



Blue Swan

This 330 GTS wowed the crowds at the 1967 Geneva Motor Show, but fell on hard times in later years. It's now been restored to its original beauty.

STORY BY WILLIAM EDGAR PHOTOS BY WILLIAM EDGAR, COURTESY VIRTUOSO PERFORMANCE

When I first met this 330 GTS (s/n 09627), it was skewered like a chicken on a chassis rotisserie at Scott Drnek's Virtuoso Performance shop in Hayward, California, on the eastern shore of the San Francisco Bay. Covered in grey epoxy, the Ferrari's stripped skin and bones felt a bit pathetic, and very far removed from the silver-blue *Azzurro*

beauty it had been when it was unveiled at the Geneva Motor Show 45 years ago.

The car's current owner, Steve Thein, a San Diego-based Ph.D. involved in the study of memory loss and Alzheimer's disease, used to own a 330 GTC, but for years had wanted an open-air GTS. When the opportunity arose in 2009, he sold the former to buy the lat-

ter, the 13th of 100 330 GTS's produced between 1966 and '68. While it had history, the Ferrari was black and a bit grungy at the time. Thein wanted to return it to factory-fresh, Geneva '67 condition, so he turned to Drnek, who had been maintaining Thein's historic racing cars for more than a dozen years.

"When we got the GTS,"

says Drnek, "it looked like it'd led an illustrious life and had plenty of stories to tell. The black paint job on it wasn't very good, the panel fit wasn't very good and most of the details—like the way it looked under the hood and trunk—were beat up. There was a fair amount of surface corrosion. It was a pretty car, but it was an old car, so we had plenty of work to do."



TOP S/n 09627 (XXXX) at 1967 Geneva Motor Show. ABOVE When Steve Thein bought it, the once-blue Ferrari had been painted black. BELOW Rotisserie mounting reveals 330 GTS's factory fiberglass floorpan.



To kick off this restoration, Drnek and crew began by photographing everything, recording crucial evidence about what was brought in and how it had to go back together. This documentation would continue throughout the car's stay at Virtuoso: More than 1,200 pictures would be shot from the time the project commenced in July 2009 until it was completed in April 2012.

Next, Virtuoso's body and paint specialist, Charles Fernances, disassembled the Ferrari. "Every nut and bolt came out of this car," Fernances tells me. "We had a couple of guys pull the engine, and we pulled all the wiring out."

While taking a car apart is usually easier than putting it back together, the Virtuoso crew ran into several challenges with s/n 09627. "The wheel bearing were frozen onto the front spindles with a force we had never seen before," says Drnek. "The Ferrari pulling tools would not take them apart—nothing would take

them apart. We ended up making a special carbide long-end mill that allowed us to reach down inside the hub assembly and machine away part of the bearing, so we could destructively disassemble the bearing to get the two parts separated without damaging the spindle.

"Another problem we had was on the engine, with corrosion between the cylinder head studs and the heads. Removing the heads required making a special tool that would allow us to put in bolts that would push down on the studs to carefully remove the heads without warping or damaging them."

Looking at the broader restoration picture, Drnek adds, "All of these older cars suffer from the same thing—they went through a period of time where they were not particularly valuable and were repaired with methods that weren't always the best. You find those when you take a car apart, unless you get a car that had one owner from the time it was new and always had good mechanics. We've taken

apart 250 GTOs and Jaguar E-Type Lightweights and found repairs that would embarrass Mickey Mouse.”

Virtuoso’s engine builder Jeff Ritz, who’s also Drnek’s son-in-law, soon dug into the car’s 3,967cc SOHC V12. Building on an earlier Gioacchino Colombo design, this “big block” Tipo 209 engine features factory-re-designed wider bore centers (the distance between the center of the cylinders as they lay along the length of the block) and was rated in period at 300 horsepower.

The V12 had been smoking under acceleration, necessitating a rebuild. “The crank was in pretty good shape,” says Ritz, “but the cams were a little worn, and the cam timing was actually off on the right bank—a few degrees from what factory spec is. It didn’t look like the engine had been apart recently.”

The order of the day was to install all-new bearings, chains, seals, gaskets, valves and valve guides, as well as new pistons,

connecting rods and cams. But Ritz didn’t rely exclusively on factory-original components. “We have our own piston design that raises the compression ratio a bit,” he says. “Plus, when we re-did the cams, we changed the profile slightly to be easier on the rocker arm components as well as maximize performance.”

