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OUT OF THE **BOX** BY BILL BENNETT


# California Dream

**CMC FERRARI 250 GT SWB  
SPYDER CALIFORNIA**  
1:18 | \$440




**C**ar geeks love to rattle off their dream rides: bombing around the 'Ring in a Porsche GT3, for instance, or hooning a freshly restored Hemi Dart down Woodward Boulevard ... maybe even pointing a Cobra toward Red Rock at dusk, with a nod to old Shel's ghost as the side pipes chuckle and the sun goes down.





Born out of a desire to cater to the Americans who loved open-air performance, Ferrari's 250 GT Spyder "California" became an immediate classic—and years later, is a perfect match for CMC's no-holds-barred approach to replicating automobiles in scale.



To those, we'd add an afternoon spent motoring in a Ferrari 250 GT SWB Spyder "California." The joint brainchild of Ferrari's U.S. distributor and a southern California Ferrari dealer, the Spyder had the raw power of the 250 GT race car, a decidedly American name, and a body that caused ladies to swoon, boys to dream, and men to consider leaving years of marital bliss behind for just one ride.

Such is the effect of beauty—and when it comes to trance-level pulchritude, few machines can match the California. Built between 1958 and 1963, penned by Pinin Farina, and hand-shaped and bolted together at the Scaglietti works, each car was made to the customer's individual specs, with engines at various levels of tune. And although each two-seater was unmistakably a California, each of the only 105 made varied somewhat in its details. One thing for sure: if you're in the market for one, bring along a semi trailer full of cash.

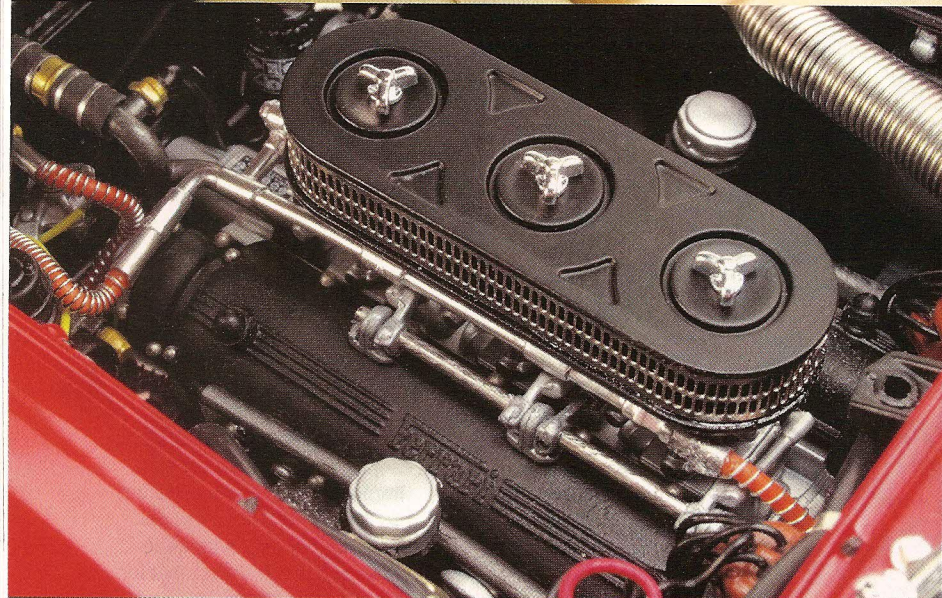
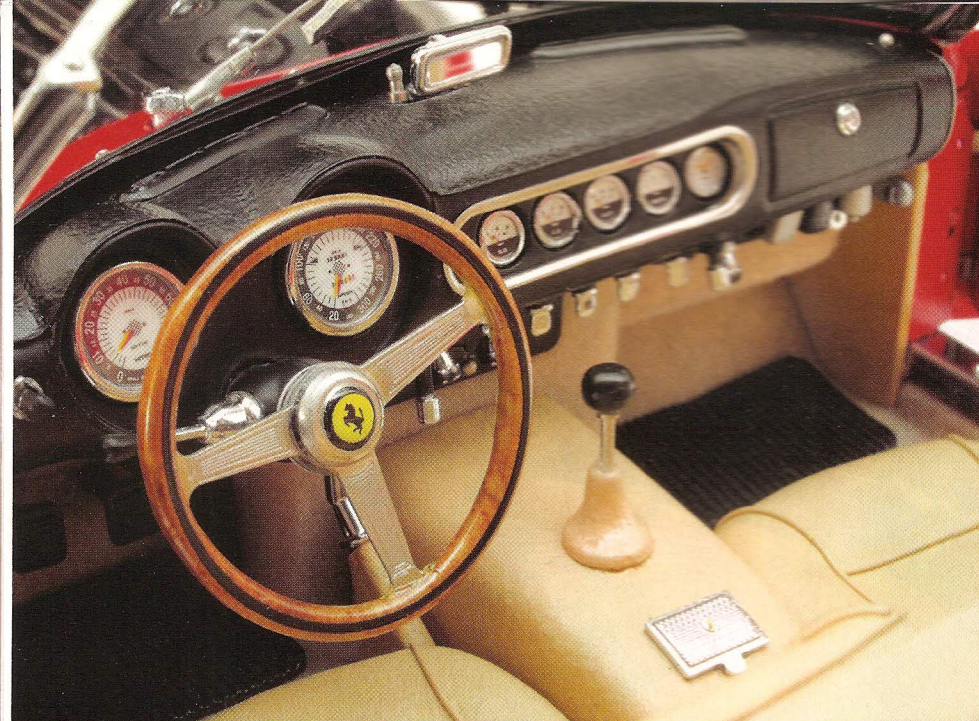
#### DREAM STATE

