

The Raging Panther

by Daniela Zacconi *In the Sixties the Rome Flying Squad used a 250 GT 2+2; it is the only police force in the world to have used a car from Maranello.*



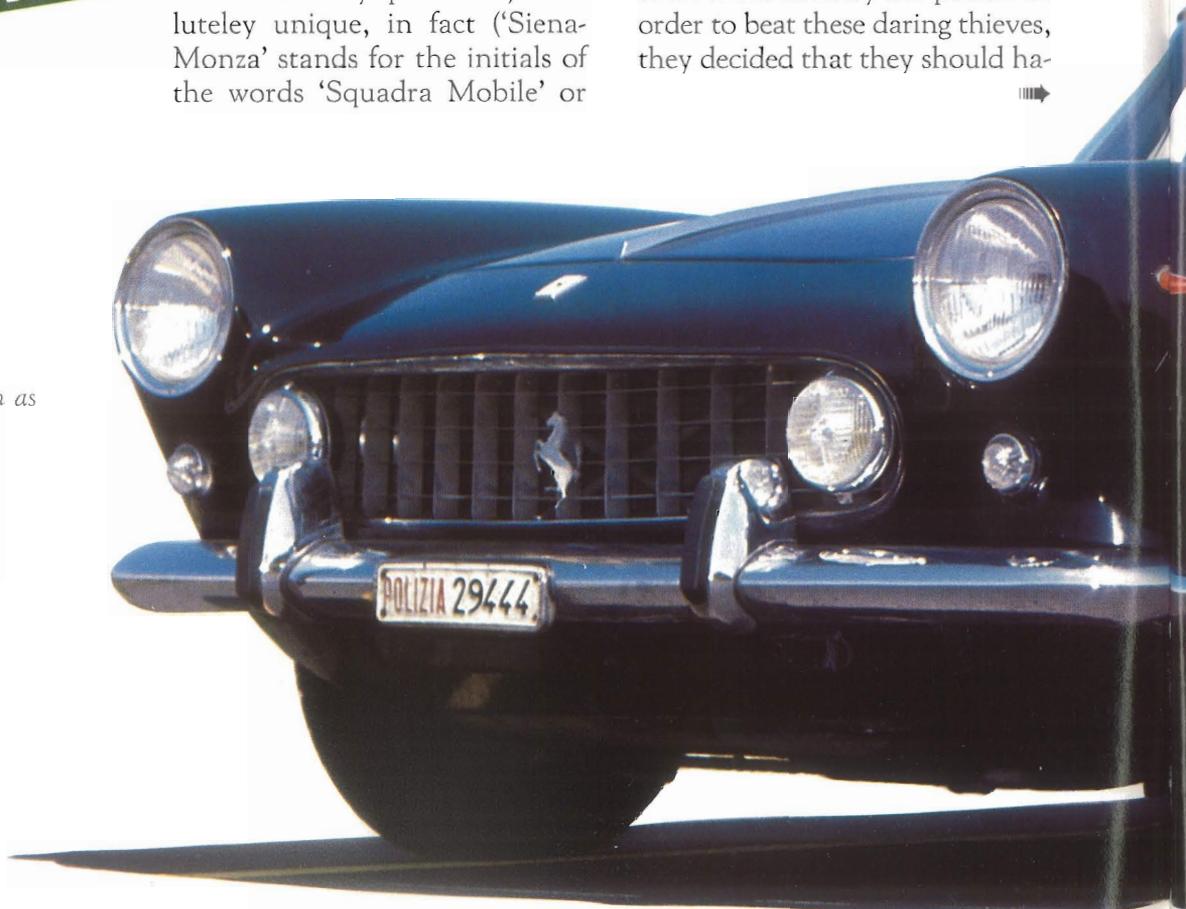
“**T**his is Doppia Vela calling Siena-Monza 44 ...” That is one of many messages which the Rome Flying Squad police (code name ‘Doppia Vela’ - ‘double sail’) sent out to one of their ‘panthers’. This one was a very special car; absolutely unique, in fact (‘Siena-Monza’ stands for the initials of the words ‘Squadra Mobile’ or

‘Flying Squad’, while the numbers correspond to the last two digits of the number plate).

In those days Rome was plagued by a growing number of hardened criminals. Even worse, these people used means of transport which were considerably faster than those used by the police. In order to beat these daring thieves, they decided that they should ha-



The police cars were known as “panthers” because of their black colour and the badges on their sides. Two shots of the powerful machine devoted to the fight against crime.







