

1989 FERRARI TESTAROSA

Submitted by Frank A. Rubino



I have always admired and coveted the Ferrari Testarosa. The sleek low lines, the wide tail, the cheese grater fins on the side made this one of the most recognizable and iconic Ferrari's ever made. About two years ago I decided I could no longer live without one. So began my quest to find as perfect as possible an example. After looking at almost 30 cars my disappointment level was rising. Some of the cars had way too many



miles on them 30-40-50 thousand. Some of the cars look like tired used cars. And some of them just had too many needs. Normally I would be looking for a project car to do my own restoration upon, but in this case a Testarosa is not for the faint of heart. A Testarosa is an extremely complicated machine with many systems way beyond my capabilities. Having restored many 30's 40's and early 50's cars I know where my comfort level ends. There are probably more parts in a Testarosa than any three cars I own put together. For example, a Testarosa has four-wheel independent suspension, four-wheel disc brakes, five speed transmission coupled to a flat twelve-cylinder four cam four valve mid-engine displacing 4943

ccs with 420 hp at 6300 rpms. The car weighs 3,492 pounds and has a weight distribution of 41% in the front and 59% in the rear.

The Testarosa was produced from 1984-1991 with a total 8,177 cars manufactured. The Testarosa name paid homage to the famed world sports car champion the 1957 Ferrari 250 Testarosa race car. Testarosa, which literally means “Redhead” in Italian refers to the red painted cam covers on the big twelve-cylinder engine.



Right before the pandemic set in R.M. Auctions was offering three Testarosas at their Auburn, Indiana Auction, a red one, a black one and a yellow one. The red one was a nice car, but a little tired, the black one was not a nice car and very tired and the yellow exceeded all of my expectations. This car was totally original in every single component on it. The car was in fantastic condition needing very little attention. 85% of all Testarosas, and probably all Ferraris for that matter, are red. To find one that is not red is unusual and to find one that is yellow is extremely unusual. I love yellow Ferraris as I drive a California T in yellow as my daily driver.

Testarosas have cam belts instead of chains which tend to either stretch or rot or in some case do both.

Ferrari recommends that these cam belts be changed every ten years or 30,000 miles. In order to do so the engine and transmission must be removed from the car as one unit. It is further recommended that not only should the belts be changed, but since the engine is out all of the hoses should also be changed. As one can appreciate this is time consuming and an expensive procedure averaging between \$15-\$20,000. In pricing a car this was a very important consideration as to whether this service had been done and especially so by an authorized Ferrari dealer. This yellow Ferrari that I was so interested in had this cam belt service done 600 miles ago and one year ago to the tune of \$16,780. This obviously made the car even more desirable to me.

Another important factor in a show quality Ferrari is that all of the glass has the Ferrari name, emblem and date code on it. So, it was very important to be sure that all of the glass in this car was correct, which in fact it was. Another item that pleased me greatly was that this car only had 6,000 original miles on it. After thoroughly inspecting this car top to bottom inside and out I could find no flaws. I then engaged in some very serious bidding in order to bring my treasure home. Never one to be satisfied with anything and wanting this car to be perfect enough to qualify for Platinum at Cavallino I decided to go through it.

I had the leather re-dyed the exact same color and



had new carpeting installed. The car has a tremendous amount of cadmium plating such as hinges, door locks and many parts in the engine. I removed every single piece of cadmium plating took it to a plater at the airport and had it all re-plated. I then proceed to remove every nut, bolt and screw visible in the engine compartment and on the engine and polished each and every one of them. The radiator overflow tank and an engine heat shield are the only two parts in the engine compartments that are high gloss black. I removed those two and sent them to Bullseye powder coating to have them done in high gloss black. The car is now as good as I could possibly make it and hopefully good enough to win at Cavallino. It should also be noted that the car has all of its original books and records, all of its service records, its complete original Ferrari tool kit and its complete original Ferrari jack kit with all the belts and tools included in it.



Driving the Testarosa is like driving a 1980's race car. It is mean, brutal loud and tough. It has no power steering, no power brakes. It's not for the faint of heart and you really need to muscle it around, but if you want the feel of a real 80's race car in a street legal vehicle this is as close to it as you will ever get.

