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# GREAT ESCAPE

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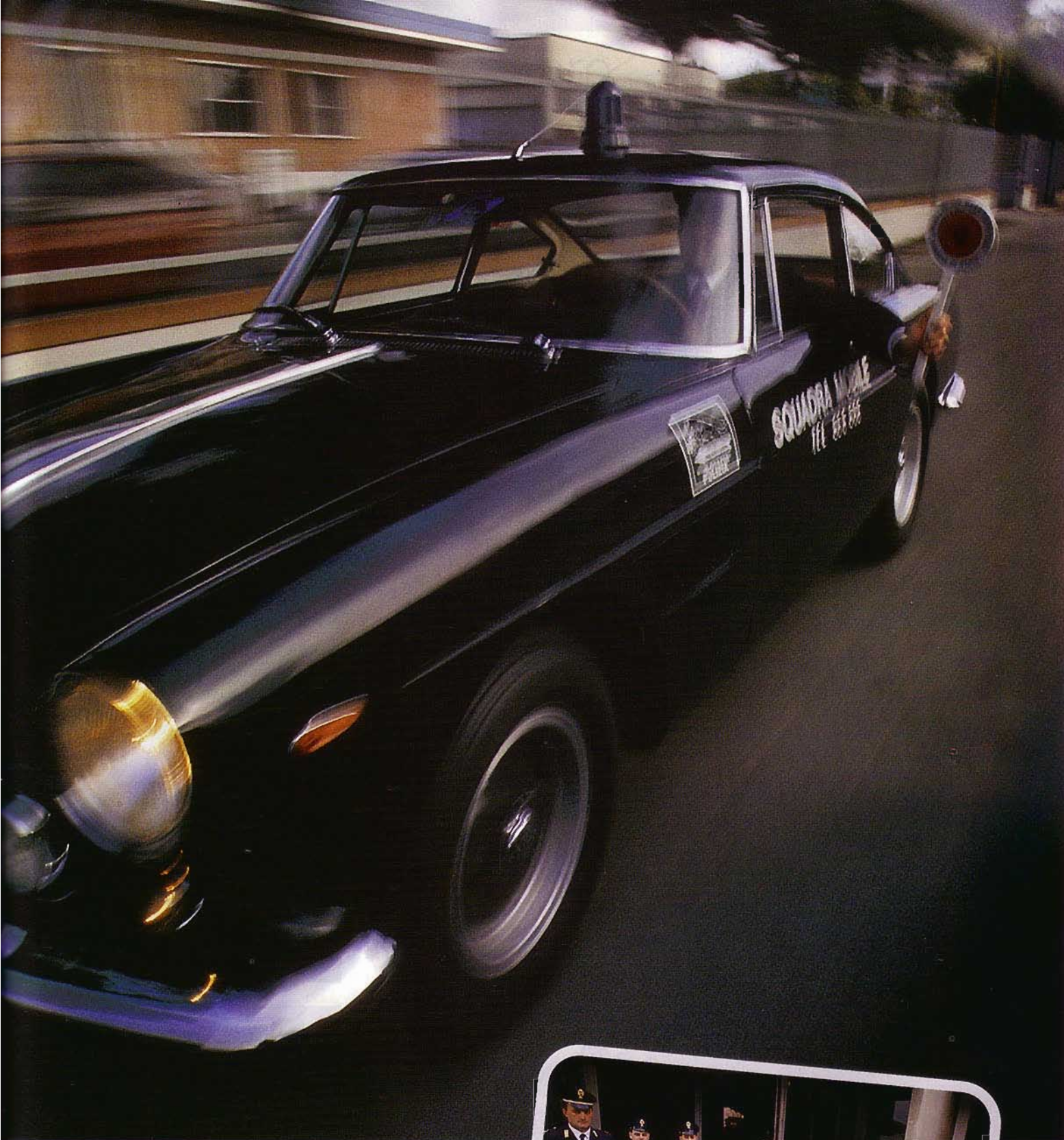
# I fought the law and the law WON

What do you expect if the local force is equipped with a 240bhp Ferrari 250GTE? Giancarlo Reggiani finds if you can't beat 'em, join 'em



**W**e all fondly remember the film *The Italian Job*, where a trio of Mini-Coopers runs rings around the hapless Italian police in their Alfa Giulia saloons. Not entirely realistic but it made the point. Imagine if the coppers in pursuit had been behind the wheel of this Ferrari 250GTE, a snorting, 12-cylinder, 240bhp Italian super-car, gagging to apprehend the most courageous of high-speed villains.

