

WHAT THE NOISE



For our first dealer drive feature at Tom Hartley, Jonty drives one of his all-time favourite Ferraris, the 360 Challenge Stradale.

Written by: Jonty Wydell

DEALER DRIVES

Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale

2004 (04)
12,000 miles
£164,950

What is the best Ferrari you can buy outside of the big five (288, F40, F50, Enzo, LaF) or the many historic cars now fetching over £1 million? If you ask me, the answer to this question is simple – the 360 Challenge Stradale.

Although I had already driven a couple of Challenge Stradales in the past on both road and track, I instantly had that tingily excited feeling when I found out I would be driving this one at Tom Hartley. Unlike the Strads I had driven before, this one isn't resale red, but extremely rare Bianco Avis – white! I had checked out the car on the Tom Hartley website and was undecided whether that

white with contrasting blue Alcantara dash and black carbon race seats worked on a Strad. Glancing into the preparation bay at Tom Hartley, though, I laid my eyes upon the car in all its glory on a very chilly February morning and concluded that it works very well indeed!

We were greeted by Carl in the showroom whilst ogling the impressive stock of hypercars. On one side of the showroom sat a LaFerrari and an Enzo between two McLaren P1s, all of which made the silver Bugatti Veyron and Porsche Carrera GT seem almost understated by comparison. Peering over a 675LT, as the back of the showroom was a

row of Testarossas, two of the 80s originals in red and silver plus a much later F512M with the open headlights.

Eventually, I was able to peel my eyes away and head back outside to the white Strad which was now fired up and waiting to be driven. With this being the first dealer drive feature on one of his cars, Carl was slightly nervous as myself and Riad made ourselves comfortable in the baron cockpit of this legendary car. I offered to leave the keys to the Bentley GT V8 S I had arrived in as collateral, although Carl quickly pointed out that the Bentley wasn't actually mine but was on loan from XL Leasing!

With the car still not quite up to temperature, I maintained a steady cruise down the road to our first photoshoot location next to a canal which had frozen over. The view of the car reflecting in the water was amazing and gave me chance to have a proper look around the car. In most cases, blue interiors just don't work, but the contrast of white against the blue and black just seems to blend nicely here. I was slightly disappointed that the car had the standard seatbelts, which do at least make getting in and out easier, but personally, I'd have to install a set of the more commonly seen harnesses for track day use. During this

time, Riad concluded that the white coachwork, although beautiful, was a pain to photograph on such a bright sunny day and would be more suited to lower light (I can only imagine how cool this car would look roaming the streets at night). We therefore went in search of some shelter from the winter sun to see if our suspicions were right, and to stop Riad moaning.

By now the car was up to temperature and the roads were both quiet and dry, so it was time to press the Race button on the centre console and unleash one of the Challenge Stradale's distinct features – its noise! In a world where supercars

are now engineered to sound a particular way and produce the exact same pops after every downshift, the Strad is so refreshing – it's one hundred percent hardcore rock and roll. The aggressive downshifts are spine-tingling and every one of them sounds slightly different. Then there is the incredible noise under power which is relentless until you have to lift for a corner. It sounds so good that I could quite easily finish the write up at this point and forgive the car for any drawbacks, but there is so much more to go on about.





For me, this car was the pinnacle of the V8 Ferraris. By the time the 360 CS was built, Italian reliability issues were a thing of the past, but traction control was still in its early stages; there's no five-stage system to make you look like a driving hero here, and that's a good thing! It's either on, which stops the fun, or off, which could have you acquainted with a hedge or a ditch in no time if you get carried away. This is why I love the Strad so much – no one really makes a car like this anymore.

The 430 Scuderia which followed on the track special V8 range was still very good but, for me, lost some of the Strad's charm. The Spécialé went even further with this

and could even be considered a civilised daily. The Spécialé will defy the laws of physics with how quickly it will go around corners, but it's not always about that. For me, the buzz of driving outweighs lap times on a road car, and not a lot gives the buzz of driving like the Strad does.

