

In this case, speed brings passenger smile
Two laps aboard an Enzo deliver a sensation of stability and smoothness

BY ANDY DWORKIN

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The doctors are right. Needle drugs are addictive.

In this case, the needle points to 150 on the speedometer of a million-dollar Ferrari on the front straight of Portland International Raceway. And my goofy smile says I'm high as a kite.

I may be under the influence, but I'm not driving. Since I first took the wheel of my brother's 1978 Volvo 244, I can count the times I've hit triple digits on both thumbs. I won't detail my wrong-way trips down one-way streets. Nobody wants me driving a \$1.2 million sports car, including me.

But I leapt when local racer Todd Harris offered the passenger seat of Ferrari's exclusive Enzo supercar. Harris, who co-owns the Pro Drive Racing School at PIR, was celebrating the end of summer classes with a "play day" that offered friends and clients laps in one of three 200 mph supercars, on loan from a grateful and generous customer.

I grab my \$3.25 million car (thanks, MAX) and head trackside where a pair of Porsches and a Ford GT are sunning themselves amid the Lotuses -- three or four Elises, which won't be still long enough to count. Including a British Radical (that's a race car, not London's mayor) that's more than \$2 million worth of cars, making more than 3,000 horsepower. At \$700 a horse, a Ford Focus would cost \$91,000. Apparently, you can charge that much if you're fast enough: The Ford GT claims to hit 205 mph and sells for \$150,000.

The clear star of the show, though, is Enzo. A gangly mix of curves and angles, with 12 cylinders buried in its huge backside, the Enzo ain't pretty. But it's faster than Paris Hilton, and much less common. Ferrari claims a top speed of more than 218 mph (the speedometer counts to 250). And the company made just 400, all sold.

Not just any millionaire could buy an Enzo, Harris' friend Mark Tatom tells me. Ferrari hand-picked millionaires (mostly those with several expensive Ferraris) to apply for a chance to spend \$640,000. At least, that was the sticker price: Actual costs were far higher. Pope John Paul II auctioned off car 400 (I assume it was only driven to church on Sundays) netting \$1.2 million for charity.

The bottom line, Tatom says, is that "getting to ride around in it is priceless."

Tatom, who races spec Fords at PIR, calls his laps in Enzo "exhilarating." His daughter, Sidnie, says she was "scared to death. . . . We were going so fast on the straightaway I felt like I was freefalling."

As I'm wondering whether I'll stain my first supercar, it's my turn to get my head in a helmet and my tail in the Enzo. The latter proves challenging. The car's low-slung seats have such stiff side bolsters that I sling in sideways, like I'm flopping on a beanbag chair. I spend awhile wondering how to close the door, which doesn't swing out like normal doors but up and forward like a catapult. At least the seatbelt is normal. I expected a harness.

In seconds, Harris has the Ferrari up to 100 mph -- in third gear. My eyes, flitting between scenery and speedometer, tell me I'm moving very fast. But the car's smooth as a skate on ice, with barely a shake or rattle for all the rolling. Credit the car or driver (I suspect both) but neither Todd nor Enzo seems to be exerting himself.

The needles are the best proof that Enzo's 12 cylinders are working very, very hard. Near the end of the front straight, the speedometer creeps just past 150. And the tachometer offers more delight. The Enzo redlines at 8,000 rpm, and Harris seems content to run it north of 6,000, the point at which the engine in my first car sublimed directly into a hot iron gas. I remember my dad teaching me to shift at 3,000 rpm. I never catch Enzo below 4,000.

Curve one comes fast, and Harris brakes and shifts down to normal highway speeds in two heartbeats. I look for places to plant my feet, but don't need them. Ferrari must teach some sort of non-Euclidean motoring because curves and straight lines seem the same to Enzo. The passenger gets no sense the car is tilting or struggling to stay on track.

Harris shifts gears with a flick of his fingers. The Enzo has no clutch or stick to slow things down, just small shift paddles on the steering wheel. The car also doesn't have features like a radio or power windows, to save weight. I guess \$1.2 million can't buy you everything.

But as my two laps end, close to two minutes later, it's clear that \$1.2 million buys a lot of speed, stability and smoothness. And a cheesy smile that lasted me several hours.

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