After the engine had been reassembled, the final step was to rebuild its triple 40 DFI/2 Weber carburetors. Explains Ritz, “They needed to be balanced and synchronized on the engine dyno, as well as having the chokes synchronized. Jetting was set for maximum performance and throttle response. They are really good, tunable carburetors.”

When all was said and done, the freshened 4-liter V12 produced 320 hp at 6,400 rpm

and 275 lb-ft of torque at 5,200 rpm—enough to make the roughly 2,650-pound 330 GTS a true 150-mph cruiser.

To satisfy an itch to know more about s/n 09627’s history, I dug into my stack of Ferrari Yearbooks. There, I found a photo from Geneva of the 330 GTS, sitting on the Ferrari stand like a newborn—top down, yet poised and ready for life to begin. What path would it take?

The car’s first private owner is not known, but by December 1972 s/n 09627 was in the hands of Grand Touring Car’s Harley Cluxton, a well-known buyer, seller and owner of Ferraris, who purchased it from Jean-Jacques Weber’s Ferrari dealership in Geneva.

“I had the car sent to

Modena Sports Cars in New York City,” Cluxton tells me. “I was a Ferrari dealer then, and I had seen these 330 GTSs come in when I was working at Luigi Chinetti’s. They were really cool in that the top went down, making them the best of both worlds. I bought it to sell, and sold it to Tom Hibbeln, an orthopedic surgeon in Danville, Illinois.”

Hibbeln kept s/n 09627 for a year, then traded it back to Cluxton, who sold it to Joss Muss, then an attorney in Virginia. The car was still wearing its original *Azzurro* paint when Muss got it, but that wouldn’t last. “Joss changed it to black,” Cluxton says. “He said he did not like the blue, but he obviously liked the car—he drove it quite a bit during the 18 years he owned it.”

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FAR LEFT Suspension was disassembled and refurbished; every re-used original component was repainted or replated.

LEFT Each of the Weber carburetors was fully stripped down and restored (finished carb is shown at right).

BELOW RIGHT Transaxle was broken down for inspection, and its internal components were sent out to be crack-checked.





ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT Original V12 engine was smoking during acceleration, so Virtuoso rebuilt it with proprietary cams and pistons; engine dyno was used to tune the triple Weber carburetors; restored engine bay looks factory original, with a hint of patina.



In 1992, the 330 GTS returned to Cluxton, who sold it to respected Ferrari aficionado Rob Walton. Five years later, in early '97, Walton traded the Ferrari to another well-known *Ferraristi*, John Mozart, in part for a Maserati 300S. Mozart didn't keep the car long; between late 1997 and 2009, the 330 GTS went through the hands of several short-term owners. Then present-owner Steve Thein saw it offered for sale by exotic-car broker, and *FORZA* columnist, Michael Sheehan.

"Sheehan told me to come have a look at it," Thein

recalls. "It was, well—it needed everything. But I ended up buying it probably at the bottom of the market."

Thein soon delivered his new Ferrari to Virtuoso, and while the shop labored away on its restoration, step-by-step, month after month, the owner took on the task of restoring the car's instruments and wooden dash. "As much as Scott [Drnek] was willing to send me, I wanted to do myself, because I take pride of ownership," says Thein. "I'm not as handy as Scott with mechanicals, but I'm no slouch. My garage is a 'work-

ing man's garage.' I have an engine hoist, and a work bench that is solid and well-stained."

Virtuoso wasn't the first shop to dive into the 330 GTS's mechanicals. Dyke Ridgley, who maintained the car when it was owned by Rob Walton, reports that Cluxton's shop had rebuilt the Ferrari's transaxle, redone the heads, shocks and suspension, replaced some fuel lines and made other minor adjustments. "When Rob bought that GTS," Ridgley says from his home in Decatur, Illinois, "it

was an honest car, never restored—a so-so car."

I've always respected Ridgley's view, so I ask him what he thinks of the 330 GTS. "They are one of the first Ferraris without any weak links," he replies. "They could be driven in traffic, they were good on the road and they were quite reliable. In many ways it had the best motor that Ferrari ever built—the expanded Colombo."