The market seems to agree as Challenge Stradale prices have soared. Just five years ago, you could pick up a right-hand drive example for around £80k. For the same car today, you'd be looking at around £220k. As I browse through the classifieds to see what's currently on offer, most left-hand drive cars seem to be up for around £180k, but a similarly specced car in rare Bianco Avis (like buses, you

never see them then two come at once!) was listed at an eye-watering £235k, making the £165k asking price for this car seem exceptionally good value!

I really do love the Strad for so many reasons, it is possibly the only Ferrari since the F40 which can be mentioned in the same breath when speaking about its credentials as a race car for the road and, when the time came to return it, I was coming up with every bit of man maths possible to work out how I might be able to buy one as I can only see values continuing to rise as their cult following grows.

Carl was waiting for us on our return, he had a slightly less worried look on his face by

this point and I had a giant grin on mine. After a quick cuppa, there was just enough time to have a look around the new Tom Hartley showroom which is now nearing completion. With three levels, glass floors, a balcony and turntable in the plans, this is going to be one special looking place. Carl even showed us what promises to be one of the best offices imaginable for any supercar fan – it will feature curved glass walls to look out over the middle level of the showroom and a glass floor under his desk to look down on whatever car is positioned below his feet. I can't wait to see it finished. Watch this space for an SCD meet there in the near future! ●



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14	CONTINENTAL GTC V8 'S' Onyx Black/Hatspur & Beluga Hide, 20" Open Spoke Alloys, Quad Exhaust, Factory Exterior Styling, Massage Seats, Sports Exhaust, Contrast Stitching, 32,500m.....	£81,950

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54	CARRERA GT GT Silver/Ascot Brown Leather, Bucket Seats, Luggage Set, Air Con, Porsche Online Pro Radio, Full History File, Totally As New, 599m From New.....	£POA
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17	991.2 CARRERA GTS Guards Red/Black Leather & Alcantara, 20" Turbo S Alloys, Chrono Plus Pk, Carbon Interior Pk, Sports Exhaust, H/Seats, 3,000m, As New.....	£99,950
65	991 GT3 RS 4.0 LHD GT Silver/Black Alcantara & Leather, 918 Spyder Bucket Seats, RS Pedals, FI Exhaust, Clubsport Pk, PCCB, Front Lift, Dynamic Engine Mounts, Massive Spec, 4,500m.....	£179,950
66	991 GT3 RS 4.0 LHD Lava Orange/Orange Alcantara & Black Leather, Silky Black Alloys, PCCB, Front Axel Lift, 918 Bucket Seats, Sports Exhaust, Michelin Decals On Tyres, Sports Exhaust, 8,000m.....	£174,950
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17	McLAREN 720S LAUNCH EDTN Glacier White/Black Leather, Lux Spec, Carbon Fibre Upgrade Pk 1, Front Lift, Visual Carbon Structure, Soft Close Doors, Carbon Fibre Intakes, Carbon Fibre Structure.....	£234,950
67	McLAREN 570S SPIDER Ventura Orange/Black & Orange Alcantara, Front Lift, Super Lightweight Alloys In Stealth, R'Camera, Luxury Pk, Orange Brake Calipers, As New, 200m.....	£179,950
65	McLAREN 650S LHD Brilliant Silver/McLaren Orange, Sat Nav, Parking Sensors, Carbon Side Intakes, Great Spec, Delivery Mileage.....	£129,950
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61	MERCEDES-BENZ SLS Matte Designo Allantite Grey Magno/Classic Red Designo Leather, Black Twin Spoke Alloys, COMAND With Nav, Carbon Interior Pk, R'Camera, Immaculate, 31,000m.....	£144,950
05	FORD GT Bright Red/Black Leather, Whipple Supercharger (800BHP), Heffner Exhaust, Macintosh Sound System With Subwoofer, KW Suspension With Adjustable Height, White Livery, 10,500m, Stunning.....	£234,950

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