# RETROMOTIVE

VOLUME SIX

F40


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# RETROMOTIVE

VI

VOLUME VI


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Photo:©Shaun Maluga

## SHAUN MALUGA

Shaun Maluga is an Australian born, New York City based photographer with a penchant for automotive photography.

When not shooting cars, he is happy photographing everything from the streets of NYC to portraits, weddings, events and travel.

You can follow his work at instagram.com/shaunmaluga and instagram.com/fujifilmxpro2

Adam grew up in Michigan surrounded by American classics. His father was a gearhead and Adam recalls being impressed that his dad could point out the different years and models of cars from the subtle differences in headlights, grilles and shapes of the fenders.

His family always owned sensible American cars, but his dad would point out 'oddball' European automobiles whenever he spotted them on the streets. This probably gave them an elevated sense of exceptionalism in Adam's young and impressionable mind.

When the family moved to California in the '90s, his dad bought him and his brother a 1970 Porsche 914 to share. 'That car got under my skin the way Porsches do. It was balanced like a go-kart, fast enough but not scary, and started every time you turned the key'. That 914 came to an unfortunate end at the hands of another motorist, but the emotion and excitement it stirred up stayed with him.

After college he owned a few American classics, a 1970 Ford F100, two 1963 Chevy Novas and a collection of Vespas, Lambrettas and a BSA Lightning motorcycle. In 2001 Adam was in a bad crash with his BSA Lightning and decided he was safer in modern cars. A few years passed and he found himself missing having a vintage car to work on and enjoy. Mostly he missed the community of people that owning an older vehicle introduces you to.

He began searching for a sub-$10k, '60s four-cylinder car when a friend suggested he look at a Porsche 912. This was (decades) prior to the air-cooled Porsche boom we are in now, but even back then it was still difficult finding one for a good price. He eventually found one on the 912 BBS classifieds out in Stockton, 90 miles east of Oakland where he was living at the time.

Pretty much as soon as the garage door went up, I was sure I was going to have it. The paint was beat and faded, but it was complete, very original, and the body was solid, top and bottom. The engine ran. It started and stopped just fine. It had clearly been both well-used and maintained throughout its life. I came back and drove it home the very next day.

During his ownership of the 912, he also bought and sold a couple of Series III Land Rovers. A few months after selling his last Rover, he still had the proceeds burning a hole in his pocket. He knew he wanted a convertible after driving around in the summer with the roof off one of the Landys.

Porsche Speedsters were way out of reach for most collectors, but he knew that replicas could be just as much fun. The minimalist 'Outlaw' design spoke to him.

There are plenty of tricked-out replicas with heated 'comfort-style' seats... wind wings, AC, etc, – that's all just borderline offensive to me. I feel that if you're going to have a Speedster – even a replica – you should spec it and enjoy it for the same reasons people bought the originals – for whipping it around the canyons or around the racetrack.

He stumbled upon this particular Speedster on eBay. It was a mild 'Outlaw' style build with a matte silver colour and the seller was local. He won the auction with a bid just $50 over the reserve, so to him, it felt like a steal.

One of the first things he had to do was switch out the seat rails so that his girlfriend, who is about a foot shorter than him, could drive the car too. Coincidentally the welding on the seat rail was done by Elco Welding, who you can also read about elsewhere in this issue. Otherwise it has mostly only needed general update and maintenance work that Adam typically does himself.

The freedom of owning a replica is that Adam sees the car as a blank slate. As things wear out and need replacing, he is happy to consider changes such as a different colour interior, or a Subaru or even an electric motor. Although he says anything other than an air-cooled motor out back seems a little blasphemous.

Adam drives both the Porches regularly with the Speedster more of a day to day or canyon drive car as it is easier to hop in and go. The 912 he sees more as a tourer, a bit more comfortable than baking in the Californian sun in a noisy convertible. Although both cars share similar drivetrains, Adam says they are entirely different experiences to drive with the Speedster having more oomph uphill and power available wherever and whenever you need it. 'The Speedy is really as close as you can come to a motorcycle on four wheels'.

As for the cons in owning a replica? Adam says there aren't really any. The unwitting assume it is original and the Porsche crowd are still curious and positive as well. 'They don't seem to care at all about whether it's an original or not. They only want to justify finding one for themselves'.


Photo: ©Isamu Sawa

ISAMU SAWA

Born in Japan and raised in Australia, Isamu Sawa, or Issey to his friends, is a commercial photographer and a watch collector. He enjoys connecting with other like-minded enthusiasts (read "obsessives") sharing their passion and watch stories...
You can follow his work at Instagram @analogwrist

Despite being an avid watch enthusiast and collector, I have never really been a 'Rolex' guy. Those that can afford and have bought into the contemporary Rolex brand only for its lauded name and investment potential have diminished the overall appeal (for me).

So it's refreshing to meet Graeme Goldman, former MD of The Swatch Group Australia and now the co-owner of a direct to consumer online watch brand called THE 5TH. A fellow enthusiast and eclectic watch collector, he bought his first Rolex only because the person he saw wearing one was 'the coolest-looking guy'.

'When I was in my 20s, I used to admire this cool guy who worked in a clothing store wearing a Rolex – he reminded me of the singer Lenny Kravitz. He was so damn cool – the fact that he wore a chronograph rather than a more common time-only watch made me want to own one'.

The watch in question was the now iconic Rolex Cosmograph Daytona.

After becoming the official timekeeper of the Daytona International Speedway in 1962, Rolex launched a new chronograph, the Cosmograph Reference 6239, nicknamed 'Daytona'. Unlike their existing watches for divers (Submariner), outdoorsmen (Explorer) and pilots (GMT), the Daytona was aimed as a tool watch for motor racing enthusiasts, with a chronograph function (stopwatch).

The Daytona was a flop at first, and there was a time when Rolex dealers almost had to give them away. However, a fortuitous association with Hollywood actor turned racer Paul Newman changed everything – making the Daytona one of the most sought-after watches in the world, with collectors referring to the model 6239 'exotic dial' as the Paul Newman Daytona. The watch which was owned by the late movie star, sold at auction for a record-breaking $17.8m (AUD25.3m) in October 2017, making it one of the most expensive watches in the world.

Graeme's Daytona is a second series Cosmograph released in 1988 (Reference 16520). Unlike the original Daytona 6239 which housed a manual wound movement manufactured by Valjoux, the second series utilised an updated self-winding automatic movement, produced by Zenith.

'The workings of a mechanical watch had always fascinated me, and I wanted to learn more about watches. It was particularly difficult during apartheid times in South Africa (where I was living at the time). With the country under sanctions, we rarely received any information from overseas. Being pre-internet days, I used to search for magazines with any watch-related content I could find. Then, in 1994, I came across an Esquire magazine which had an article (which I have kept to this day, pictured) that featured a Rolex Daytona!'.

Graeme was fortunate enough finally to purchase a Daytona in 1995. He was walking past the Rolex dealer in Durban South Africa – just as the shopkeeper was about to display the exact piece in the shop window. At that time, these watches had a seven-year waiting list according to Graeme, so he immediately walked in, negotiated a discount (which is unheard of these days), and purchased his dream watch.

'I wanted a black dial like in the Esquire feature, but this one was a white dial. I bought it anyway'.

'My late father at one time owned a Rolex GMT. I loved the robustness and manliness of a Rolex. It seemed to be indestructible and looked like it would last forever'.

'He was also into cars, and I grew up driving around in them. For my very first car, my dad let me drive his 'spare' 1969 Jaguar E-Type. I hated it because it had a manual transmission and no air-conditioning – all I wanted was a Volkswagen Golf GTi'.

'I think my passion for both watches and cars has something to do with a reminder of times past, one's childhood and a reminder of happy times'.

'Driving my 1966 (T5) Mustang brings me joy and happiness and reminds me of my late father and his convertible Mustang. I felt like I could conquer the world driving that car'.

Graeme's Daytona sits in a safe these days – since he became the MD of The Swatch Group, he felt it was wrong to wear a Rolex when the company did not make or sell them.

'I just love it, and it (still) gives me such joy and pleasure whenever I visit the safe to see it'.

Today is one of those joyous days as Graeme delivers his pride and joy to my studio to have it photographed – it was the first time it had left his safe in 20 years.

Graeme is one of the most interesting (cool) characters I have met in recent times. It just happens that he unknowingly bought a future icon which is now a collector's item – now that's cool.

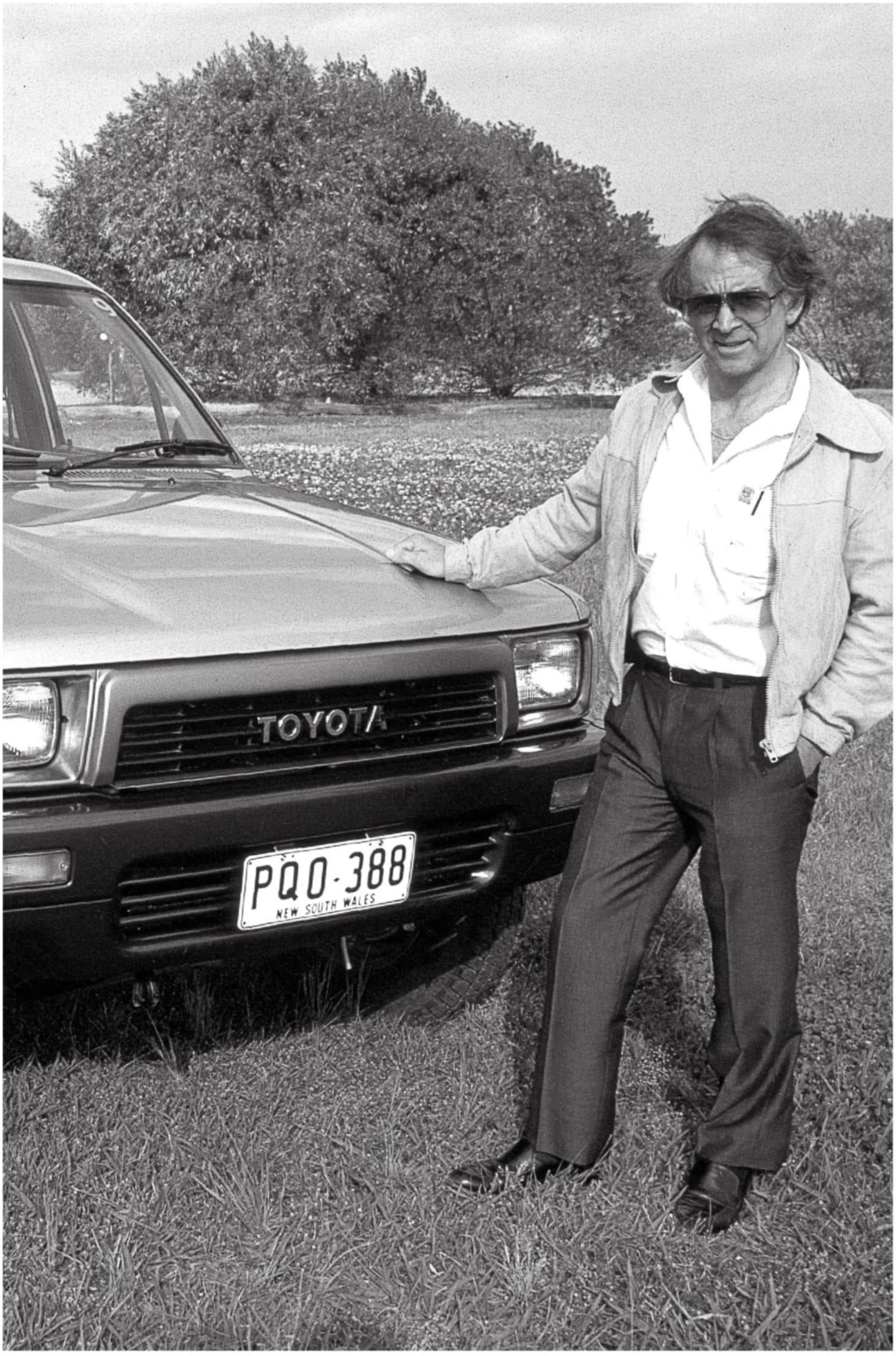



Photo: Supplied

R

BRUCE MCMAHON

Bruce McMahon started out with a '49 Riley Roadster moving on to Porsche 911s, Range Rovers, Fiat coupes, Alfas and utes. He'd buy a Toyota FJ Cruiser if he didn't need a Mazda BT-50 ute and couldn't afford a Range Rover Sport

As the son of Greek immigrants, the young diesel fitter knew the value of work and how to stick at a job. Especially when you had to walk Sydney town to find that job, sweep floors to keep it.

Those attributes, plus an early introduction to Japanese business practices, helped John Conomos take Toyota's Australian enterprise from a mixed grab of 1980s entities to the dominant vehicle brand. Direct, charming and forceful with politicians, press and Japanese bosses, Conomos and his team took Toyota to the top with a mix of flair and confidence.

The young Conomos liked working with his hands and found his first job with truck company Thornycroft in Sydney; which was then taken over by English bus builder AEC, in turn bought out by British Leyland.

Here John was seconded into an office role. 'I didn't have a suit', says the man who became one of the motor industry's best-dressed. Here he met Bob Johnston, the man who'd become his mentor and, later, Thiess Toyota boss.

In 1974 Leyland stopped making P76s, shut down its Sydney plant and Conomos was sent south as a Leyland bus salesman in Victoria. 'Sales training was the loan of a company car, a road map and £20 for motel expenses. See you in three weeks, it was as clumsy as that'.

He was promoted to an operations role, sent off to see what the Leyland empire looked like, and in South Africa saw his first Daihatsu, an F10 built by the Toyota affiliate.

Back here he convinced his bosses – and head office in Japan – to import Daihatsu commercials, but was stymied by Johnston, now head of Thiess Toyota, who could see Daihatsus giving Toyota's LandCruiser grief. Instead, Johnston formed an independent company to import the brand and Conomos became chief executive. He was the first and only employee, started from scratch in 1975.

'We didn't have a split pin to call our own. Had to recruit key staff, form a bank relationship, learn about international trading, letters of credit, import laws, appoint distributors.....

'It was a hell of an experience and I loved every moment. I got to know the immense cultural differences between the Japanese way of doing business and he stifling climate of the British hierarchy and class distinctions and so on.

Five years into the Daihatsu business, Conomos realised volume was limited without a utility, van or passenger car on the horizon. These were the days of import quotas and 57.5 percent tariffs and when Daihatsu – at Conomos' request – homologated the Charade sedan; he went to work on politicans, lobbying Canberra to loosen up the system. The young upstart secured more import licences at a premium; yet with the dollar buying 440 yen there was profit in the $4999 Charade.