HISTORY

ve a fast but safe car. The Alfa 1900 used by the police was too heavy and not easy to handle. What the police needed was a thoroughbred. They immediately thought of the Prancing Horse. 'Siena-Monza 44' was the result of this decision: a 250 GT 2+2, one of the cars delivered to

the Rome Flying Squad.

Originally, Modena delivered two powerful gran turismo cars to the forces of law and order, both production cars, but fitted out like all the other police cars: the siren, the flashing light on the roof, two-way radio, the words 'Squadra Mobile' on the sides and the colour, traditionally black. But one of the two Ferrari 250s was

totally written off in a serious accident only a few days after being delivered. This led the police to set up a driving course to improve the fast-driving skills of some of their members.

A small group was selected: among them was Officer Spatafora who later became famous for his legendary descent of the steps

250 Gran Turismo coupè Pininfarina 2 + 2

Specifications

Engine

Number and arrangement of cylinders: 60-degree V12

Bore and stroke: 73x58.8 mm

Total cylinder capacity 2953.211 mm

Compression ratio: 8.8:1

Maximum power at 7000 rpm: 240 bhp

Chassis

4-speed synchronized gearbox, direct drive in 4th gear

Disc brakes on all 4 wheels, mechanical hand brake operating rear wheels

Wheelbase: mm 2600

Front track: 1378 mm

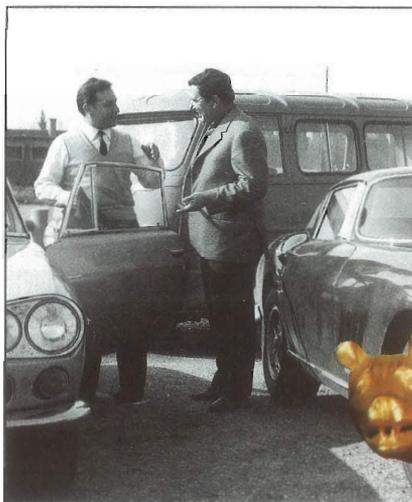
Rear track: 1394 mm

Vehicle weight empty: 1280 kg

Fuel tank capacity: 100 litres

Fuel consumption per 100 km: approx. 16 litres

Wire wheels for tyres:
650x15 or
185x15



The group of police officers photographed on the Modena Autodrome after the driving course. The six drivers then presented their instructor Roberto Lippi with a beautiful trophy of the Capitoline wolf.

Police Officer Armando Spatafora, in conversation with course instructor Roberto Lippi during a "driving lesson".





of Trinità dei Monti, during a dangerous chase through the streets of Rome. So they were invited to Maranello and handed over to the attentions of the test drivers of Ferrari under the expert guidance of Roberto Lippi of the Experimental Department.

The learner-drivers spent some ten days in Maranello, just enough time to be put through a wide range of tests and to acquire complete control of the car in every situation. This training took place both on the track and on the road: some of the simulations were so realistic and dangerous that one day they were actually pursued by the official cars of the road police on the *Autostrada del Sole*!

The black Ferrari, with the number plate 'Polizia 29444' went into action with great panache. It was driven mainly by the now legendary Armando Spatafora, whose determination and zeal are still remembered today. This sometimes led to minor accidents, but during the car's six years of service it achieved excellent results.

Then, as often happens, the Ferrari 250 came to be thought antiquated. The car park of the Flying Squad in Rome became filled with more modern cars, pos-

sibly more manageable and undoubtedly less costly than the glorious Ferrari, which was then retired.

Not much is known about the rest of the car's life; after a long period of oblivion, like all things no longer useful, the Ferrari was sold at an auction after which it seemed to disappear into thin air.

But last year a small group of car-lovers, officers and officials of the police force led by Dr. Luciano Caporali, founded the *Scuderia di Pantere Storiche* (Scuderia of the Historic Panthers) with the object of tracking down and restoring the cars which from 1945

to 1970 had played a part in the history of the police.

As a result of this initiative and perseverance, many historic cars, from the Lancia Augusta to the Alfa 1900 and the more recent Alfa Romeo 2600 and Giulietta TI, have been brought back to life. The black Ferrari 250 has naturally been given a place of honour among all these veterans, having been discovered after a long search and restoration.

So, like her companions in uniform, the Ferrari 250 of the Flying Squad has regained some of its past glory, by bringing back to life a small piece of history. ♦