Ridgley does warn me that the 330's transaxle can be problematic to get right—"It requires experience and knowledge to set



ABOVE S/n 09627's interior was in decent shape, but came out to be restored to as-new condition. BELOW LEFT The finished cockpit—owner Thein restored the car's wooden dash and gauges himself. BELOW RIGHT Steering components before and after the Virtuoso treatment.



up a transaxle correctly," he says—so I take that thought back to Virtuoso's Ritz, who had worked on s/n 9627's then noisy-and-hard-to-shift Type 592 gearbox. "The linkage adjustment is critical," concurs Ritz. "If the linkage that goes from the shifter on back isn't exactly right, it never shifts right."

The problem, it seems, is the gated shifter up front. Continues Ritz, "It has a specific position for each gear, so if you don't have the front-to-back setting and the left-to-right setting exactly right, and the handle in that gate is either

pulling or pushing or twisting a fork a little bit, it preloads that synchronizer and it makes it hard to shift. Getting that dialed in is a little tough, but once it's right, it's sweet."

In the meantime, body and paint guru Fernances had been busy. To gently remove the paint without causing panel distortion or damaging the chrome, the car was soda-blasted, a stripping process that uses baking soda under high pressure. "There was some rough repair on a front fender support," says Fernances, "so we had a fabricator weld some new

tubing in. There was also some previous damage on the nose of the car that we had to repair."

For paint, Virtuoso used PPG's Envirobase water-borne base-coat/clear-coat system. "The base coat is basically acrylic latex suspended in water, and that reduces the volatile organic compounds that are actually released into the environment," Fernances explains. Fresh blue paint was mixed to match the original hue, which was discovered in hidden areas during the disassembly process. Fernances sprayed the car in Virtuoso's on-site booth. "We had no shrink-

age or dieback [loss of gloss] on the base coat," he reports. The final step was a modern clear coat on the beautifully contoured Pininfarina body.

Ultimately, every component on the car was either repainted or re-plated. Under the aluminum hood on this otherwise all-steel-bodied car, for example, Fernances painted the engine, while the V12's massive valve covers were powder coated with a black texturized finish.

Beyond steel and aluminum, quite a bit of fiberglass was used in the 330 GTS's original construction—namely



ABOVE LEFT 330 GTS's nose required a few repairs. BELOW Environmentally friendly water-based paint mimics the hue of original lacquer finish.



flooring, belly pan, even the car's firewall. In addition to being cheaper than metal, fiberglass doesn't rust. Yet, as Drnek points out, in period the mere mention of fiberglass and Ferrari in the same sentence rankled some people who thought that using "glass" was somehow dishonorable.

Turning to the GTS's underpinnings, there was a suspension revision that required some welding: a 1970s factory-mandated reinforcement plate that helped support the front shock absorbers. "We got the original factory drawings of what they

wanted to weld in there, and we did it exactly as they said," recalls Drnek. "That way, it looks like a contemporaneous repair—we didn't want to do a modern sort of thing that wouldn't look right in the car." The rest of the suspension, as well as the braking system, was restored to original factory specifications.

Drnek, who supervised s/n 09627's restoration and the 3,000 man-hours that went into it, thinks highly of the 330 GTS, describing it as the best-driving early Ferrari. "Compared to the cars of only a few years

before, it was a major step forward," he muses. "It had the 4-liter V12 engine, a five-speed transaxle, four-wheel disc brakes and independent suspension."

After three long years, the enthusiastic Dr. Thein—Drnek's second customer, and now his longest—was thrilled to get his dream car. He had told Drnek in the very beginning that he wanted his GTS to look good and be a nice driver. "I don't have any interest in cleaning the car with Q-Tips and all that—I gave that up with my Speedster long ago," says Thein. "I kept saying to Scott, 'Remember,

we're doing a nice driver,' but he doesn't know any way but the top way. In any case, I enjoy what the car brings, and I plan to drive it and show it."

I photographed the finished Ferrari in all its brilliance a day before the transporter came to truck it south to Thein. It arrived in his hands on a Thursday, and that very weekend the proud owner entered the 330 GTS in San Diego's Bella Italia at the Bay Concours, where it won First Place in The Circle of Excellence Awards. It's a fitting tribute to a car that began its life in the public eye so many years ago. ●