In the early 1980s, Johnston and Thiess Toyota snaffled Conomos for their burgeoning business. From here a combination of foresight, fortune and John's forcefulness helped build Toyota Australia. There were distributors to buy out, dealers to sort, jealousies to hose down and the wedding of Australian Motor Industries – the local Toyota builder – and Thiess Toyota to organise. 'It would have been easier to unite the Israelis and the Arabs', John says.

Toyota's market share crept up from five per cent to 10 in the early 1990s. With executives such as ebullient marketer Bob Miller, plus Toyota's worldwide growth spurt, Conomos determined to dominate the 1990s. And by 2018 Toyota had more than 18 per cent market share and had topped sales for 16 consecutive years; the top-selling HiLux and a range of SUVs hasn't hurt.

He says selling cars remains a matter of having the right people because the product is a given, most cars today are quite good. In his time, he says, Nissan and Toyota mirrored each other in terms of product, network and Japanese parents. 'The only difference in my simple way is people – we had a good team, they didn't. We had good parents, they didn't'.

Conomos allows there were battles to overcome the perception of bland Toyotas. 'But they were undeniable in their performance, in their quality and sales. We had to persevere. We did zany things with advertising, off the wall promotions with dealers, gave away prizes that'd make your head spin'.

Still Conomos was never keen, despite years of discussion, planning and costings, to take Toyota to V8 Supercars. 'We were held back only by my own belief that we'd be soundly condemned by the motoring public, that if we entered the Ford-Holden rivalry we'd get worse than (Jim) Richards got when he won (Bathurst 1992).'

John Conomos' biggest disappointment was his mandatory 'but correct' retirement 10 years ago. 'I miss being directly involved and I miss it most dreadfully when it comes to issues'. That's heightened by a swag of issues he sees ahead for the motor business – from autonomous motoring to power technologies to a lack of clear political vision on the future of the car.

# FERRARI F40

WORDS **DR JOHN WRIGHT**

PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

‘Little more than a year ago, I expressed my wish to the engineers. Build a car to be the best in the world. And now the car is here.’ Thus were the words of Enzo Ferrari translated at the reveal of the F40 on 21 July 1987.

The F40 (named for the fortieth anniversary of Ferrari road cars) was the last model Enzo Ferrari signed off and it was undoubtedly one of the cars for which he wanted to be remembered, the perfect-pitch swansong. ‘I expressed a wish that we could produce a car which could remind us of Le Mans and the GTO’. (Perhaps he also thought of his late beloved son Dino, for there is a hint of the Dino 246 amidships…)

But the best car in the world? How about the 4WD (in the 1980s, the term ‘all-wheel-drive’ had yet to be coined) Porsche 959 or even the newly launched BMW 750i? By contrast with these two German sophisticates, the Ferrari F40 was a race car with a rego label. It had no power assistance for the steering or the brakes. There was no carpet, no door trims, no door handles and no sound system beyond the race-bred V12 bellowing into the driver’s brain. The only reason air-conditioning was fitted was to ameliorate the intense heat from that wild creature, the twin-turbo V8 with its 7750rpm redline.

The answer is that the F40 was Enzo Ferrari’s idea of the best car in the world.

If there was ever any logic to the Ferrari product line, then the F40 was the successor to the 1984 288 GTO.


‘LITTLE MORE THAN A YEAR AGO, I EXPRESSED MY WISH TO THE ENGINEERS. BUILD A CAR TO BE THE BEST IN THE WORLD. AND NOW THE CAR IS HERE.’

For the F40, the GTO's 90-degree all-alloy V8 was bored from 2855cc to 2936 and its pair of watercooled IHI turbochargers (chosen because they were superior to the F1 car's KKK units) delivered boost to 1.1 rather than 0.8 bar. There was a new crankshaft, silver/cadmium conrod bushes and the 32 valves had hollow stems and heads. Magnesium was used for the sump, rocker covers and inlet manifolds, inter alia.

Leonardo Fioravanti, the designer at Pininfarina responsible for the F40, said: 'The world has too many computers, too much technology and here we have recovered the design of a car as an emotion, just as in the old days'. He might have added that race drivers don't want ABS brakes, air-conditioning or music beyond the engine's.

When the F40 was launched, there was a view that it had been designed to challenge the Porsche 959. That seems to be about 50 per cent accurate. In 1984, two years into the F40 development program, FIA ended Group B racing: so whether or not the F40 could beat the 959 on the world's circuits was never to be comprehensively answered, although would probably have been 'yes'. Doubtless, Ferrari and his team of yes-men – all men in his days – were eager to prove they could build a faster car – so, ergo, a superior racer – but the bigger picture is that the F40 showcases Ferrari's unique values in contradistinction to those of Zuffenhausen.

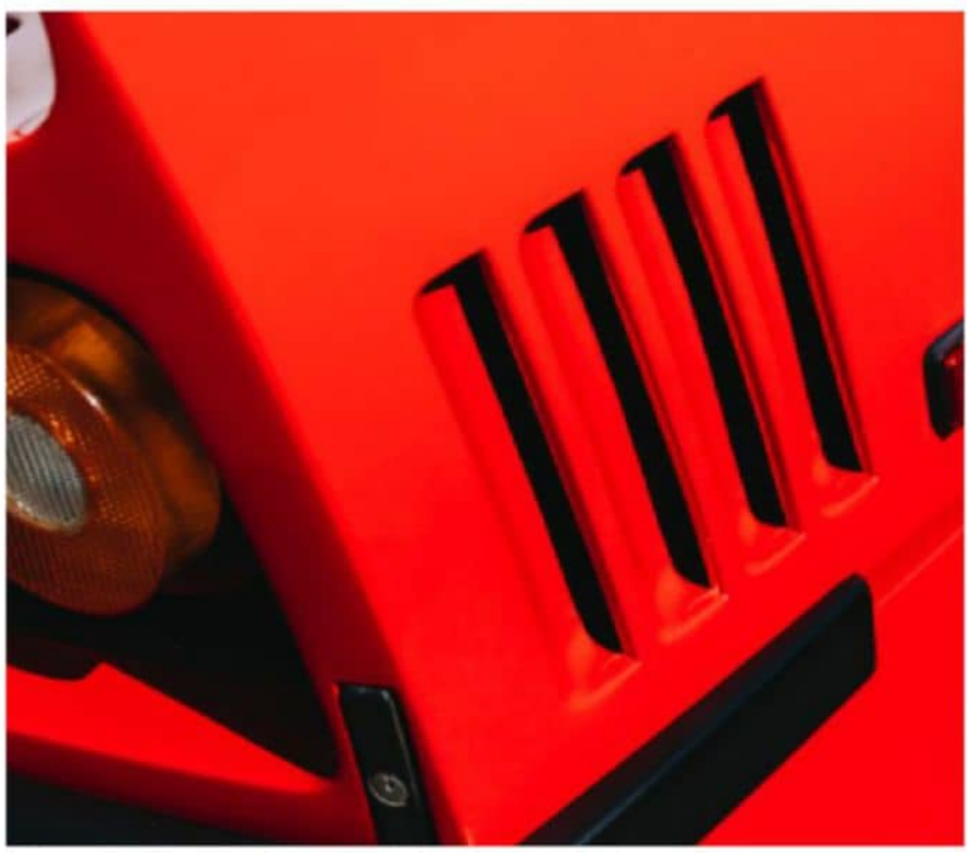
Of course, the contemporaneous motoring magazines could not resist pitting the two supercars against each other with predictable conclusions: the head says Porsche; the heart screams Ferrari. This latest model was the first production car to be capable of a genuine 200 miles per hour. (The Ford GT was sold in production guise from January 1966 – 31 examples – but where the race cars could reach 217, the road versions used a detuned 289 engine to manage a still creditable 164. Other true 200mph cars were one-offs or bespoke machines made in tiny numbers.)

The 1980s was the era of conspicuous consumption and power dressing. Ferrari himself had always worn drab clothes and (according to biographer Brock Yates in Enzo Ferrari: The Man, The Cars, the Races, the Machine) held the wealthy consumers of his road cars in contempt; indeed, in the negotiations with Ford, he was delighted to sell the road car business but demanded continuing control of the racing. Ferruccio Lamborghini, tractor manufacturer, hated his roadgoing Ferrari so much that he went into the sports car business himself. For Enzo Ferrari, the road cars sold (in his view) to wealthy, self-indulgent dilettantes, were a necessary evil to fund his racing ventures; racing, for Enzo, was effectively life itself (as the Steve McQueen character portentously declares in Le Mans).

'THIS CAR IS SO FAST IT'LL MAKE YOU SHIT YOUR PANTS'

In its way, the F40 also epitomised the 1980s. Has any road car in history better epitomised power dressing? Here was a tubular steel space frame chassis clothed with Kevlar panels, carbonfibre doors, bonnet and bootlid. The rear wheels were 13-inches wide! Pirelli created a special tyre, the P Zero specifically for the Ferrari F40. And, unlike human fashions, this particular statement of


Ferrari

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DESIGNED BY pininfarina

power had an aural quality – nothing short of the clichéd spine-tingling.

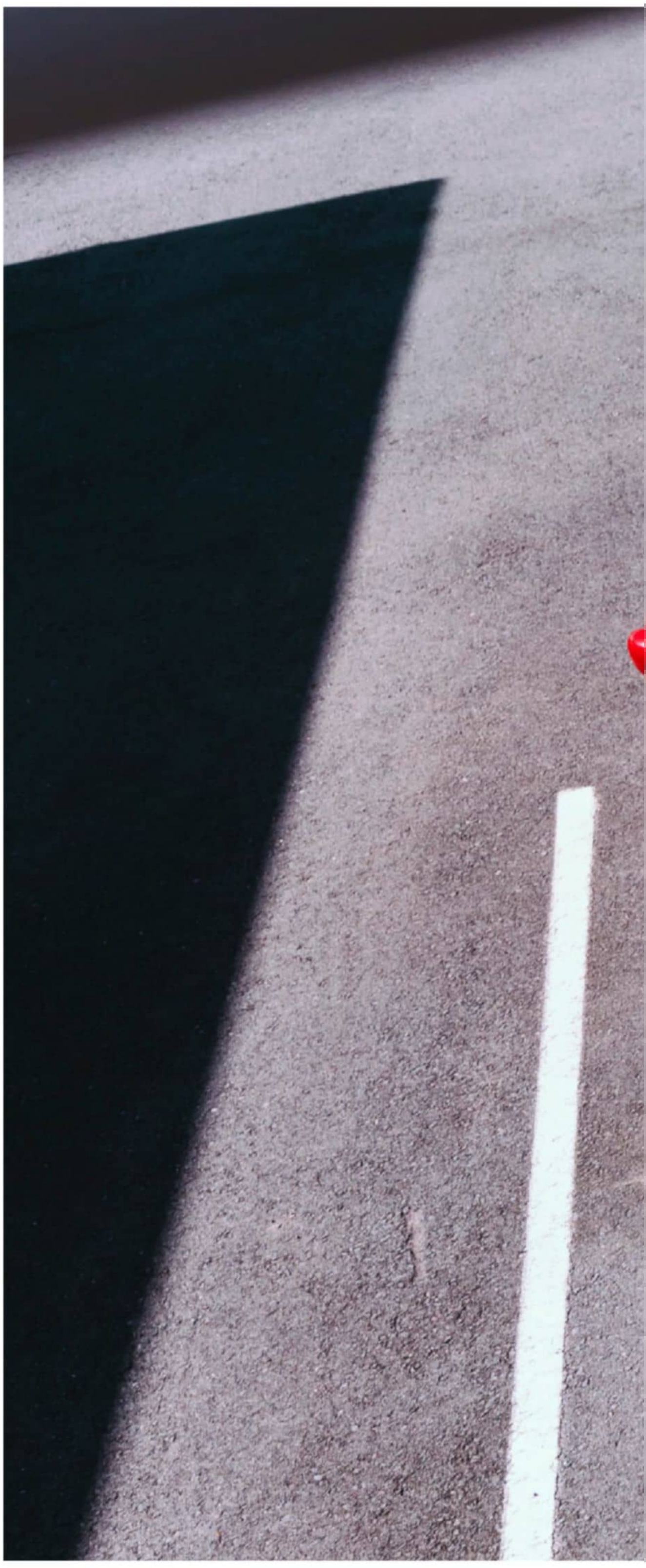
The F40 had a pair of bright red leather-trimmed seats that were close to racing buckets, a simple three-spoked Momo leather wheels, the trademark gated gearshift for the five-speed box. Its brakes were Group C, vented and drilled with alloy centres affixed to their cast-iron centres to reduce unsprung weight. Bright red seats? What other conceivable colore?

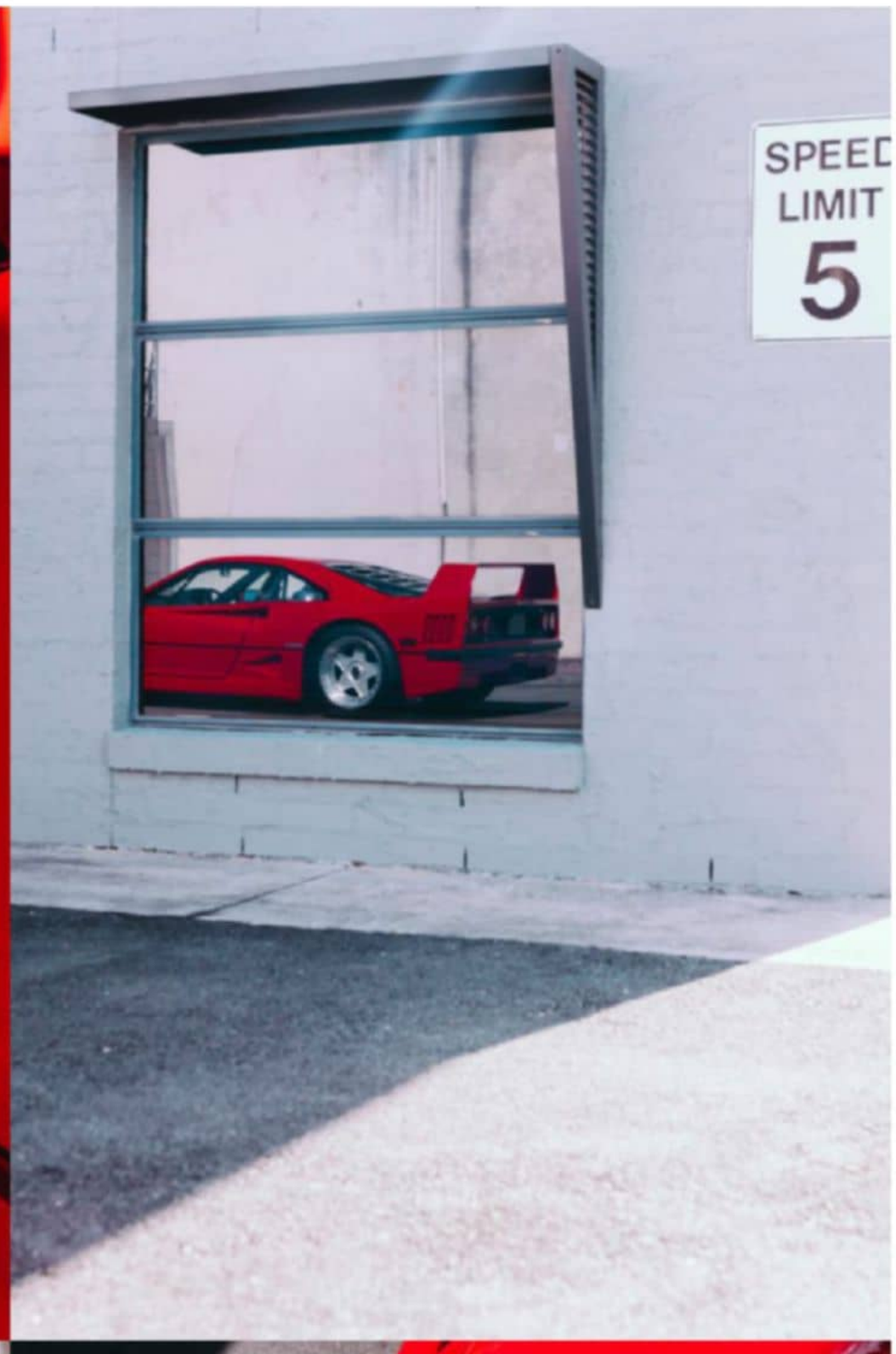
In 1987, Australia's proudly larrikin Rhodes-Scholarship-winning Prime Minister Bob Hawke with his famous coiffure and winning ways cruised the world. Maggie Thatcher won her third term in the UK. Michael Jackson and Fleetwood Mac were huge. Was everything getting too much? On 19 October the world experienced the biggest stock market collapse since the Great Depression.

