TOM HARTLEY JNR

1988 FERRARI 288 GTO Evoluzione

Rosso Corsa with Rosso

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Mileage	N/A miles	Engine Capacity	2855cc
Body Style	Coupe	Fuel	Petrol
Transmission	Manual	Chassis No.	79888

While the 288 GTO (O for Omologato) was in itself a very impressive machine, Ferrari realised that they needed something even more special to be able to compete with the likes of Porsche, Jaguar and Lancia on the racing circuit. The result was the 288 GTO Evoluzione.

The Evoluzione featured modified bodywork that was made from fibreglass and Kevlar, while its aggressive carbon fibre rear wing gives an indication of the speeds the model is capable of. A cheese-grater front grille, that is typical of Ferrari tradition, was used along with wing mirrors that have hidden air scoops. The weight was trimmed down to just 940 kg, some 220 kg lighter than the standard 288 GTO. The lightweight carbon fibre tub and aluminium floors saw to this weight saving while the stiffness was increased three- fold due to the combination of thinner tubes and carbon fibre.

Its engine is a tuned version of the 2,855 cc, DOHC V8 unit that was fitted to the 288 GTO, but with a higher compression

ratio, greater valve lift and greater valve timing overlap. During production 2 engine specs were developed, a more powerful version for circuit competition and another with rallying in mind and that had a lower power output.

The more powerful engine featured twin IHI (Ishikawajima Harima Industries) turbochargers, a free- breathing Weber injection system with eight throttles and longer inlet manifolds, the result increased the power from the standard GTOâ€™s output from 400 bhp to 650 bhp, enabling an astonishing top speed of 229.9 mph!

Before Ferrari had the opportunity to show the Evoluzione off on the track, fate intervened and Group B was cancelled by the FISA. Throughout the Group B period there had been a number of serious and sometimes fatal accidents but the final blow came in May 1986 during the Tour de Corse when rally driver Henri Toivonen crashed in his Lancia S4, killing both himself and his co-driver Sergio Cresta. The Group B cars were deemed too powerful and dangerous by the FISA and so the series was banned. The cancellation was effective from the 1987 season meaning the 288 GTO Evoluzione was now surplus to requirements.

Despite the cancellation of Group B, Ferrari decided to show off their 288 GTO Evoluzione to the motoring press and the famous Imola test was organised. At this test, Ferrari managing director of that time, Giovanni Razelli, stated â€œLight bodywork materials, such as those used in the Evoluzione and GTO will find their way into our production cars soon and so, true to the Ferrari philosophy, with the GTO project we have given technical goals greater value than commercial success.â€ Razelliâ€™s words were clearly evidenced when the F40 was unveiled to the world and as later discovered, the 288 GTO Evoluzione was the test bed for that icon and the subsequent â€˜Fâ€™ cars that would follow.

The Evoluzione is the definitive link between the 288 GTO and F40, both mechanically and aesthetically, however, its performance figures undermine both its predecessor and its successor. It is a spectacular car that was denied its chance to remind the world just what Ferrari was capable of.

Chassis #79888 was the very last of the five examples produced and built to the highest spec, with the model specific competition engine which produced a whopping 650 bhp (not all examples were built with that spec engine). It was sold new through legendary Ferrari importer Jacques Swaters Garage Francorchamps to noted Ferrari racer Jean Blaton before later being re-purchased by Swaters for his own impressive Ferrari collection.

In the last three decades itâ€™s been owned by some very prominent Ferrari collectors and in recent years, totally restored by model experts Michelotto. It also benefitted from Ferrari â€˜Red Bookâ€™ Classiche certification, the only example of the five we believe to boast such.