lb-ft at 3000 rpm can accelerate the car very rapidly on sheer torque alone.

When compared to the Mercedes 380SEL, the Maserati is quicker in a straight line. It takes 9.3 seconds from 0-60 mph compared to 10.1 sec for the Mercedes and in the quarter-mile the figures are 17.1 sec and 85.0 mph for the Maserati against 17.7 sec and 77.5 mph for the Mercedes. However, the Maserati is not quite as maneuverable as the Mercedes, as our slalom test showed. The Mercedes went through at 56.3 mph and the Maserati at 55.2 mph, although the figure for the Maserati is good considering its size and weight.

Around town the car is extremely docile and the dohc V-8 is smooth and remarkably tractable, but once on the open road the throaty Weber carburetors take over, the engine and exhaust notes rise to remind you of the car's heritage and the shifting becomes rather sharp but extremely positive. However, there is a considerable jerk when the transmission drops down at about 30 mph, the only trait that suggests Chrysler's transmission was hardly designed with the rest of this drivetrain in mind.

The handling is Italian at its best in that the car is most predictable and forgiving and, while other cars may corner faster,

it would take a driver of the caliber of Maserati's Guarino Bertocchi to make them do so. The road holding is impressive with a firm, secure and rather neutral feeling and with almost no tire squeal at the limit, as well as minimal body roll and minimal pitch under heavy braking. The brakes on our test car were somewhat disconcerting because they tended to be a little spongy on light application but most effective for such a heavy car when applied hard. The rack-and-pinion steering is a little slow in tight, low-speed corners but at high speeds, it has good feel and just about the right amount of power assistance.

Perhaps one can sum up the characteristics of the Maserati Quattroporte by saying that, when driven at moderate speeds, it has a strong feminine appeal, but the harder you push it, the more masculine it becomes. Altogether, a most sensual car in the best Italian tradition.