As the swinging sixties made way for the sombre seventies, so did the extravagant eighties surrender to the nuanced nineties where safety became a major driver of automotive design.

It is worth briefly considering the F40 and the 959 in the context of 2019.Even Ferrari's entry level model, the Portofino, makes nearly 100kW more than the F40. Most 992-series 911s are faster than the 959. But here is where the racing genetic inheritance of the 1987 Ferrari asserts itself. The F40 weighed 1100kg dry; the Portofino 1664. The 959 weighed 1459kg; the 911 992 Carrera 1540. Get it: how pure was the F40?

When prototypes of the F40 began circulating Fiorano, Enzo exclaimed to a mate: 'This car is so fast it'll make you shit your pants'. It was the Old Man's last proud, contemptuous gesture to everyone else in the motoring world. Porsche would not get serious about stripped-down road racer specials until 1993 when the




SPEED
LIMIT
5

first 911 GT2 was introduced.

It seems that Enzo Ferrari had developed a greater interest in the road car business since the days when he vetoed the Ford buyout bid. The same year he showed the F40, he protested successfully about owner Fiat's plan to manufacture a luxury four-door Ferrari sedan. Nineteen eight-seven was about the last time in history when a car like the F40 – but has there ever been any other car like the F40? – could be legally registered for road use. Enzo Ferrari had masterminded his own dream machine. Not for him the safety and avoirdupois of 4WD or a kerb weight of 1459kg; for all its power-dressing, the F40 was, like its creator, interested only in speed: it was unique in the way the Volkswagen Beetle and the very first Porsche 911 were – utterly original, pared to a purity of expression that could be called Bauhaus, spawning no imitators, unforgettable.

It was said that the F40 could lap Fiorani quicker than the 1980 Grand Prix car. The fact that even some super sedans of 2019 are quicker is absolutely beside the point. Think of it like this: in 1987 Holden's fastest road car, the VL Commodore Turbo, had a top speed of 217km/h (135mph); any car with a zero to 100km/h time much below 10 seconds was still considered quick. The gap between the quickest Ferrari and a high performance sedan has closed dramatically.

Unlike the civilised Porsche 959, the Ferrari F40 moved quickly from being a current model supercar to being an appreciating collectible. It shows no signs of rivalling the car which Enzo wanted it to honour (the GTO), but the F40 will always be a blue chip automotive classic.

That comparison between the F40 and the 959 poses one of the best question asked in the art world: what do we mean by 'best'?

NINETEEN EIGHT-SEVEN WAS ABOUT THE LAST TIME IN HISTORY WHEN A CAR LIKE THE F40 COULD BE LEGALLY REGISTERED FOR ROAD USE.

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# NOEL TUCKEY

## AKA GEORGE AMBROSE

WORDS **BRUCE MCMHAON**

PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

Noel Tuckey is a man of many talents, proud owner of three curious machines, a decent set of tools and a well-worn writing desk.

Among the cars are a pair of DKWs and a lightweight Rochdale coupe; among his writings are those ever-entertaining, ever-educational Dirty Wheels columns in Australia's Wheels magazine, filed under the byline George Ambrose.

The teenaged Tuckey was best at art and English but his widowed mother – his father was killed in New Guinea in World War II – wanted him to be a motor mechanic. Many cars, many motor races and thousands of words later, the semi-retired Tuckey admits he's had a long and varied career as both mechanic and writer.


19
HINE COAST
CAR CLUB

ANDREW MUSTARD WITH ROCHDALE, ADELAIDE.


FEBRUARY, 1963. BLUEBIRD AND ROCHDALE COUPE.
REGISTERED NUMBER 114 DNX

‘I started out as an apprentice mechanic in Taree (New South Wales)’, Noel says. ‘But I had to teach myself mechanics really. They didn’t teach me much in the dealerships and I ended up doing all sorts of jobs – service manager, workshop foreman, the spare parts bloke….’

He moved to Cairns in Queensland and one weekend decided to write about his experiences in car dealerships, called it ‘One Day in Hell’ and sent it off to Wheels.

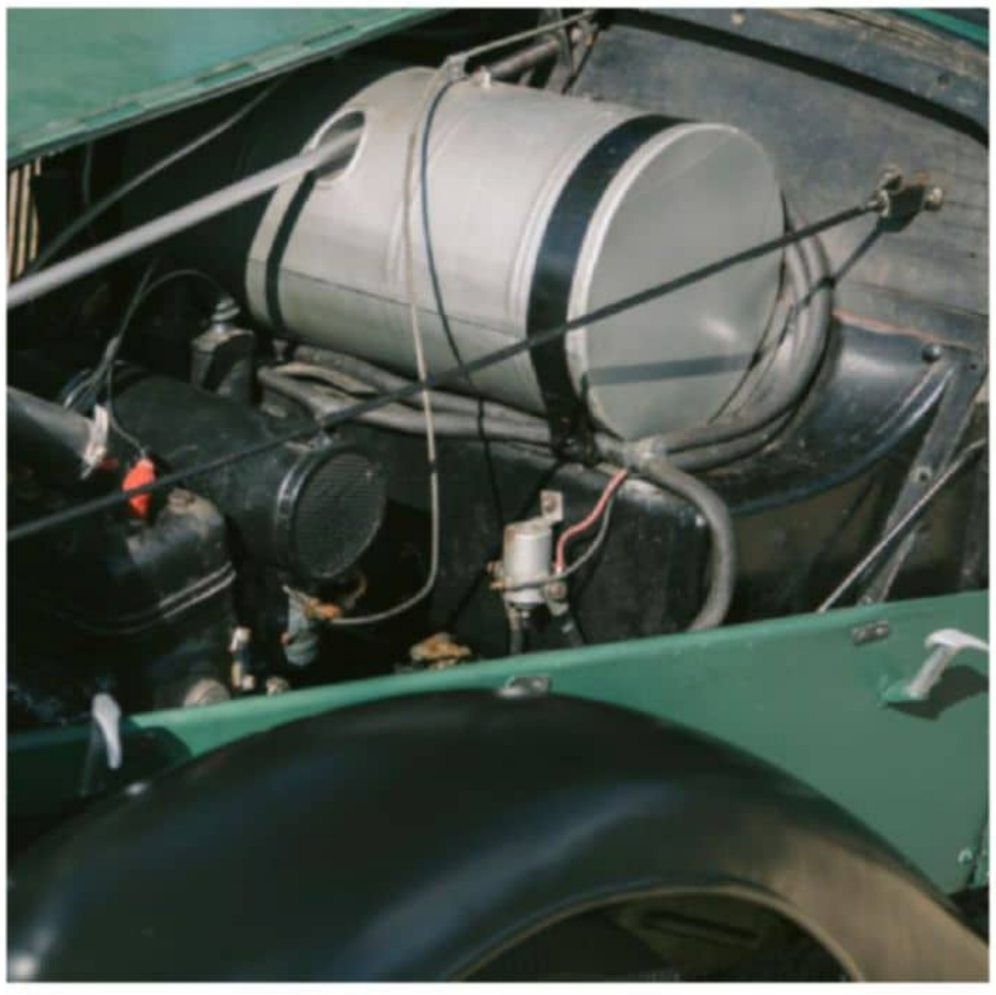
Then editor Peter Robinson liked it, said just cut the lead sentence in half and we’ll run it. Can you write some more, he asked. ‘And I said, “if you pay me, yes I will”. That’s how that started and I taught myself photography later on and I was a photo-journalist for 44 years’.

NOEL TUCKEY, AKA GEORGE AMBROSE, IS NOTHING IF NOT ORIGINAL.

Noel, younger brother to the late motoring writer Bill Tuckey, had truckloads of experience through those years to fire up typewriter and then computer – still does with an ongoing Dirty Stuff column in Street Machine magazine.

His first car was a 1920s Buick, cut down into a ute. Then there was a 1936 Standard coupe and somewhere in there a 1951 2.5 litre Riley sedan before he took to Triumph motorbikes and company cars.


DKW

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In his mid-20s Noel got into motor racing, built up Queensland's fastest FE Holden, then looked after a Centaur race car before heading south to fettle a Lola T70.

For some 25 years he was a semi-professional race mechanic and in 1974 resurrected a 1955 Ferrari Super Squalo sitting idle in George Gilltrap's museum on the Gold Coast. That ex-Grand Prix car took two hours to start at every meeting, towing it to bring up fuel and oil pressures, changing over a complicated fuel mixture and swapping to eight race spark plugs before heading to the grid. Plus an engine rebuild every 500 miles.

Yet it remains one of the man's all-time Noel thinks he's probably getting about 30 horsepower out of the modded side-valve four-cylinder Ford engine, mated to a 105E four-speed gearbox. And reckons the 800kg coupe goes 'quite well' around Lakeside with its transverse upper leaf, wishbones and mini shock absorbers up front with five-link rear end with coil-over dampers.


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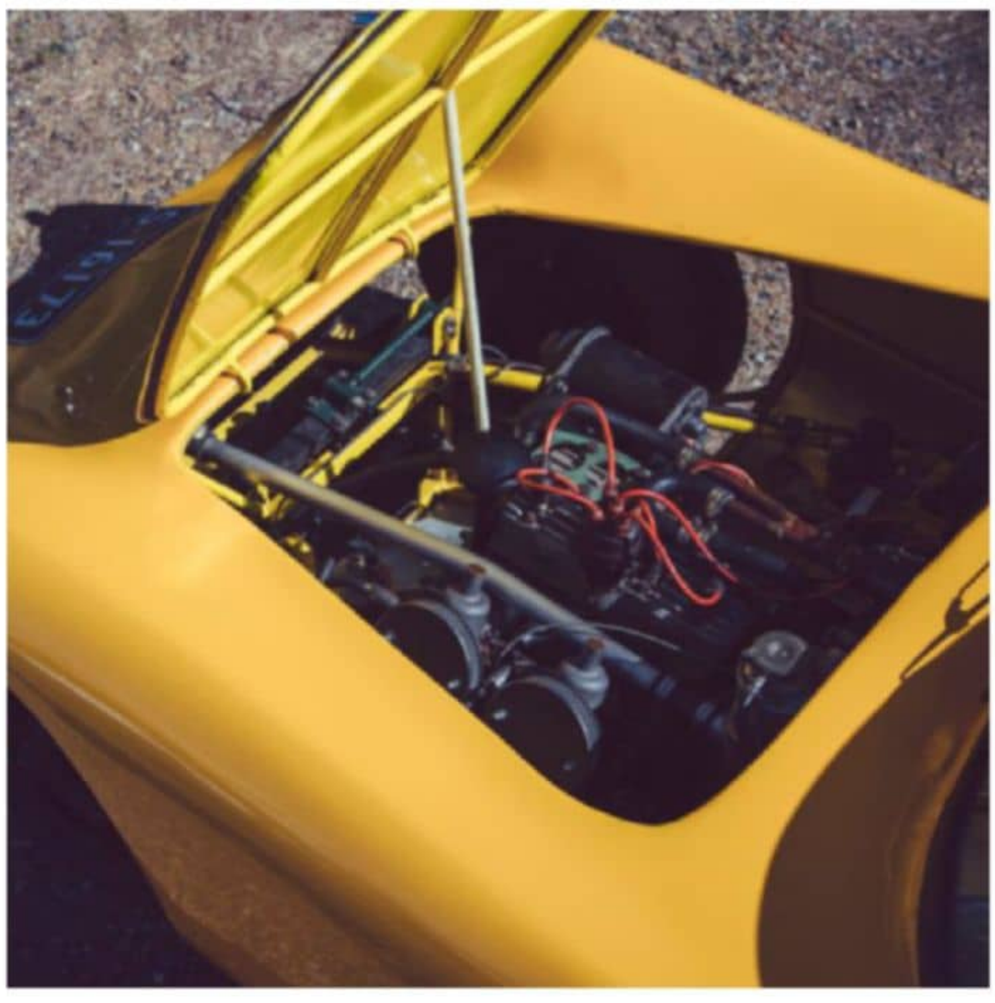