Getting a high-end replica of the car just got easy (if not cheap), thanks to CMC, whose excellent 1:18 250 GT SWB (short wheel base) Berlinetta provided the bones and much of the meat for this release. With that in mind, we were fairly certain that the "Cal Spyder," once it arrived, would carry the beauty of the real car, have the same technical prowess and parts count as that prior model—and maybe even deliver a surprise or two.

Well, it does, it does; and it *has*. The first part is evident on sight; painted in red with a tan, fine-grain leather interior, the car is proportioned beautifully and perched at a perfect height on hand-laced steel spoke wheels. Here's a kick: the tires are modern Michelins, right down to the "Radial X," "Made in France," and "Tubeless" cast into their sidewalls. OEM-correct? Nope. But it makes a heck of a lot of sense for a modern driver. And it shows that CMC tooled this replica of a 1961-vintage

Pinin Farina's design is brought out beautifully here, in a multi-media masterpiece that boasts 1,634 individual pieces. Go ahead, count 'em.





**Above:** Tiny details—like this photo-etched “Ferrari” script, embedded in the model’s finish, and the working push-button trunk release—are all over the car, and are fun to discover.

**Above left:** There’s fine-grain, small-pore leather everywhere in here, even on the dash and door panels. Check out those switches.

**Left:** The scaled-down, Colombo-designed V12 is one of the best-ever 1:18 engines, period.

## ONE OF OUR FAVORITE SOUNDS IS THE RIPPING-CLOTH CACKLE OF A FERRARI V12 ON POINT, AND THAT’S JUST ABOUT THE ONLY THING THAT’S MISSING UNDER THE MODEL’S HOOD.

California from a machine that exists today—on the road.

Once the eye gets past the impact of the overall car on display, the secondary details start sinking in. The photo-etched grille sports a pair of driving lights, and it’s flanked by marker and directional lamps; the depth and clarity of these little jewels and the high-mounted taillights is wonderful. Running back from the covered headlamps—replete with fasteners for their metal trims—the shut lines are sharp and even. That’s remarkable, considering this sample’s pre-production origins. So are details like the “Ferrari” badge at the tail,

and the screened, shaped-steel cooling vents at the car’s sides. CMC’s love of “real” materials is on a high, here: in addition to the salami-cut metal exhaust tips and the steel rockers, the wee pads attached to the stamped-metal bumper blades are formed from “ebonite”—ultra-vulcanized rubber—just like on the real California. Over the top? Absolutely—but we’re not complaining.

