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## Featured Vehicles

### California Spyder Replica

California Girl--She's the One Ferris Bueller Saw on His Day Off

By Steve Temple  
Photography: PPC Photographic, Wes Allison

Ferrari fans probably remember the forgettable movie Ferris Bueller's Day Off better than cinema fans. That's because the scene stealer was a stolen '59 California Spyder that, among other misadventures, crashed through a plate-glass window. A little-known fact is that the stunt stand-in was a replica called the Modena. The company that manufactured this vehicle changed hands a few times, only to suffer an untimely demise due to poor management.

Nothing was ever faulty about the car itself, so Bill Eikner and Louis Linxwiler Jr. of Precision Design, with the help of Mark Goyette, the Modena's original designer and builder, have introduced an updated version called the GT250 California. And man are we glad, because this is one fabulous shape. Lines like these will always be in demand as long as there are folks who appreciate such graceful and classy styling. Note, however, that Precision's body and trim are not exact copies of any single model year of the authentic item. Instead the company has merged the best elements that appeared on several versions from 1959 to 1963. Still, Precision preserved the precise tone and feel of the original, right down to the stippled, black dash, the Connolly biscuit-colored leather seats and the Beverly Hills bank carpet in the footwells.

Not only that, the ride is just as rich, with a luxury feel that would make devout believers out of the most jaded and cynical critics of replicas. The car cruises smoothly and solidly at speed for grand touring in style. Since this particular vehicle was completed just in time for publication, no chassis tuning had been done yet. So we'll have to hold off on specific suggestions about sway bars and the like and supply figures for acceleration and braking after further road testing. Still, our first impression is that Precision's GT250 California delivers generously on the promise of its evocative and provocative form.

The demo shown here was outfitted with a 289 Ford (personally wrenched on by Eikner for an output of about 300 hp) that uses street-ported 351W heads with roller rockers and an Edelbrock Performer manifold and 600cfm carb. Although he admits to having a bias toward Ford powerplants, at our suggestion Eikner made sure a Chevy 350 would have no trouble dropping onto the frame. He has also received inquiries about fitting Jaguar and Ferrari V12s into the engine bay, and these can probably be accommodated as well. With a small-block Ford, the car has more than adequate power if you keep in mind that this type of vehicle is not intended so much for baiting musclecars at stoplights as it is for gathering a crowd of inquisitive admirers.

How much will this sort of allurements set you back? Surprisingly enough, the kit is pretty affordable, with an introductory price of only \$9950. For this sum, you get a hand-laminated fiberglass body (with the hood, doors and trunk lid installed), a tubular, backbone-type frame, custom A-arms for the front suspension, a front grille, side intakes and a fuel cell.

For \$14,950, the Home Builder's Kit adds items such as trim, hardware, tinted windows, suspension components, a steering rack and the like. The Deluxe Kit (\$21,500) supplies virtually everything required to complete the vehicle, from the interior upholstery to the wiring harness to the complete Ford 8-inch rearend. These various stages of kits allow builders some flexibility. If they already have some components or can get a better price on them, their initial investments can obviously be kept lower.

For those not inclined toward assembly, completed vehicles begin at a price of \$42,000. While we're on the subject of financial items, we should mention that Precision's sales agreement includes arrangements to place deposits in escrow in a trust account, to be released only upon the final shipment of the order. (Kit customers who have been burned by unscrupulous companies will probably appreciate this feature the most.)



For that first-cabin look in keeping with the upscale aura of the car, Connolly leather upholstery is an optional upgrade.

And here's a historical footnote. We discovered that the last original long-wheelbase version of the California Spyder was completed in February 1960 and sold to Mr. Robert Petersen of Los Angeles. (Ferrari built short-wheelbase models until 1963, with a total limited-production run of about 100 vehicles.) You may recognize that customer's name as the founder of this magazine's parent company, Petersen Publishing. Now we know what Mr. Petersen does on his day off. KC



They hit you where you live: Finishing touches include a wood-rim Nardi steering wheel and Wilton leather-bound carpeting in the footwells.



Dayton knock-off chrome wire wheels are a must on 1950s-style sports cars. Included with this \$1800 option are adapters and a lead hammer for tapping the wing nuts.



At the front are 11-inch vented disc brakes, custom dual wishbones with coil-over shocks, and Mustang II spindles and a steering rack.



The Ford 8-inch rearend is located by four trailing arms and a Panhard rod.



A tubular, backbone-type frame surrounds the drivetrain.



Additional frame members secure the aluminum, internally baffled fuel tank.

#### SOURCES

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