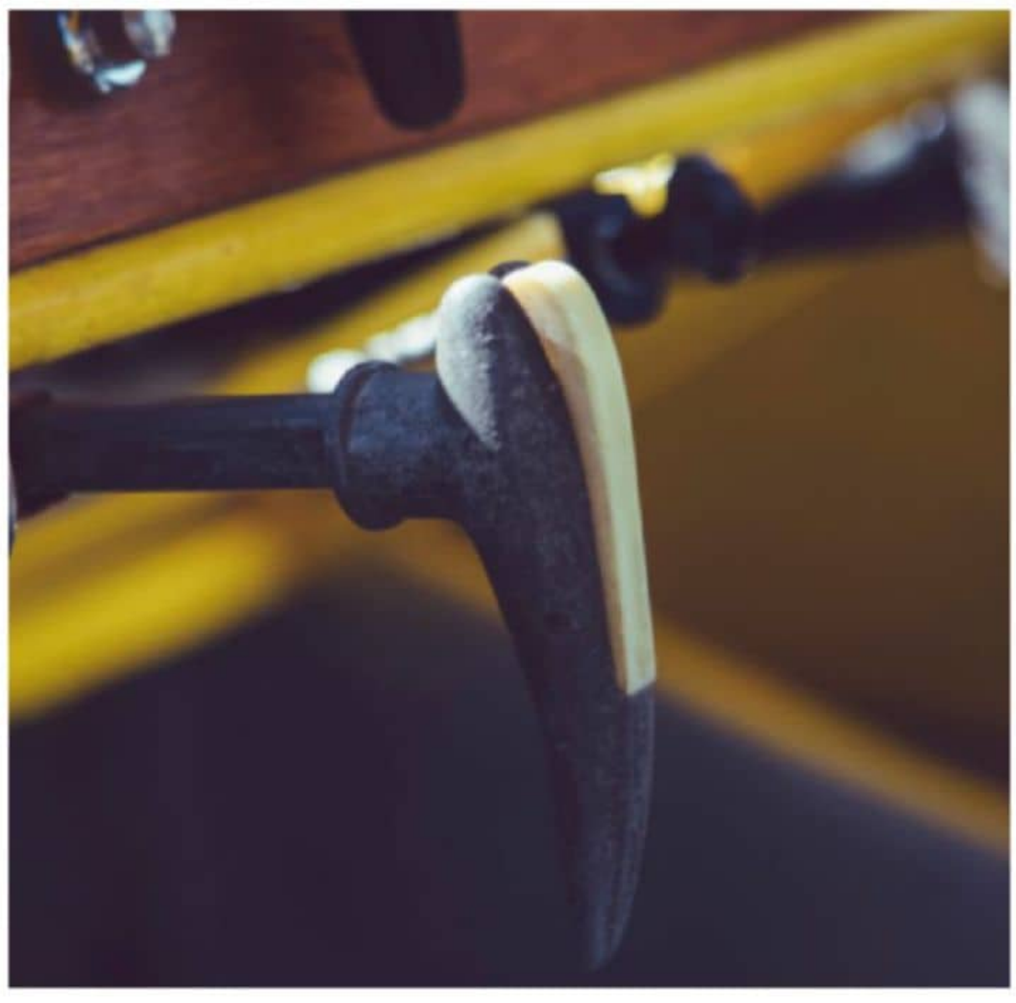


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But the German-built, front-wheel drive DKWs – both 1938 F7 models which arrived in Melbourne as rolling chassis before being farmed out to body builders late that year – are for road. not track.

Noel's DKW Tourer cost him $4000 in 1991 and took ten years to rebuild; his partly-rebuilt sedan and a pile of parts cost $3000 in 2016. The mechanicals, he says, are a touch complex because of the company's motorbike heritage; if the pistons don't go in exactly right for instance that 584cc motor just won't run. But the smoking two-cylinder, two-stroke engines are great for killing off mosquitoes on his southern Queensland rural block and maybe a top speed of 80km/h.

Does the half-finished red two-door sedan today look like the makings of a hot rod? 'No, no', says Noel. 'It's going back to original, I have all the rest of it and quite a few spares. I have a thing about originality'.

Noel Tuckey, AKA George Ambrose, is nothing if not original.

# OLDSMOBILE TORONADO

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

Oldsmobile embraced innovation and forward thinking in an era when other American manufacturers were principally concerned with size and speed. This was the General Motors brand which usually pioneered breakthrough technology. Oldsmobile took chances where others didn't and in doing so, created some truly innovative engineering for its vehicles.

For model year 1940, Oldsmobile was the first automotive manufacturer to offer a fully automatic transmission, the Hydra-Matic (later Hydramatic). The company's engineers worked with industrial turbocharger manufacturer Garrett to produce the first production turbo car, the 1962 Oldsmobile Turbo Jetfire. Oldsmobile was also the first US manufacturer since 1929 (Cord) to release a new front-wheel-drive production car, the Toronado.

While the Mini is considered by many to be the most successful commercially available front-wheel-drive drive car to date, something as big and audacious as


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OLDSMOBILE EMBRACED INNOVATION AND FORWARD THINKING IN AN ERA WHEN OTHER AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS WERE PRINCIPALLY CONCERNED WITH SIZE AND SPEED.


Toronado

the Toronado with drive to its front wheels was unheard of in the 1960s, even though this configuration was first seen in the first decade of the twentieth century.

John Walter Christie was the first person to patent a front-wheel-drive design (1904). Although he was better known for developing suspension systems for tanks during the war – Christie's front-wheel-drive car still managed a modest 50 horsepower and competed in the 1906 Vanderbilt Cup and French Grand Prix.

Race car builder Harry Miller designed the 'Miller 122' front-wheel-drive car that ran in the 1925 Indianapolis 500. In 1926,

OLDSMOBILE TOOK CHANCES WHERE OTHERS DIDN'T AND IN DOING SO, CREATED SOME TRULY INNOVATIVE ENGINEERING FOR ITS VEHICLES

Cornelius Willett Van Ranst and Tommy Milton built a variation of Miller's car called the Detroit Special.

Van Ranst went on to work for Cord Automotive, who had bought Miller's patents for front-wheel-drive cars. Van Ranst was heavily involved in the development of the The Cord L-29 which was produced from 1930 to 1932 and was the first American front-wheel-drive production car.

The idea for a front-wheel-drive car had been kicking around Oldsmobile since about 1958, but never gained traction due to the associated costs in developing it on a smaller platform. A larger, more expensive car was needed to offset the development costs.

It wasn't until 1962 when a design painting by Oldsmobile stylist David North known as 'that flame red car' stirred a bit of movement on the project. His design was never intended to make it off the drawing board – it was more of a palate-cleanser – a way to break the monotony of working continuously on facelifts and upgrades to bread and butter lines.

However, to North's surprise, only a few weeks after the finished painting was circulated through the office – boss man Bill Mitchell quickly realised the potential in the design, and it was given the nod to be the basis for a compact sports car for model year 1966.

As the design team got to work, they were unaware that the yet to be named car (Project XP-784) would prove to be the catalyst to propel the front-wheel-drive project into production. The Toronado's powertrain – Unitised Power Package (UPP)

– took up no more room in the engine bay than a conventional V8 of the time. It also provided more interior space in the cabin with completely flat floors.

Eight cobbled-together 1963 Dynamic 88s were used for early road-testing of Oldsmobile's new drivetrain and by October 1964 four hand-built prototypes that closely resembled the final design were being tested outside of the proving grounds. When combined with testing already undertaken within the grounds the total was more than 1.5 million miles. Oldsmobile's engineers were leaving nothing to chance. They were adamant their new system would be durable and reliable.

The resulting Toronado was built on a platform larger than initially intended but retained a lot of the styling cues from the original painting – clean lines and pumped-out guards.

The Toronado's unique drivetrain didn't undermine its performance, despite a hefty kerb weight of 2041kg. The slightly worked big block 425 cubic inch engine still had the chops to pull 16.4 seconds at 150 km/h down the quarter mile in comfort with a top speed of around 217km/h. Handling was on par with other similar sized sporty cars of the time.

The car gained publicity for GM by winning Motor Trend's Car of the Year Award and Car Life's Award for Engineering Excellence.

The Toronado featured here found its way into an eclectic collection of cars owned by brothers Carl and Grant Amor. Carl had a Corgi model of a gold Toronado when he was a youngster and had been searching for one for the last five years.

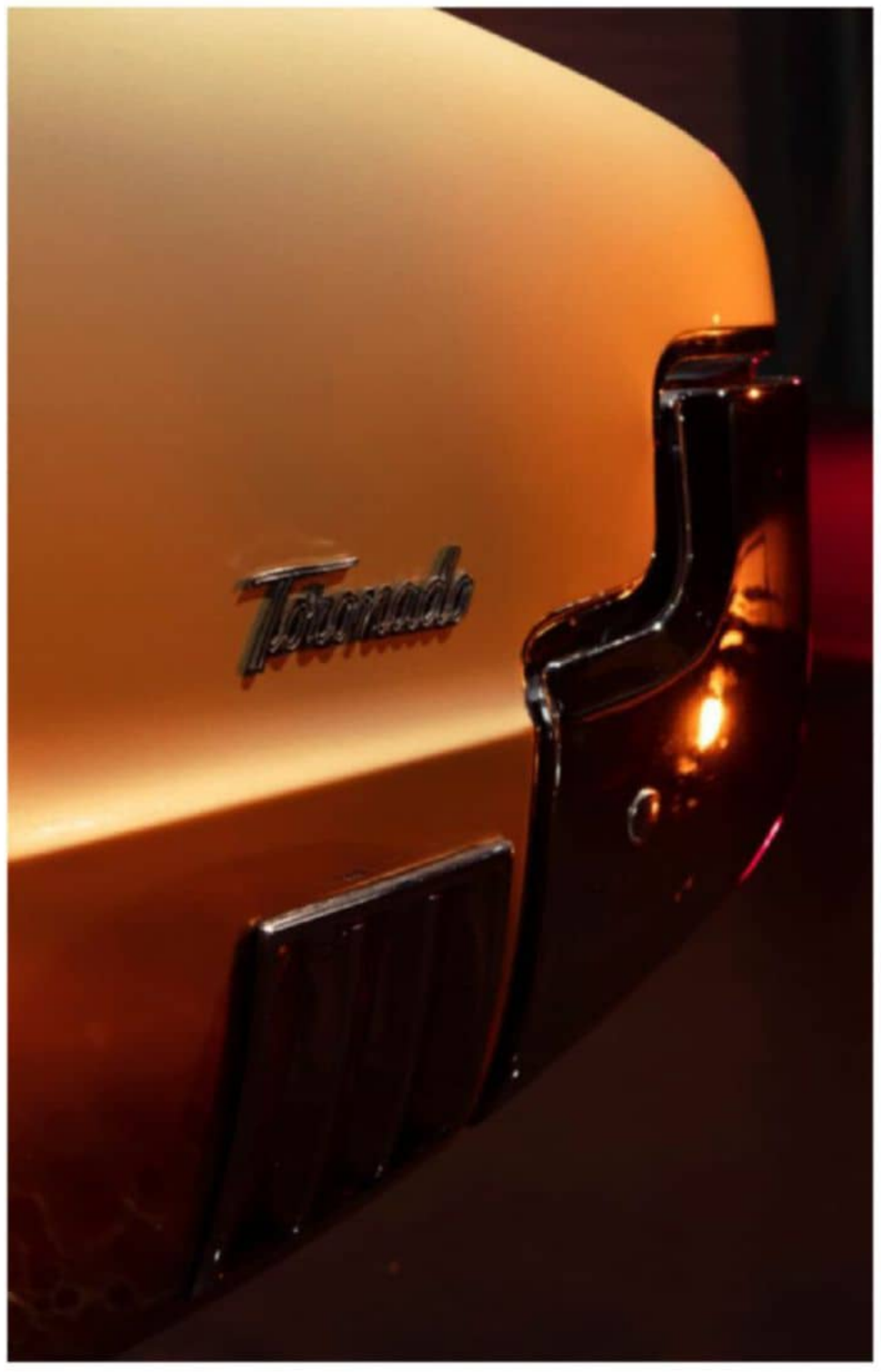
'I've always had a soft spot for this car – it was innovative for its time. It has some cool features too'.

THE TORONADO'S UNIQUE DRIVETRAIN DIDN'T UNDERMINE ITS PERFORMANCE, DESPITE A HEFTY KERB WEIGHT OF 2041KG

Aside from the aforementioned engineering innovations, the Toronado also has a unique 'Slot Machine' style speedometer – the horizontal needle remains stationary while a vertically rotating drum displaying the numerals descends as the vehicle gains speed: 'Jackpot!'

Also, by happy coincidence, the brothers have a 1936 Cord in the collection – one of the first American-produced front-


OLDSMOBILE


Tornado

wheel-drive cars. Call it the Toronado's long lost cousin, twice removed...

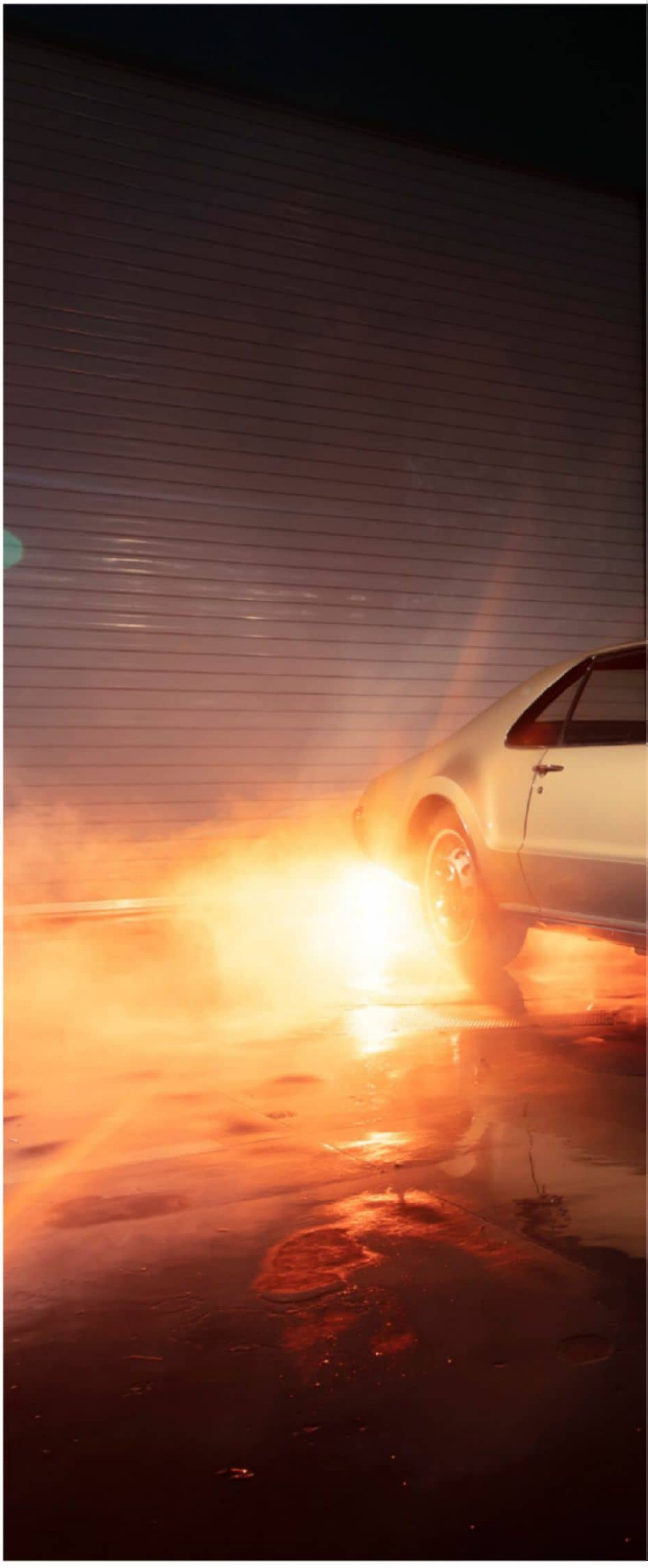
'Grant liked the Cord more so than me, but that's what makes it work for us'. The decisions on cars to be added to the collection may not always be unanimous, but Carl and Grant understand the need for individual freedom in automotive desires.

