Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Enzo Ferrari and Me

Elisa Leonelli · Friday, December 22nd, 2023

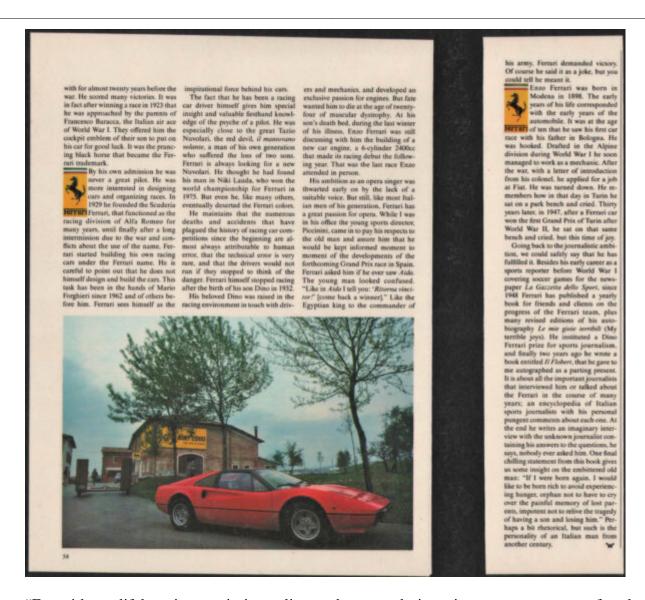
It's very exciting to me that a movie about Enzo Ferrari was filmed in my hometown of Modena last summer, and that on December 25 *Ferrari* will be released in U.S. theaters for everyone to enjoy. Directed by Michael Mann it stars Adam Driver as Ferrari, Penelope Cruz as his wife Laura and Shailene Woodley as his mistress, Lina Lardi.



I will not review the movie and spoil your enjoyment (click here for trailer), but take you back to April 1979 when I interviewed Enzo Ferrari, then 81, and photographed the Ferrari factory and racetrack.

I wrote an article that was published on *Westways*, the AAA travel magazine. Read some excerpts below.





"Ferrari has a lifelong interest in journalism and apparently is curious to meet a young female journalist from his own town. But suspicious and defensive as usual he puts one condition: no pictures of him and no tape recorder. Of course I am disappointed, but the magnetism of the man conquers me too and I certainly can't pass up the opportunity of chatting with him, even if the event will go unrecorded."



Ferrari 308 GTB 1979

"He maintains that the numerous deaths and accidents that plagued the history of racing car competitions since the beginning are almost always attributable to human error, that the technical error is very rare and the drivers would not run if they stopped to think of the danger. Ferrari himself stopped racing after the birth of his son Dino in 1932."



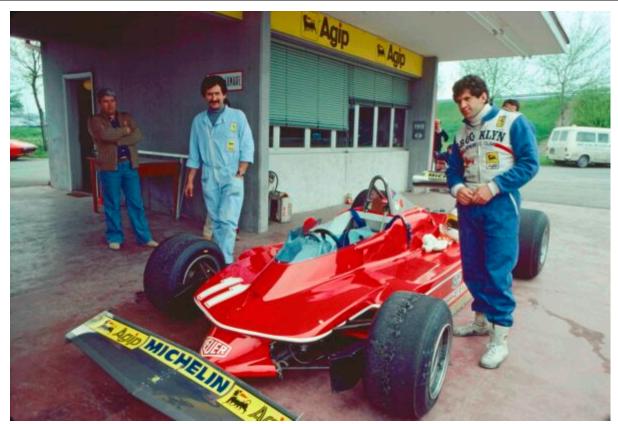
Ferrari 308 GTS 1979

"His beloved Dino was raised in the racing environment, in touch with drivers and mechanics, and developed an exclusive passion for engines. But fate wanted him to die at the age of 24 of progressive muscular dystrophy."



Nikki Lauda 1975 Ferrari Formula One 312T

"While I was in his office the young sports director, Piccinini, came in to pay his respects to the old man and assure him that he would be kept informed moment to moment of the developments of the forthcoming Grand Prix race in Spain. Ferrari asked him if he ever saw *Aida*, the Verdi opera. 'Like in Aida I tell you: Ritorna vincitor! (come back a winner).' Like the Egyptian king to the commander of his army, Ferrari demanded victory. Of course he said it as a joke, but you could tell he meant it."



