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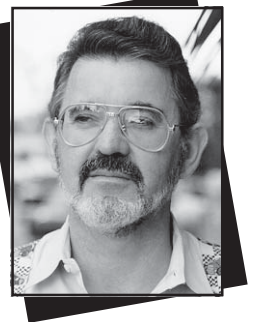
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## Sheehan Speaks

By Michael Sheehan

# Cutting Cars for Fun and Profit

**B**etween 1968 and 1974, Ferrari built what many consider to be the last "real" Ferrari, the 365 GTB/4 Daytona. A front-engined, 350-horsepower, 4.4-liter V-12 cruiser equipped with a six-pack of Weber carburetors, the Daytona offered effortless high-speed touring coupled with stunning acceleration. A properly tuned Daytona will do 60 mph in 1st gear, 85 in 2nd, 115 in 3rd, 150 in 4th and there is one gear left for those brave enough to exceed 170 mph in a road car. The Pininfarina-designed body offered a long nose, abrupt tail and an aggressive "tail up—nose down" stance that has become one of the design statements of the 1960s and 1970s.



In their October 1970 issue, *Road & Track* magazine called the Daytona "the best sports car in the world. Or the best GT. Take your choice; it's both." Buyers obviously agreed, and the Daytona became the most popular front-end V12 Ferrari two-seater ever built, with almost 1,400 coupes and 122 spyders produced.

In the late 1970s, prices for used spyders climbed to the then-shocking heights of almost \$75,000, while coupes were impossible to sell for more than \$25,000. Consequently, a cottage industry was born that converted coupes, often well-used, into spyders. Two well-known restoration shops in Southern California, only a few hundred feet apart, competed for this business. Each shop produced about 25 spyder conversions between 1977 and the early 1980s. Another 25 or so spyder conversions were built in Europe, and 20 or so were built by individuals and small shops. Today, the spyder conversion is more rare than an original spyder, but not nearly as desirable.

While the frame and basic body structure of a factory-built coupe and spyder are identical, all coupes left the factory with fiberglass inner fender wells and a fiberglass bulkhead between the cockpit and trunk, while the factory-built spyders were fitted with steel inner wheelwells both front and rear, and a steel bulkhead between the cockpit and trunk area. Few clients were willing to spend the thousands of dollars required to change these panels, so most spyder conversions retain the fiberglass inner structure, making them slightly more flexible when driven aggressively.

The 122 factory-built spyders also had extra bracing between the front wheel well and the firewall, in the front cockpit footwells and through the rocker sill panels, adding to structural rigidity.

At the peak of the market madness in the late 1980s, Daytona coupes and spyder conversions sold for about \$500,000 while factory spyders went for well over \$1,000,000. Today, coupes and spyder conversions are available for \$100,000 or a little more, with original spyders available in the low \$300,000s. The Daytona remains both the benchmark of the 1960s and '70s super car and today's best bargain in a user-friendly, truly exotic Ferrari. ♦