'Our father had a great collection of cars when we were growing up', says Grant. 'Hudsons, Chryslers, Model T Fords and such. He died when I was 16, so we had to sell the collection to keep things going for Mum. He always wanted to have a car museum and that's something that until recently we thought wouldn't be attainable in our lifetime'.

'When we realised we might actually be able to bring the museum to life, collecting for us became more about the museum, rather than what we personally wanted'.

'We have a broad respect for all marques and have cars ranging from 1911 to 1988 – if it's a cool car, I don't care whether it's a Ford, Holden or Buick'.

Work has already commenced on the Gold Coast Motor Museum which will be open for business in the first half of 2020. It will feature sixty-three of the brothers' cars as well as rotating exhibits from other collections.

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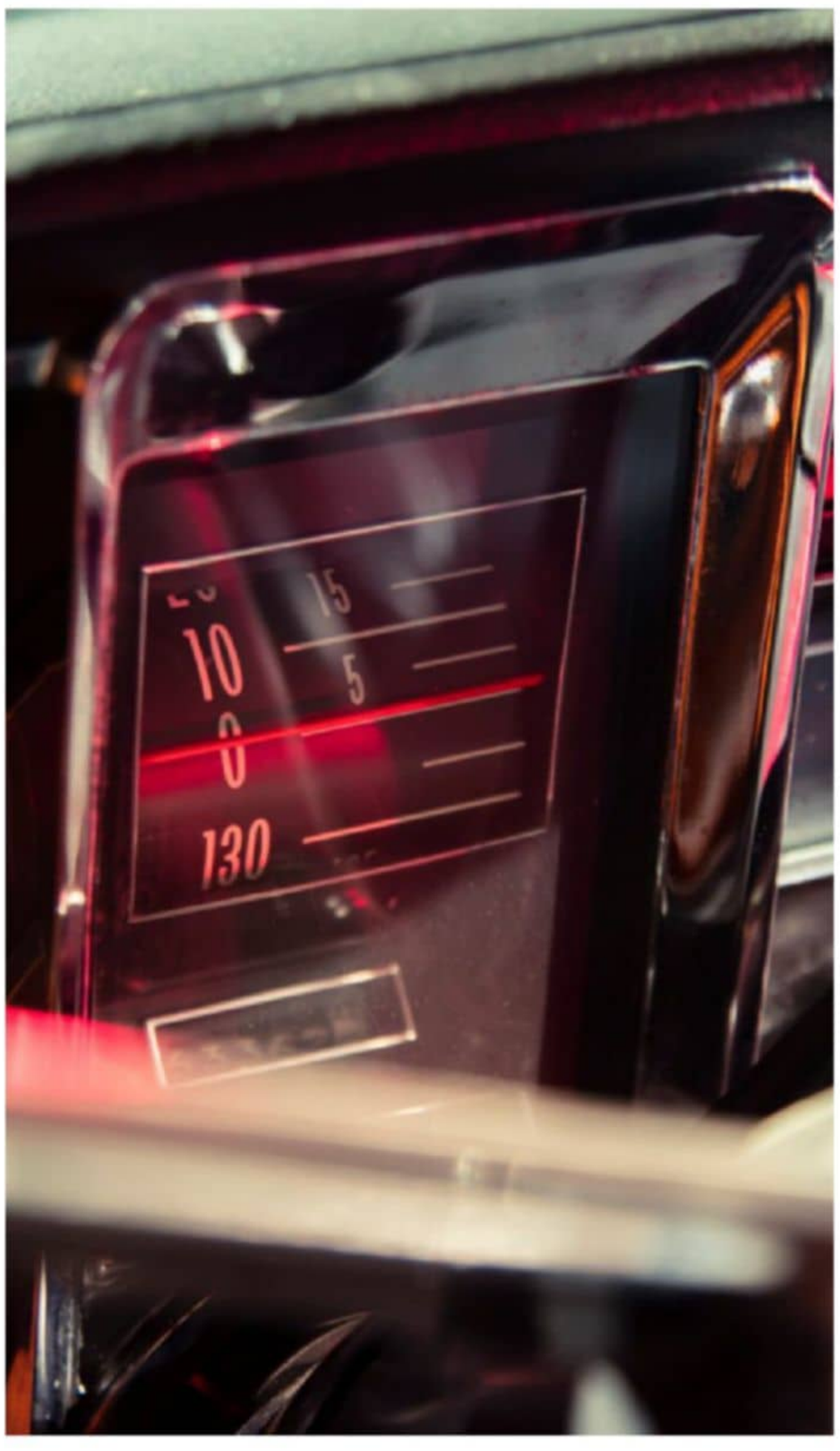
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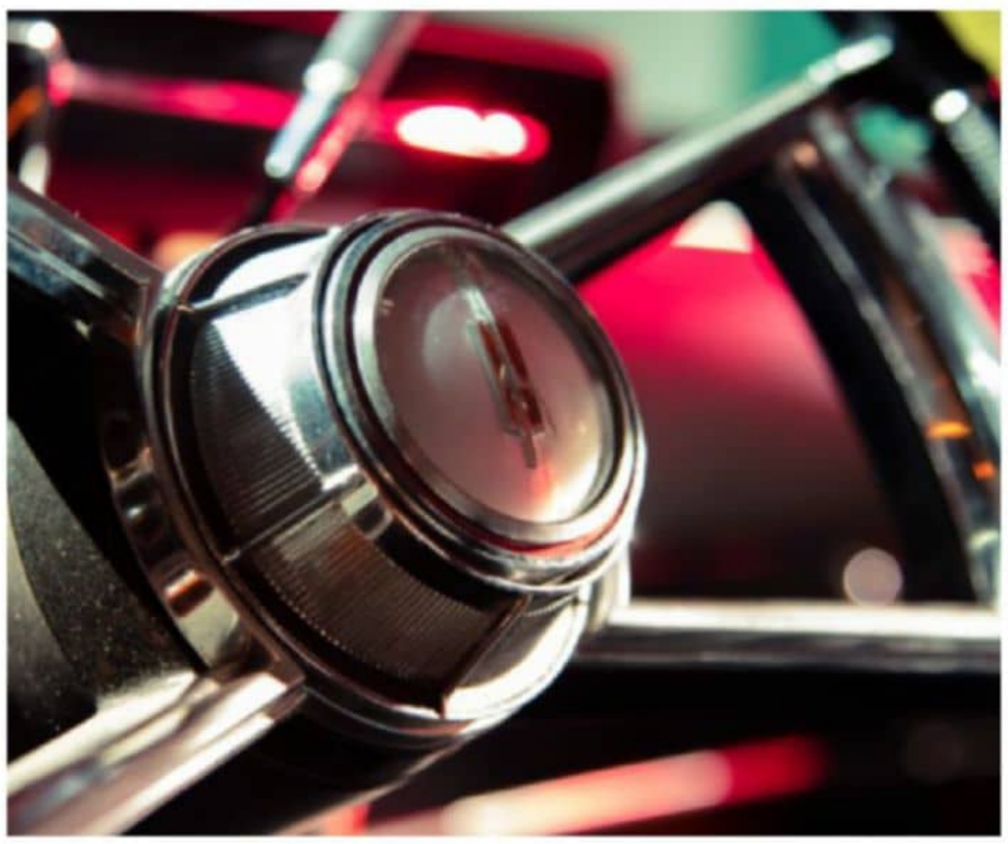


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Firenza

# HERON

## MJ1

WORD **PATRICK HARLOW**

PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

Many people wrongly think of the Trekka as being New Zealand's only production car. It is one of four farm utility vehicles produced as a turn-key product, the others being the Terra, the Trailmaker and the Duzgo. The crown for New Zealand's most successful production supercar is, in my opinion, the Heron – a supercar manufactured in Rotorua.

Some will disagree with me calling the Heron a supercar. However, it is very hard to define what a supercar is, and, in this instance, I have gone with a definition put together by Jeff Glucker, an automotive correspondent:

Supercars are mystic creatures that stalk empty backroads where they can't be bothered by lesser machines. They inhabit our hearts, our minds... and the posters of the walls belonging to our younger selves.

Judged by the above definition, the Heron ticks all the boxes. In the first half of the 1980s, if you wanted to look good, go fast and drive a car that handled well, you had a choice: you could buy European – Lamborghini, Ferrari, Porsche - go British with Lotus, or Japanese with the ummm...

But when the Heron MJ1 came on the scene, NZ buyers had an alternative option and it was NZ made!

Having said that, for many who read this story it will be the first time that they have seen or even heard of the Heron MJ1. It was a car designed by Ross Baker, an A-grade mechanic, based in Rotorua, who could not only fix cars but also create them using processes that were outside conventional thinking, and innovative for the day. For a brief time during the early '80s, this incredible sports car was manufactured in a small factory in Rotorua. Paul MacDiarmid, who was one of the principal people involved in the manufacture of its fibreglass monocoque body, remembers it, 'as a wild ride'. Sadly, this amazing car is all but forgotten.

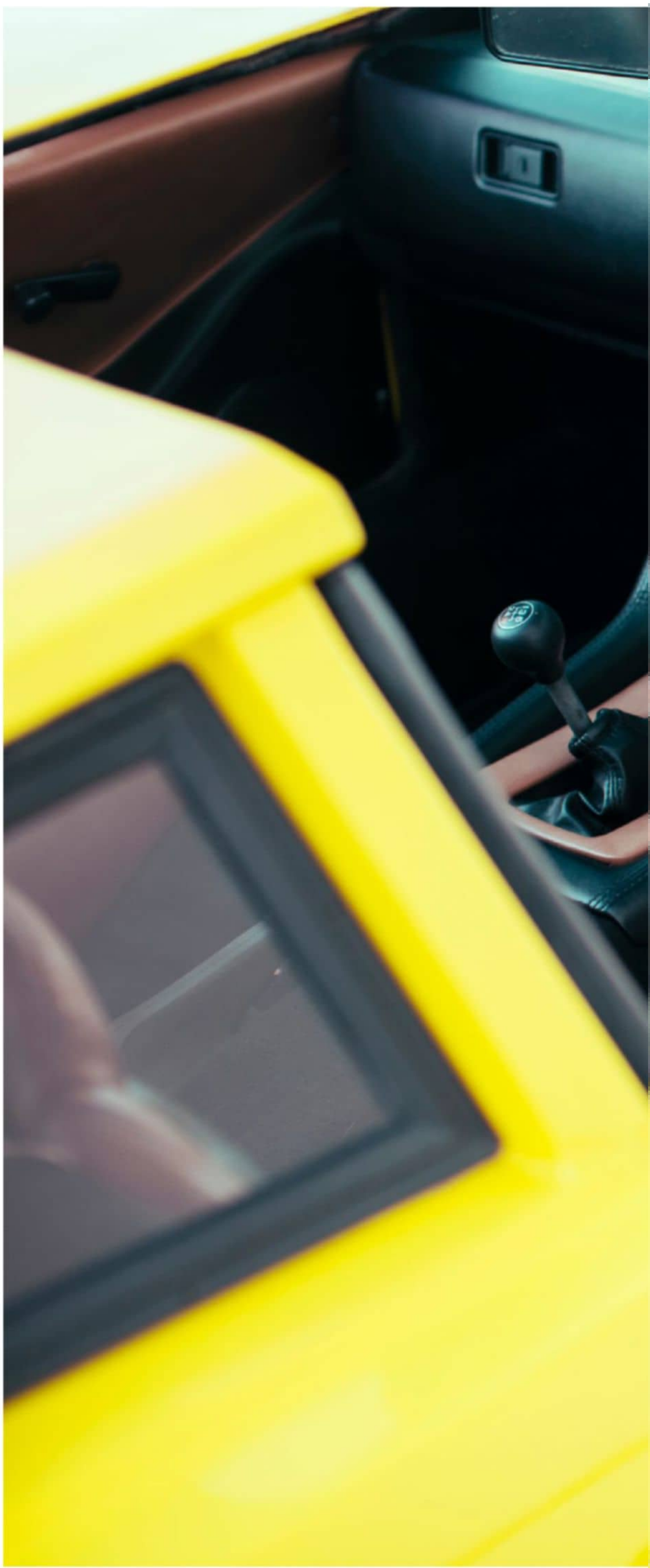
Unlike most other fibreglass cars, hardly any steel plates or metal members are moulded into the body, nor is the bodywork mounted onto a steel chassis. Ross believed that the two materials were incompatible with different expansion and contraction rates and in degree of flexibility. The only concessions to this are a steel rollbar glassed into each door pillar – which also gives a solid mount for the door latches and seatbelt mounts – and, where greater strength was

needed for suspension-mounting points, a patented stainless-steel mesh system was bonded into the fibreglass. All this at a time when fibreglass monocoque cars were unheard of.

Mechanically, the motor was Fiat, with the suspension and drivetrain componentry provided by Skoda, including the transaxle and gearbox. Skoda parts were used as they were simple yet very robust and relatively inexpensive. The instrument cluster comes from the Holden Camira.

At its public debut at the 1983 Motor Expo, it was a sensation. Ross had promised his team that if 10 people showed interest in the car he would shout them dinner. By the end of the show, he had 350 names from people who had expressed an interest. This would eventually turn into 32 confirmed buyers, complete with deposits and dinner was duly provided!

Ross had intended that the car be sold as a kit or built in their factory for around $16,000, using mechanical components provided by the car's owner. However, before he started gearing up for production, he was convinced by Frank Hart, of Summit Engineering, that a car this good should




TWIN CAM 20


TWIN CAM 20

only be sold brand new, and turn-key. Frank even offered to become the project's main financial backer and offered to purchase two-thirds of the Heron Company. At the time, the offer seemed too good to be true and although Ross would later regret it, he agreed to Frank's terms. Once it became a new car, it immediately attracted the 20% 'luxury items' sales tax in place at the time.

One of the many changes that Summit made was to have the original 1.6-litre motor changed to a brand new 2.0-litre Fiat motor. Ross had designed the car around the 1.6-litre unit, and the 2.0-litre meant that parts would have to be beefed up and possibly changed to take the greater power. Summit Engineering was looking for a quick return on its investment, so any development work had to be done while the car was in production. As a consequence of this imperfect design/development process, cars left the factory that Ross knew would return under warranty. He was not happy with this situation but Summit Engineering was now the majority shareholder: Ross had lost control.

Eventually, including the prototypes, a total of 20 production cars were built but with the in-production design changes, sales tax, and the additional burden of the warranty claims the price of the Heron kept on increasing. By the time production ceased in 1985 the cost for a new Heron was $27,500 (about the same price as a new Commodore), and although at this price it was profitable it could not compete with other acceptable sports cars, such as the Japanese import Mazda RX-7s, which were then selling for $18,000. With the rapid increase in price, many of the people who had paid a deposit for the Heron asked for their money back.