### ANDIAMO

The first impression is one of wonder; going under the model’s skin is revelatory. Of course, the interior is top dead center, and a faux-wood steering wheel sets

the tone with steel spokes and a hand-rubbed shine. The doors swing smoothly, and the jambs are decorated with steel sill plates and piped weather strip. In between, the leather seats—done in a remarkably tight-grained hide, with carefully lapped seams—join a dash and binnacle bedazzled with switchgear and gauges. More leather, dyed black, tops the dash and door tops; beneath the latter, map pockets have been hand-sewn into place. Behind a complete-to-its-gaskets windshield, replete with rubber-bladed, folded metal wiper arms, this is CMC’s finest, most believable cockpit yet.

Behind it lies one of the

model’s surprises—a working trunk release. It’s a little fiddly, but pressing the push-button catch whilst raising the lid is a hoot. Once it’s open, the boot’s carpeted floor boasts a steel rub strip, a fuel filler sporting steel clamps, and a full spare, held in check by a real leather belt with what looks to be a working buckle. That buckle was tempting, but we were content to just leave it be—for now.

One of our favorite sounds is the ripping-cloth cackle of a Ferrari V12 on point, and that’s just about the only thing that’s missing under the model’s hood. If there’s such a thing as a kitchen sink when it comes to





**Above:** Each California was slightly different, but the egg-crate grille and driving lights—done here by CMC with crisscross metal stampings and jewel-level lensing—were a constant.

**Above right:** Real steel, copper, rubber, and a full-metal tube frame make the scrupulously woven chassis come to life.

**Left:** Twist off the "Borrani" knockoffs—threaded correctly for each side of the car—and here's what you'll see. Those steel leaf springs work, as do the shocks and the flexible brake hoses, and the craftsmanship is top shelf throughout.

## THE UNDERCARRIAGE IS THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE VISTA OF MECHANICAL REPLICATION WE'VE EVER SEEN IN THIS SCALE, PERIOD.

utter completeness, CMC has thrown it in here, maybe a couple of times. The oval air cleaner is fastened by a trio of three-bladed wing nuts; below it, a multi-piece throttle rod assembly and spiral-steel-covered fuel lines wind into view and terminate in tiny banjo fittings and metal ends. The crinkle finish on the cam covers is scale correct, as is the gauge of every plug wire, electrical cable, hose, and clamp. On the passenger side, a steel duct funnels fresh air to the cabin, and on the driver's side, the brake booster is tucked under the fender below a gaggle of steel-clamped cables. The oil filter is legibly labeled, as is the

firing order plate affixed atop the engine near the fan belt and radiator hoses. From the tidy little prop that holds the hood aloft to the little rubber bumpers around the engine bay's perimeter, the 280-horse V12 looks real; we can only imagine the fun CMC had putting all of these bits of detail in.

The model's biggest surprise—and its most impressive visual, save for its powerful presence on display—is tucked away under the car. It's true; the undercarriage is the most comprehensive vista of mechanical replication we've ever seen in this scale, period. Built off of a tube frame, the working suspension, copper

brake and fuel lines, steel springs and working steering linkages are stunning, as are the various textures, colors, and materials used to finish each piece. After we removed and reinstalled the road wheels to view the brake discs (via correctly threaded "Borrani SPA"—emblazoned knockoffs), saw the chain-hinged hangers for the multi-muffler exhaust system, discovered the clear drain tubes that hang on either side of the V12, and observed how the extraordinary clamps that hold everything together were individually riveted to the frame, we were looking for a mirror to park the model on.

### EYES WIDE OPEN

There are rides we all hope to take, some day, and common sense says we'll probably never get to pilot a Ferrari California through the valleys and hills of the Golden State. But thanks to a handful of artisans half a world away, we can still dream. Available soon in other, limited release colors and trims, CMC's latest masterwork gets our very highest recommendation. Dream on.

### SOURCES

CMC Model Cars [cmc-modelcars.com](http://cmc-modelcars.com)