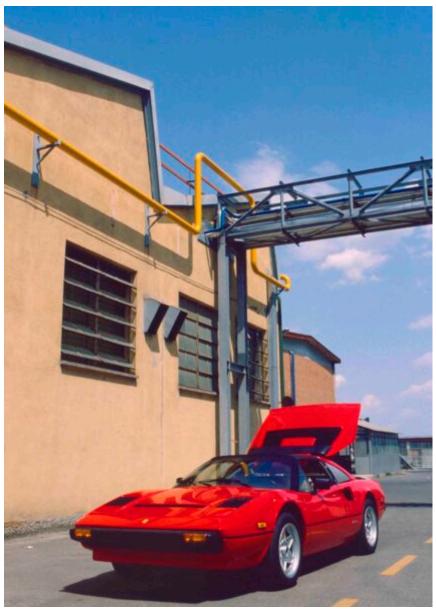
Jody Scheckter testing Ferrari 312 T4 1979

"One final chilling statement from his autobiography *Le mie gioie terribili* (*My Terrible Joys*) gives us some insight on the embittered old man: "If I were born again, I would like to be born rich to avoid experiencing hunger, orphan not to have to cry over the painful memory of lost parents, impotent not to relive the tragedy of having a son and losing him." Perhaps a bit rhetorical, but such is the personality of an Italian man from another century."



Piero Lardi 1979

Related to the *Ferrari* movie storyline, but not a spoiler, see above a 1979 portrait of Piero Lardi at age 33. In 1990 he would request and obtain the last name of Ferrari, his father.



Ferrari 308 GTB 1983

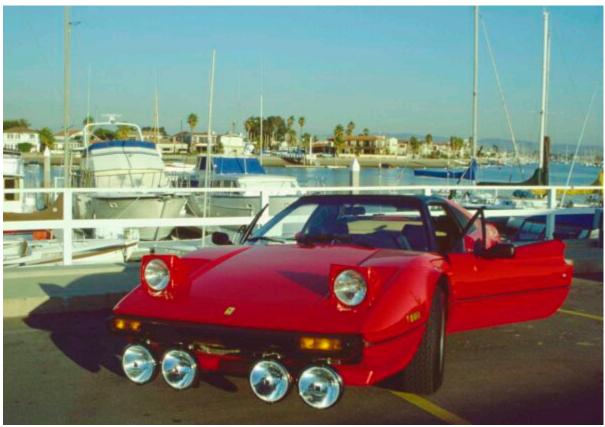
In May 1983 an American friend wanted to visit the Ferrari factory, so we went, and I was granted permission again to take more photographs.

You may see the 1979 and 1983 Ferrari factory photos at this link in the Elisa Leonelli, Photojournalist Collection at Claremont Colleges Digital Library



Ferrari Formula 1, Long Beach Grand Prix.

In March 1983 I photographed on assignment the Long Beach Grand Prix with Ferrari Formula 1 cars in the race. Click here for photos.



Ferrari 308 GTE Los Angeles 1983

In 1983 I photographed in Los Angeles for *AutoCapital* magazine the Ferrari 308 GTE piloted by Doug Turner and David Diem that set a cross country record in the US Express race. Click here for

more photos.

In March 2004 I visited the Ferrari museum in Maranello, in May 2013 the Enzo Ferrari Museum in Modena.

As a film critic, I have to point out other depictions of Enzo Ferrari on the big screen: Sergio Castellitto played him in *Ferrari* (2003) by Carlo Carlei, Augusto Dallara in *Rush* (2013) by Ron Howard, Remo Girone in *Ford v Ferrari* by James Mangold, Gabriel Byrne in *Lamborghini* (2022).

Not coincidentally the Maserati factory is also in Modena, and the Lamborghini museum in a small town near Modena. That is why this area of Emilia Romagna is nicknamed "Terra dei motori" (Motor Valley).

Just like Luciano Pavarotti and balsamic vinegar, the Ferrari sport cars are among the most well known exports from Modena.

You may read these articles for more details about my beloved hometown.

Italian Bread, Modena-style. October 18, 2017

Fresh Pasta, Modena-Style, January 17, 2018

Pavarotti and Me, June 26, 2019

Here's a map of Ferrari movie locations in Modena (in Italian)



Click to enlarge

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