On top of this Summit decided to back out of the car business, as it was not getting a reasonable return, so Ross opted to buy back the rights to the Heron and the moulds. Production officially stopped in 1985. Although a few more cars were sold as kits (to use up parts that had been accumulated), its day was done. As a testament to the quality of the initial design, most of the cars still exist, although one car caught fire and another was stolen and ended up in the Waikato River.

What is not so well known is that 'Heron' was not the first choice of

SUPERCARS ARE MYSTIC CREATURES THAT STALK EMPTY BACKROADS WHERE THEY CAN'T BE BOTHERED BY LESSER MACHINES.

THIS WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY MJ1 WITH A FACTORY INSTALLED TARGA ROOF

name for the marque. Ross Baker's first preference had been to give the cars he designed and produced the name 'Banshee'. It was on top of his list until he discovered that a banshee was a female spirit whose high-pitched wailing warns of death. Legend states that a banshee can be heard wailing nearby when someone is about to die. Possibly not the best name for a car. It was changed after Ross heard of a plane, called the Heron, which had completed some amazing feat on the South Island. Heron is also the name for a native New Zealand bird known in Maori as a Kotuku. He liked this name better and he went on to build several racing cars, farm machinery and electric vehicles under the Heron banner.

Besides cars, Rotorua-based Ross Baker has manufactured about 60 electric trucks, 50 electric golf carts, 150 go-carts and – just to be different – 100 bumper boats. But this story is about his unique electric car called the PC80.

The Heron MJ1 featured here is number 23 of 24 built. During 1991, Bob Adler bought one of the cars that were built up from parts after production had finished and its was the last Heron body to be manufactured by Paul MacDiarmid at Rotorua Fibreglass. This was the first and only MJ1 with a factory installed Targa roof as per an original early '80s concept sketch by Ross Baker. The other notable variation was a Honda 1500 drivetrain instead of the Fiat one.

It has since changed hands a number of times and is now part of a collection owned by Carl and Grant Amor. The Honda engine has been swapped out for a Toyota 20V 4AGE Toyota Twin Cam and has undergone extensive restoration work since crossing the ditch. The Amor brothers have plans to open a museum on the Gold Coast hinterland in 2020 where you'll be able to see this piece of super car history up close.

**SADLY, THIS AMAZING CAR IS ALL BUT FORGOTTEN.**

For a more detailed dive into the world of Ross Baker and Heron cars - Check out Heron MJ1 – The story of a New Zealand Supercar and the Man that Created it, by Patrick Harlow

Available from Wilson Scott publishers in New Zealand www.willsonscott.biz

EVENTUALLY, INCLUDING THE PROTOTYPES, A TOTAL OF 20 PRODUCTION CARS WERE BUILT

# ALFA ROMEO MONTREAL

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

I have very different tastes', Lloyd Muller informs me – almost apologetic for what I'm about to see. 'I'm not into any one particular car marque, I just love cars that are a bit different'. I think he's worried that I'll judge him or wonder what sort of madman would amass a collection of misfits and miscreants. We have been chatting for about 10 minutes and I continually catch a glimpse of something shiny through the doorway, beyond that under the wall of historic racing images, a what? Come on, Lloyd, you're killing me here, man.

He smiles and takes a deep breath and we walk into the shed. That shiny thing I could see through the doorway is a pristine, unmolested original Honda S2000, a future classic in anyone's book. Behind that is an Alpine GTA turbo and to the left is a beautifully restored Alfa Romeo Montreal. Which is named for the 1967 Expo in Québec, Montreal.

The theme for the 1967 Expo was, 'Man and his World'. As misogynistic as it sounds, it was essentially an exploration into the future of technology and where it would take us. Alfa

Romeo was chosen to produce a concept car representing the aspirations of the human as motorist. Alfa engaged Bertone to put together the concept, and style guru Gandini, hot off his triumph with the Miura, penned the design.

The Montreal concept was based on the Giulia Sprint GT and powered by a 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine. It didn't have a name at the time, so it was referred to as the 'Montreal Car'.

Another notable display at the 1967 Expo were four Oldsmobile Toranados customised by Hollywood go-to car man, George Barris (see page 40 for the much nicer non-Barris version). Personally, I think they were hideous and served to amplify the Montreal's beauty.

The 1967 Expo was considered to be the most successful of its kind, attracting an extraordinary 50 million people. The Alfa was received well which led to the car going into production. Initially, Alfa had the Montreal earmarked as a replacement for the Giulia, but thankfully they decided to turn it into something more exotic.

The production model had some differences to the concept. Notably, they kept the name but ditched the engine. Alfa already had recently designed a new V8 to power its 2.0-litre Tipo 33 sports racer.

It was an advanced engine at the time, using magnesium and lightweight materials. It remained a four-cam, 90-degree, alloy-block unit, dry-sumped for the Montreal, but Alfa increased the displacement to 2.6 litres, in which guise it produced 200 bhp and 173 lb-ft of torque. Drivetrain was a five-speed dogleg ZF gearbox – essentially, a race engine in a road car.

It used Giulia independent front and live-axle rear suspension. There were disc brakes all round.

On the outside it remained largely untouched. The futuristic vents covering the headlights flipped down when the lights were turned on (but were fixed on the concept car).

'I'M NOT INTO ANY ONE PARTICULAR CAR MARQUE, I JUST LOVE CARS THAT ARE A BIT DIFFERENT'.

A fake NACA duct was added to the bonnet whose only function is to disguise the engine bulge from the V8.

The resulting car was launched at the Salon de Geneva in 1970 and was more expensive than an E-type or a 911. Ironically, the Montreal wasn't sold in America or Canada as


139 EJZ

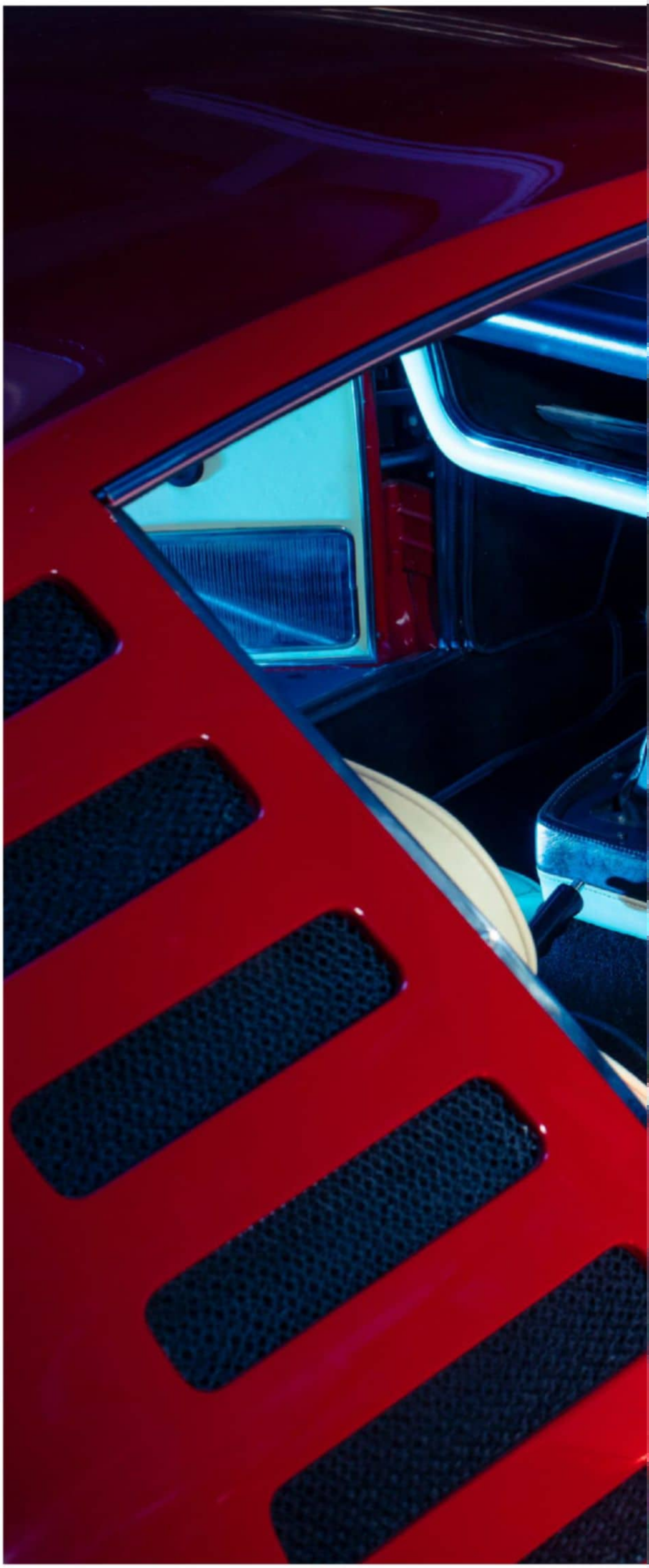
it didn’t pass the emissions legislation.

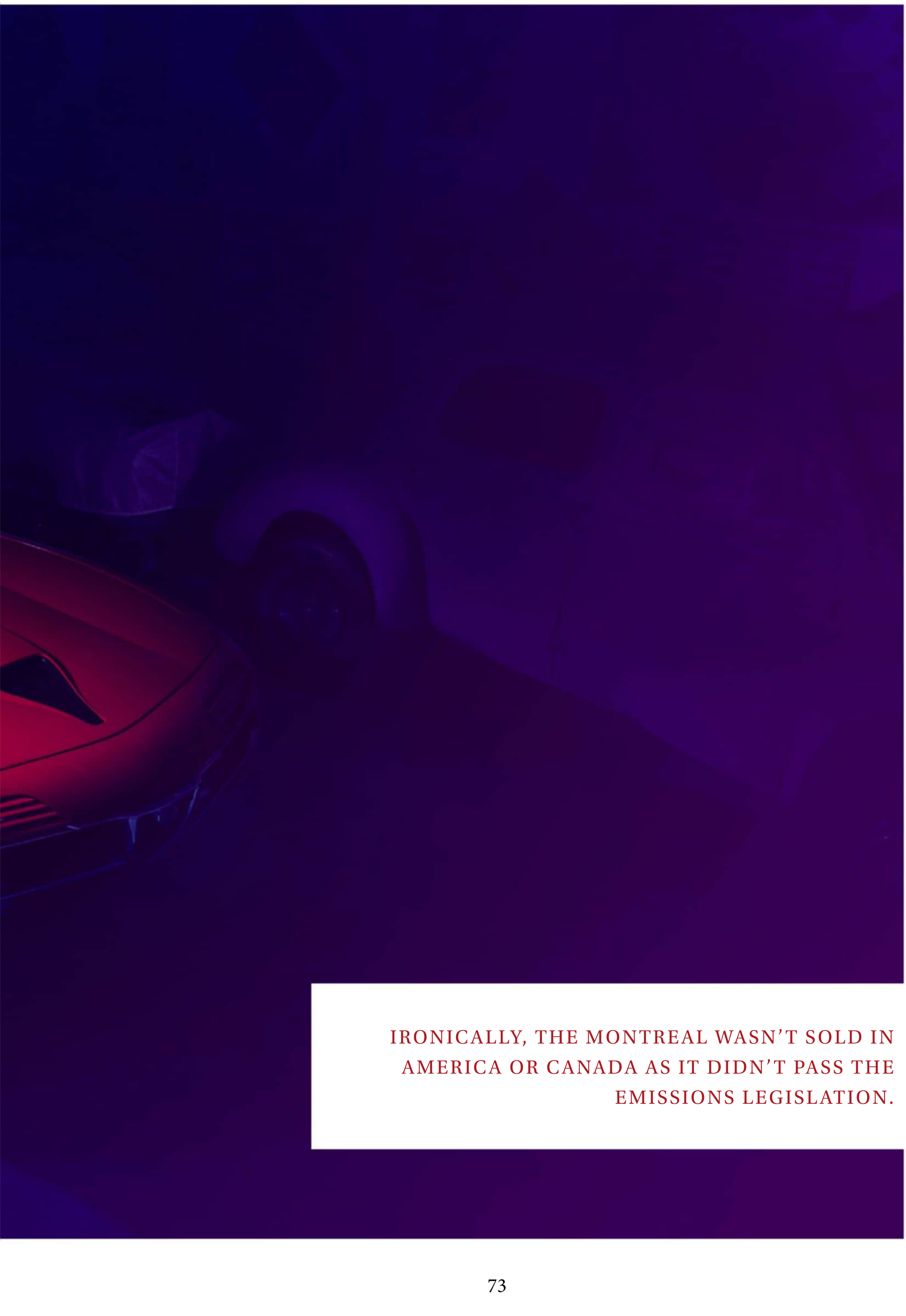
As with all Italian cars of the time – the numbers vary: depending on your source there was a total of up to 3917 built, 104 of which were RHD.

Lloyd has had this particular Montreal for almost 25 years. ‘When you get on a little in age, every birthday is an important milestone’, he chuckles. Lloyd celebrates the major ones with automotive gifts – usually in 1000 pieces and requiring as many hours to restore them. ‘I think this one came to me a little before my 50th’.

It was owned by David Rodd, who at the time was one of the new owners of a small retail outlet named JB Hi Fi. ‘He had the whole thing restored and re-built. It won a few concourses’. The Montreal made its way to Brisbane as part payment on a deal Rodd cut for one of the first Ferraris ever built, a 195 Ghia-Aigle S/N 0195 – unusual for being assembled in Switzerland.

‘It looked beautiful but there was a lot of bog and after about 10 years the paint started to bubble and do all sorts of nasty things’. Lloyd didn’t exactly know what to do with the car. He had experience repairing panels, but the type of restoration now needed was a little beyond his skill set. ‘I put it away for a while to think how I was going to do it’. Lloyd got in contact with local restorer,





IRONICALLY, THE MONTREAL WASN'T SOLD IN AMERICA OR CANADA AS IT DIDN'T PASS THE EMISSIONS LEGISLATION.

Jamie Pollard, who specialised in hot rods and worked out of a shed on his farm. 'He did all the fabrication and panel forming himself. He said, "I'll do it – but these things don't take five minutes you know."'

It took Jamie 500 hours to do the body work, 'because as you know – even Alfa windscreens rust'. Once the panels were complete it took Lloyd another year to put it all back together to form the gorgeous piece of work you see here.

'I might be a bit of an extremist when it comes to restoring my cars, but I like things the way I like things', he shrugs. 'I have a German background and it's hard to live with yourself sometimes because you have to do things exactly right'.

Lloyd was tempted to swap out the temperamental Spica mechanical fuel injection system for a set of Webers from a V8 Maserati he owned at the time. But at the last minute decided not to. The only thing which I think he struggles with is the cloth seats he re-trimmed in leather – looks period correct to me.