In 1962 Italy's Ministry of the Interior allegedly ordered the Ferrari factory at



Maranello to build 40 special 250GTEs as pursuit vehicles to intercept those hot-blooded *autostrada* speedsters who continued to evade the regular police issue Fiats and Alfa Romeos. A new highway code had been introduced in 1961 and the local speed kings were having problems adapting to the new rule of law.

Some say that this decision was prompted by the then recently released Italian road movie *Il Sorpasso*, which included some great driving sequences in a Lancia Aurelia Spider. The police department felt the need for a performance car of its own to match the exploits of

these revered, romantic screen drivers.

As the ever astute Enzo Ferrari was not entirely convinced that he would receive full payment for these special police interceptors, the factory produced only two examples. These Ferraris were duly delivered and one of the cars was immediately written



Ferrari lasted just one day with the boys in blue

PHOTOS: GIANCARLO REGGIANI

off by a police driver on the first day. Clearly the new highway code was universally baffling, even to the law enforcers.

Following this big fright the second car became the property of a *commissario* of Rome, a Signor Spatafora (funny that - bureaucracies the world over work in the same old ways) and he enjoyed this police car for a good 80,000km. Signor Spatafora used the Ferrari 250GTE to the full. Apparently he was chasing a villain one day (as you do) and the fiend tried to escape down the stairwell of the *Trinita dei Monti* in the *Piazza Navona* in Rome. The brave *commissario* obviously thought that the Ferrari should earn its keep and so he high-tailed down the stairs in hot pursuit. Very commendable. The only worrying fact in all this is that the local paparazzi were on hand, apparently very impressed. What were they doing there? Hmm, sounds like a feature on law enforcement in *Hello!* magazine. This revered car chase was later recreated in a film, and a replica 250 was driven by a stuntman down the stairs of Rome's *Piazza di Spagna*.

Signor Spatafora's Ferrari 250GTE was found



Owner never tried the police radio... honest

abandoned years later by a Signor Cappelli, a truck dealer from Rimini, in a police dumping yard. He cleaned it up and found it to be in remarkably good condition. The Ferrari had covered only 110,000km in chasing getaway drivers of the underworld, and the bodywork and interior remained in very good condition.

The only problem was - no kidding - the Ferrari was missing its flashing blue light and official number plates. But what's the point of a police car without its light? Signor Cappelli managed to source a similar light and enjoyed

the Ferrari to the full, until he got a frantic call from the police department demanding the fully operational police radio be returned immediately. He, of course, exclaimed that he had no idea the radio was functioning. But then he never got a speeding ticket, either... ●

## COP A LOAD O' THIS...



British police had a few exciting cars on the force, too. This Daimler SP250 (above), spotted near Hendon, was a well-loved high-speed pursuit vehicle



No slow Alpines please: police wanted the full-house Sunbeam Tiger V8 to compete with the blaggers in their Jaguars and Zephyrs



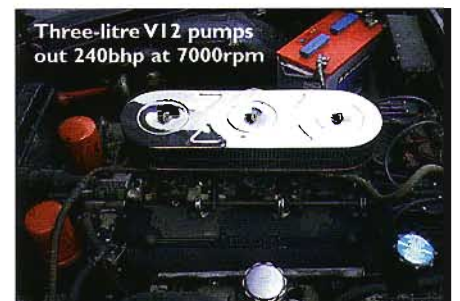
This 1963 MGB was used by the traffic division and was the first car to be crewed by all-WPC teams. They must have had strong arms



The sort of plate to make endless traffic queues a cinch



Full Ferrari grille will intimidate most offenders



Three-litre V12 pumps out 240bhp at 7000rpm