

IN THE GARAGE: 1999 Ferrari 355 F1 Spider

NOVEMBER 4, 2011

Serie Fiorano #15/100



(<http://gallery.me.com/peterten#100228/DSC03827.1024&bgcolor=black>)

THE ULTIMATE 355. 1999 saw the final year of the 355 (F355 and 355F1). The last 100 of these that were imported to the US were the Serie Fiorano (another four cars went to South Africa and Italy). Each car was numbered and is among the rarest of any production V8 Ferrari. The Serie Fiorano was not merely a standard 355 with a commemorative badge. It was the factory's swan song for what many enthusiasts consider the finest V8 Ferrari ever. The Serie Fiorano featured many Competizione-derived performance enhancements such as a suspension pack and steering rack, along with drilled

and ventilated discs and competition pads, as well as alterations to the computer mapping for added power and torque. Outside, apart from its lower stance, the Serie Fiorano is distinguished by a factory Challenge grill and enameled Scuderia shields. Inside, we find factory carbon-fiber inserts and a competition wheel wrapped in suede. The car presented here is an impeccably maintained, factory original (only a stereo amplifier has been added) with recent major service. It's a sound investment that's ready to show or drive.

OVERALL CONDITION

Given its collectibility, one would expect a Serie Fiorano to be in exceptionally good condition vis à vis a normal production 355 and this one does not disappoint. It is textbook buyer's-guide complete and sorted. Paint is near perfect with only a couple tiny chips on the nose and air intakes. The nose has had a respray for earlier chips. Not too long after its original purchase, the car suffered a low impact hit while parked. Imagine returning from a polo match to find your new Ferrari hit by a drunk driver in a pickup truck (there were several witnesses who were able to detain the driver until police arrived). As horrifying as it must've been at the time, the only damage was cosmetic. No frame or unibody damage whatsoever (see alignment below) and it was repaired to a very high standard. Inside, we find a sumptuous leather interior that is almost perfect; the only flaw being a very slight curling of the passenger airbag (*very* typical of 355s). Otherwise it is immaculate with no wear, no cracking or fading and the factory carbon-fiber accents (expensive option on a stock 355) are a beautiful complement to the 355's functional, driver-oriented cockpit. Stitching around seats and instrument pod is perfect. AC, windows, lights, and all controls/instruments work properly. Carpets are clean, fresh and unmatted. "Sticky" is always an issue with 355s, however—for the moment—this one is 100% sticky free. The semi-power top hydraulics (another one of the Spider's Achilles heels) have been serviced recently and work flawlessly. The canvas top is free of tears, snags or runs and is a deep dark black. Rubber and glass are like new all around and were clearly kept out of adverse conditions. Mechanically, it is a sublime piece of machinery with a recent (at 20,650 miles) major service performed by a former factory mechanic and service manager. The sometimes-problematic F1 transmission has also been recently serviced and is very solid with smooth shifts up and down through all gears. Tires are near-new with excellent (90+%) tread.

DRIVING IMPRESSIONS

We nestle into the sport seats covered in rich leather and turn the key. Behind us the 3.5 litre motor comes to life with a gasp of its 40 valves leading to a sexy growl telling you it's ready to go. Pulling away, all is surprisingly civilized at lower RPMs, but with a more spirited right foot, the motor and factory exhaust compose a symphony. It's a deep, primal, grumble that quickly finds a screaming pitch as it approaches the 8,500 limit. Shifting is smooth and while not microsecond-quick like today's Ferraris, the F1's paddle shifters were very progressive at the time and still provides fast shifts, or at least comparable to a manual. Ride is surprisingly tight for a Spider. There's no shake and rattle over road imperfections. Handling, typical of any Ferrari, is magnificent but with the Fiorano's Competizione derived suspension and brakes, it is on an entirely different level. Its lower center of gravity combined with a wider track and stiffer springs bring the car into a superb balance with outstanding mechanical grip. And despite a lack of electronic aids found in its descendants, it's a very forgiving car. If you're inclined to kick the tail out, it's balance and natural instinct for forward motion make it easy to right. If your style is more fluid, cornering is spot-on with fantastic braking in and gobs of torque out. It exemplifies why the 355 remains what Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson calls one of the best sports cars in the last 50 years.



(<http://gallery.me.com/peterten#100228/DSC03817.1024&bgcolor=black>)



(<http://gallery.me.com/peterten#100228/DSC03757.1024&bgcolor=black>)



(<http://gallery.me.com/peterten#100228/DSC03791.1024&bgcolor=black>)



(<http://gallery.me.com/peterten#100228/DSC03802.1024&bgcolor=black>)



(<http://gallery.me.com/peterten#100228/DSC03814.1024&bgcolor=black>)



(<http://gallery.me.com/peterten#100228/DSC03810.1024&bgcolor=black>)

from → All Cars, Ferrari

No comments yet

[Blog at WordPress.com.](#)

[The Vigilance Theme.](#)

Follow

Follow “moto+match.com”