'The only other engine I've seen a distributor like this on was an old V12 Ferrari'. Lloyd pulls the top of the air cleaner off to show me another unique feature that usually goes unnoticed. 'On the race-bred versions of the Alfa V8 engine they had a vertical ram and they couldn't do that with the road car, so they converted them to go inside the air cleaner'.

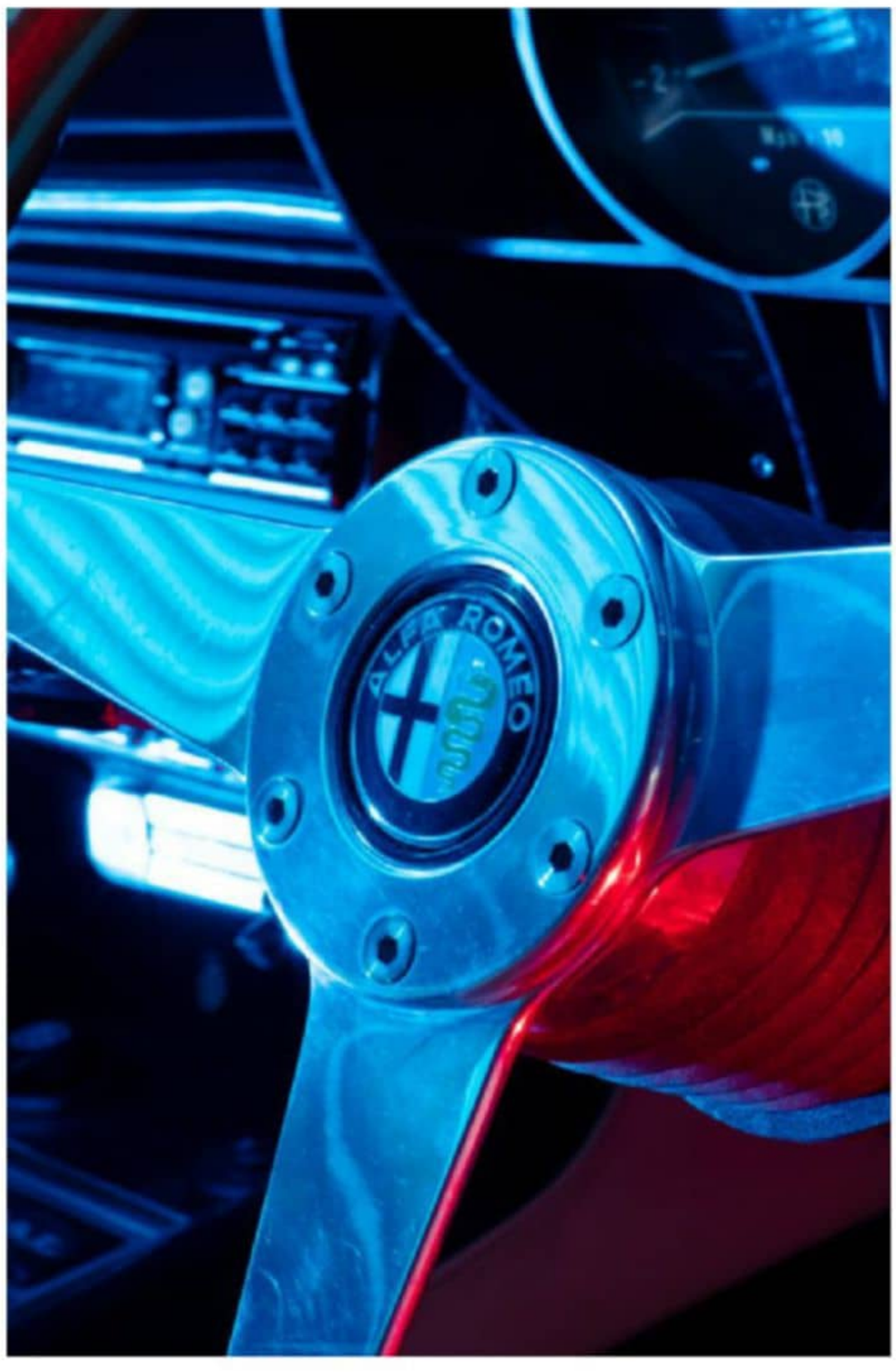
Before the Montreal underwent the full restoration, it was never used as a road car – instead, Lloyd used it on the track at Lakeside and Surfers Paradise. 'You can't drive these cars on the road – well you can, but there is no joy in someone else trying to run into you!'

IT WAS AN ADVANCED ENGINE AT THE TIME, USING MAGNESIUM AND LIGHTWEIGHT MATERIALS.

'As they were all hand-built and rarely consistently, getting parts is a nightmare and it is just easier to make them yourself'.

A technical teacher for most of his life, Lloyd has spent many hours in the shed battling his German perfectionism to restore a vast collection of cars spanning almost 60 years.

'It all started when me and my mates would restore FJ Holdens back in the '60s to fund running our MGs


ALFA ROMEO


MONTREAL

and Healeys'.

His collection, however, is dwindling as time and circumstances dictate a move to a smaller property without the luxury of the multi-bay man cave to house a diverse and extensive collection – 'Not much left now – but I still have a few things on the go'. He points to a cover that houses his last restoration project, a 1968 Alfa 1750 GTV.

'I MIGHT BE A BIT OF AN EXTREMISTWHEN IT COMES TO RESTORING MY CARS, BUT I LIKE THINGS THE WAY I LIKE THINGS'.

'This will be my last', he laments. 'I'll only have room for one car at the new place, so sadly this all this has to go'.

'The S2000 is all but sold. I think it took about thirty seconds for the phone to ring once I had placed the ad'. The GTA will go too and ultimately he will say goodbye to the Montreal which has been with him now for the better part of 25 years. 'I do like the Honda NSX, I might get one of those'.

The moving boxes have already started to encroach on his space, and in an act of defiance, they collect dust in the corner while his cars continue to remain spotless : Lloyd, the proud curator of a lifetime with cars...

# MORGAN

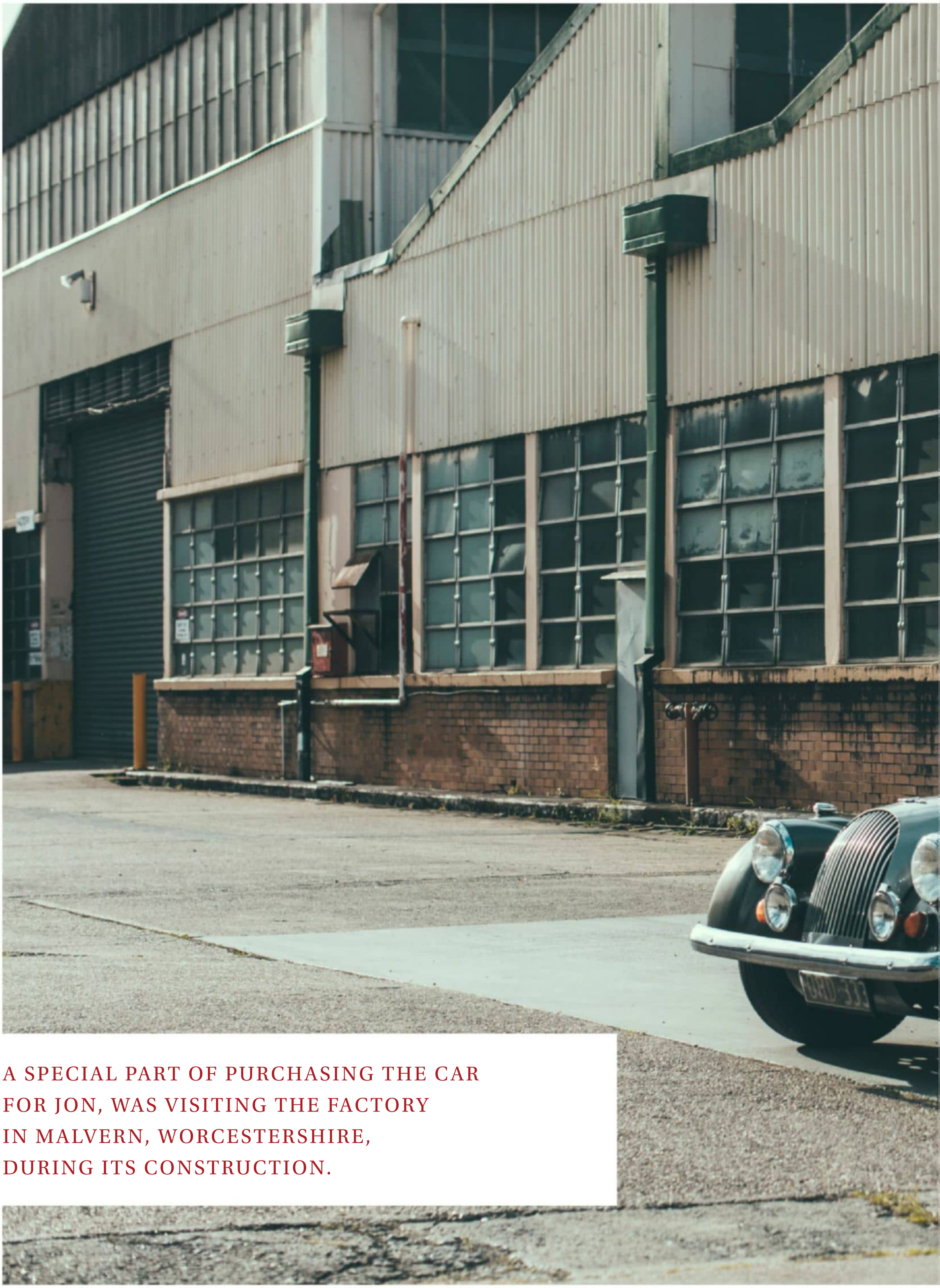
## PLUS 8

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

Jon Voller was raised on a steady diet of Vanguards, Vauxhalls, Triumphs and Rovers. His father, Ronald, was an avid subscriber to Autocar magazine and had a carefully curated collection dating back to the 1940s. It was between the pages of the aforementioned magazine that Jon first discovered the Morgan 8 Plus.

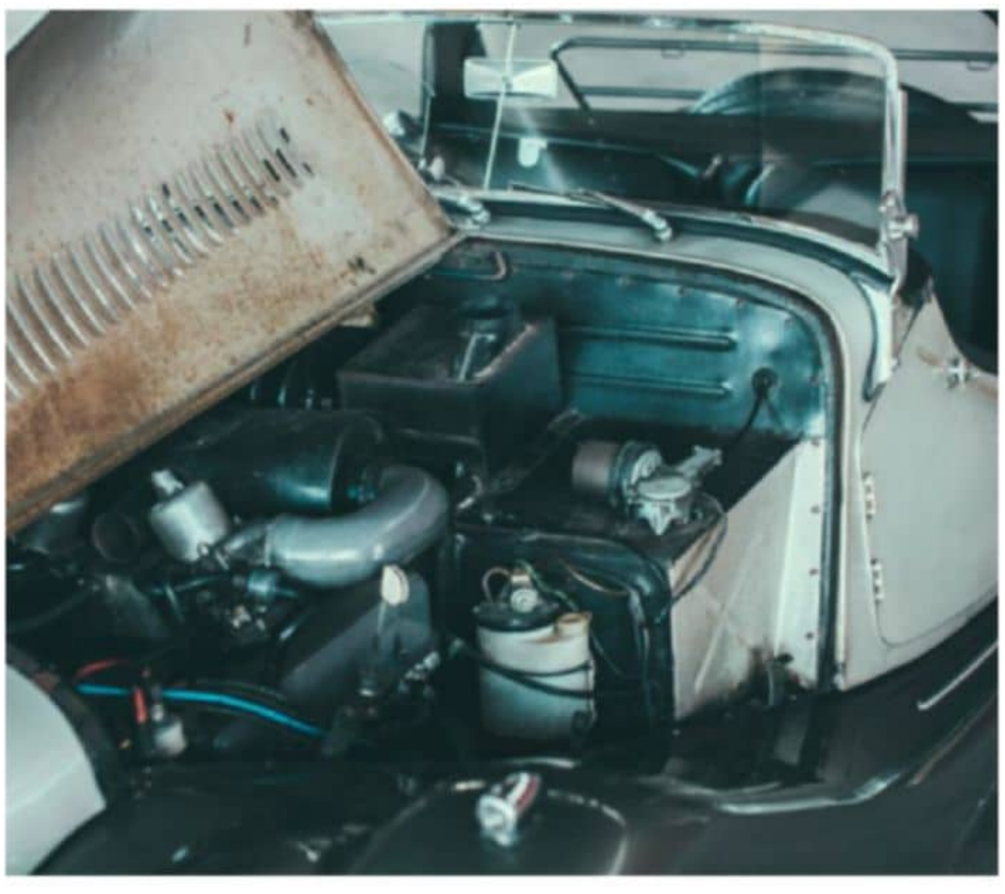
Circa 1968, Jon is 25 years old, fresh from his university studies in architecture and ready to move abroad with his wife, Lyndal. Driving a '61 TR3A at the time, his love of vintage cars and interest in modern sports cars synthesised in the Morgan Plus 8. After reading a pre-release about the Plus 8 in Autocar, 'I began plotting how I could own one. The agreed plan was to buy a Plus 8 during our travels overseas and bring it home with us. Where I was going to get the money from, I had no idea at the time'.

Landing in Calgary, Canada, Jon got a taste of a Plus 8 sooner than expected. A friend of his new boss, Grant Hill, had a chocolate brown Plus 8 and within 10 minutes of meeting him, he was hurtling down the city's deserted ring road at 125mph. Everything he had hoped for in the



A SPECIAL PART OF PURCHASING THE CAR
FOR JON, WAS VISITING THE FACTORY
IN MALVERN, WORCESTERSHIRE,
DURING ITS CONSTRUCTION.


UKV 333




LUCAS

Morgan Plus 8 had been confirmed. 'At the time, the Plus 8 was just as quick to 80mph as anything else on the road, but it was built like a vintage car – hand-made, timber body frames, sitting atop a basic steel chassis. It ticked all the boxes for me. Built like the old ones but went like a new one'.

He developed a friendship with Grant and became part of his pit crew running the Plus 8 in various hill climbs and races over the next 12 months. 'It was a hoot!'

I STILL LOVE WALKING DOWNSTAIRS AND SEEING IT THERE IN THE GARAGE.

By 1972 Jon and Lyndal were living in South Africa and planning the purchase of a Plus 8. However, an offer to good to refuse to come back home to Australia to set up shop meant they would return without a Morgan.

'After boring anyone who would listen by extolling the virtues of the Morgan Plus 8, my wife just finally said, "Why not just stop talking about it and order one?"'

