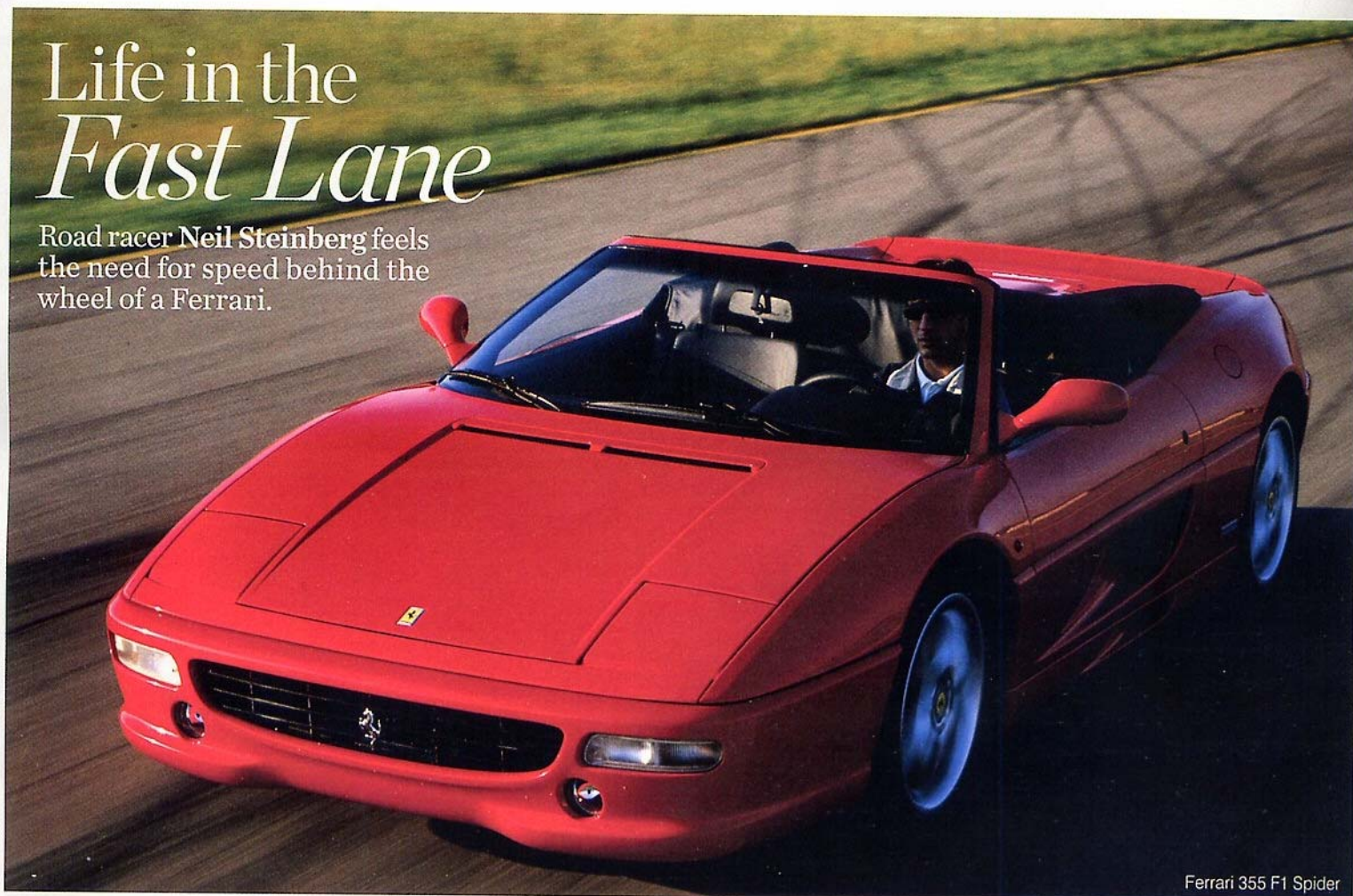


# Life in the Fast Lane

Road racer Neil Steinberg feels the need for speed behind the wheel of a Ferrari.



Ferrari 355 F1 Spider

**SCARED? SURE I WAS SCARED.** A Ferrari 355 F1 Spider is not just a cool car, a rare car and an expensive car, but it is also a very, very fast car, and as I signed the paperwork part of me was saying, "Hooray!" But another part was wondering whether I should just walk away because this was too much car for me to handle.

I didn't walk away. Because, really, how often do you get the chance? Usually, to drive a car like this you have to buy one—and only around a thousand Ferraris a year are sold in the United States. Or you have to know about a place such as Curvy Road, an exotic car share company in Palatine that will put you in a Ferrari (\$250 for a five-year membership; the Ferrari is \$1,440 for a three-day weekend)—or a Lamborghini, Bentley or any of a number of fabulous rides—for a few days.

But first, Curvy Road owner George Kiebalala walks you through the car's countless quirks, from the paddle shifters on the steering column to the counterintuitive controls (to turn on the air conditioner, hit a button marked STOP—"It's like they had a bad dictionary," he says) to the numerous ways a driver could innocently inflict expensive damage: Open the door too briskly and you wreck the paint, press against the wrong spot in the trunk and you somehow bend the windshield wipers.

All of that is forgiven, however, when you turn the key and hear that throaty howl of power. Press the gas and it's as if God grabs you by the back of the belt and flings you into space.

Before getting my hands on it, I imagined using the Ferrari to wow

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doormen and valets. But the reality was more folksy—the neighbors came running (you could hear the thing three blocks away). It was a block party on wheels and I spent two hours giving rides.

If the recession has supposedly caused some kind of backlash against wealth, it has not yet affected the public's view of exotic cars. Motorists hailed me at

stoplights. They laughed. A little boy waved, happily. "Awesome!" his dad shouted. "That is a beautiful car, sir!" called a bald man in a subcompact.

These sports cars supposedly hug the road, but as I was putting it through the hairpin ravines on Sheridan Road the back end slipped out from under me and the Ferrari spun a good 20 degrees. But it didn't leave the road and it didn't hit anything, to my amazement. The car gods were with me—I never got a ticket, though, responsible suburbanite that I am, I did make a point of keeping my speed in the two digits, generally.

I will always remember returning the car to Curvy Road. My 13-year-old son came with me, and we cranked the "Queen of the Night" aria from Mozart's *Magic Flute* on the stereo until it rattled our teeth as we blasted down Willow Road. We felt operatic ourselves, blessed and sun-kissed, washed clean by speed and power and music and the positive aspects of Italian design.

The joy of the thing lingers. For those who have difficulty getting away for a vacation, driving one of these cars brings the vacation to you—every mundane errand became a red rocket blast into the extraordinary. *For more information, visit [curvyroad.com](http://curvyroad.com).* **||MA**