Jon sold his TR3A just to raise the deposit and an order was placed with local agent – Victor Kaye. 'Victor and his wife were unbelievable characters. It was a great experience going through them to order the Plus 8'. It was also a lot quicker than ordering directly from the factory. 'Those were the days of a seven-year wait. Thirteen months all told for me'.

A special part of purchasing the car for Jon, was visiting the factory in Malvern, Worcestershire, during its construction. 'Our firstborn Jonathon came to the factory with us – he was six months old at the time. We found the car in the line-up with my name and order number on the tag. The body frame was mounted on the chassis but it had no panels'.

Jon finalised the colour selection while he was there in September. The car left the factory in December and he took delivery in February 1975.

The price rose significantly during the thirteen months it took to build Jon's Morgan – due to the value of the Australian dollar against the pound; add the import cost and duties tax. 'It rose to a point that I could have purchased a new E-Type or 911 – but I'm so glad I decided not to'.

'Victor and his wife made it such a memorable experience when I flew down to Melbourne to collect the car. They picked me up from the airport and then back to their place for a bang on lunch. The next day I took delivery of my Plus 8 and drove it 1800km back to Brisbane'.

2020 marks 45 years of ownership


R

SOMETIMES I THINK I WOULDN'T MIND
DRIVING IT IN EARNEST AGAIN, BUT
I'VE STARTED TO WORRY ABOUT
MY REACTION TIMES

for Jon. ‘I think about selling the Morgan sometimes – but the boys don’t want me to, but I don’t know whether it’s going to be a liability for them in their lifetime if I pass it on to them’.

The Plus 8 embodies such a large part of Jon’s life. ‘Milestones, people I’ve met and experiences I’ve shared. It’s part of the family. It’s our history and our children’s childhood. It’s hard to remember a time when it hasn’t been a part of my life’.

Jon’s Plus 8 has remained in its current guise since the first year of ownership when he painted the guards gunmetal grey – the original silver panel work remains largely untouched. It’s covered 100,000km, ‘some of them pretty hard’ and it still has the original clutch.

‘When I was doing a speed event or a hill climb, I’d pop the clutch at 3000 rpm. It’d chirp in first and second – but that was the way to make it go quick off the line – hasn’t hurt it!’

‘Sometimes I think I wouldn’t mind driving it in earnest again, but I’ve started to worry about my reaction times – and the car is old as it as – something could break from fatigue’.

‘I’m not sure how much longer I’ll be able to drive it, actually. Maybe for another ten years until I’m 85 or 86. That’s if I’m lucky’.

Jon believes Peter Morgan himself summarised perfectly what it is to own a Plus 8 in a portfolio titled Morgan Sports, published by Autocar in the late 1970s.

There is however nothing misleading about the Morgan. It says what it is loud and clear, though not too loudly. The only surprise for a newcomer is the sheer delight of driving such a light and seemingly crude type of car and finding is it propelled by a smooth, tractable, yet exciting engine. We doubt whether anyone has bought a Plus 8 under any illusions about what it is; it does not pretend to be anything it isn’t – and what it is, is a pure, unadulterated fast sports car.

## 2020 MARKS 45 YEARS OF OWNERSHIP FOR JON

‘I still love walking downstairs and seeing it there in the garage. I love the smell of it inside and feel privileged that it’s been part of my life for almost 45 years. I have owned many other interesting cars along the way, but none have been as special to me and my family as the Plus 8’.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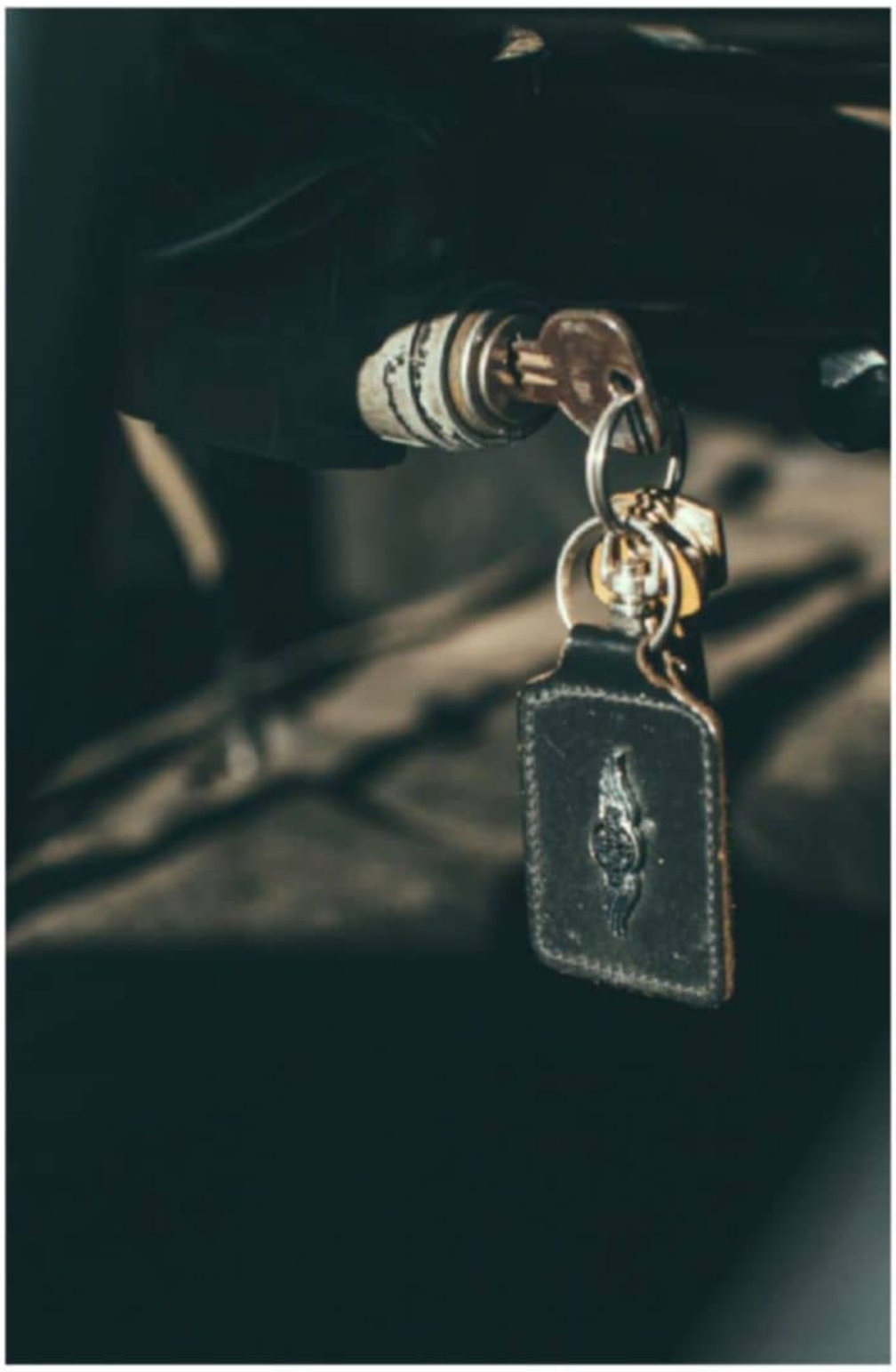


CERTIFIED
WELDING SHOP

# ELCO WELDING

## VENICE, CALIFORNIA

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **SHAUN MALUGA**

In 2012, GQ magazine named Abbot Kinney Boulevard in Venice, California 'the Coolest Block in America and it has since exploded as one of the most sought-after locations for boutique stores, coffee shops and restaurants. Property prices skyrocketed and with the ludicrous rent, many of the smaller and local businesses moved out, which is why Elco Welding is a bit of a welcome oddity on the street today.

Tucked behind a French restaurant and one of Snapchat's offices is a humble welding and fabrication shop full of memorabilia, ceramic signs, tools, machinery and even a stuffed fox. Remnants of old pin-up calendars, photos and plaques are strewn on the walls between tobacco, beer and street signs. Old rusty bits of metal and car parts from past jobs are stacked about the place with metal sculptures, antique oil cans and other relics from a bygone era sitting on top. The longer or deeper you look at what could easily be misconstrued as junk, the more you see. A lifetime, or at least 50-plus years, of collecting knick-knacks, trinkets and curiosities. It's the kind of place you expect to find in a small

THE SHOP IS ALSO USED AS A FILM
LOCATION FOR HOLLYWOOD MOVIES,
TV COMMERCIALS AND PHOTOSHOOTS


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rural town in the middle of nowhere, not nestled between designer jeans, overpriced organic food and French restaurants on one of the most prominent and expensive streets in America.

Brothers Bob and Mark Libow now run the shop that their father Seymour purchased in 1966. As a young man with Clark Gable-esque good looks, Seymour worked as a lifeguard in Venice in the '30s but took unpaid work with room and board to learn the trade of a journeyman welder. His welding skills took him around the US but it was the thriving oil industry back in Venice that saw him go to work for Mr Bullock, who ran a welding and automotive repair business that would later become Elco Welding.

Bullock opened his shop in 1928 and according to the local lore, had a hand in the bootlegging days of prohibition. A false wall at the rear of the shop and a pit out the back were used to make and smuggle liquor to Hollywood stars and whoever else could front the gold pieces. Patrons would pull up in luxurious Pierce-Arrows and Packards, feigning engine trouble. A bottle of whatever they were brewing that week would be wrapped up in bailing wire and hung under the hood. The chauffeurs would sling the bootleggers a gold piece and carry on their way.

After prohibition, when Seymour came to work for Bullock, they performed oil field maintenance, fabrication and made special tooling to service the booming oil industry. Seymour, the oldest of five, had taught his younger brothers to weld and as the oil fields began to dry up, he worked with his brothers Irv and Herb building custom props and sets for the movie industry. Another large contract saw them making many of the floats for the Disney Light Parade which, according to Mark, are still going strong today.

When Mr Bullock died, his son Blackie Bullock, a land speed motorcycle record holder, had no interest in taking over the business. Seymour made a deal with Mrs Bullock, purchased the property in 1966 and expanded the family welding business to Elco West. It was only natural that Seymour's sons, Bob and Mark, went to work for him and have been there ever since.

Early days at the shop saw work on custom motorcycles with the chopper scene in full swing in California. Extending the springer front ends and raking the heads were pretty common modifications for members of the many motorcycle gangs that were ever present in Venice at the time.

Seymour also passed his skills down to his children. Bob remembers taking engines from lawn mowers and strapping them to his bike in high school, much to the ire of the local police. It seems he has always had an interest in speed and anything on wheels and has had old cars for as long as he can remember.

Inside the shop, a rare 1934 Hudson convertible coupe takes pride of place. Bob wasn't aware of how rare this car was when he bought it. It wasn't until the president of the Hudson Club, privy to the sale as he was looking to purchase the car himself, came in and told Bob that there were probably only six or seven surviving 1934 Hudson convertibles, at least on record.

It wasn't running its original engine when he bought it and it turns out Bob has a penchant for hot rodding and running more serviceable and powerful equipment in his cars. At the shop he went about swapping in a '65 Buick Nailhead and Chevy 400 Turbo, along with a nine-inch Ford differential, power steering and power brakes.


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TUCKED BEHIND A FRENCH RESTAURANT AND ONE OF SNAPCHAT'S OFFICES IS A HUMBLE WELDING AND FABRICATION SHOP FULL OF MEMORABILIA

Sitting outside the shop was Bob's 1937 Dodge Pickup Truck. At first glance the truck appears to be in good, original condition, a survivor. The body panels and trim are all mostly present and straight, the paint faded and scratched, showing its long 82 years on this earth. But under the hood sits a more modern Chevy engine. The only real hint that something is amiss is a tacho mounted near the steering wheel. The main goal for Bob with his modifications seems to be more traction and more speed down the quarter mile.

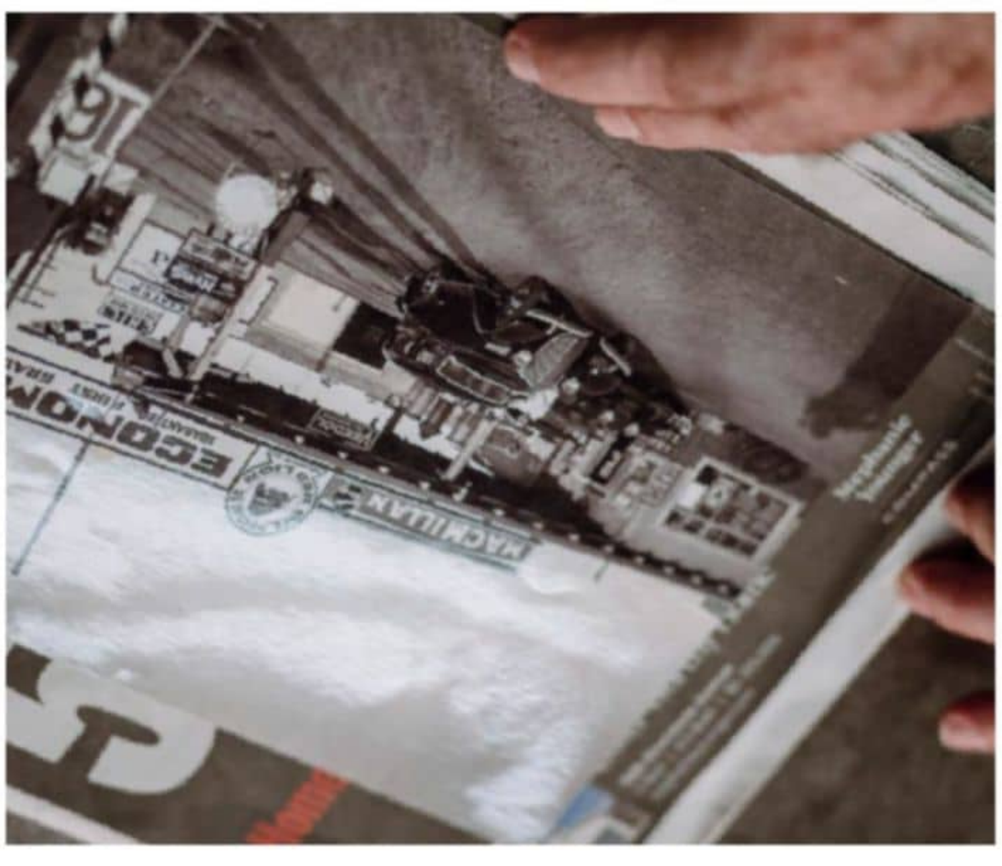
Mark recalls the street racing in California in the '60s and '70s. People would gather at the Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant in Playa Del Ray where the quarter mile was marked out on the road. One night the cops swarmed, and Mark had to run into the ocean to avoid getting caught. After the cops had left, they returned to the parking lot only to realise his friend's car had been towed, so they hitchhiked home. These days, Bob races his Hudson at more legal and safe events such as The Antique Nationals in Fontana.

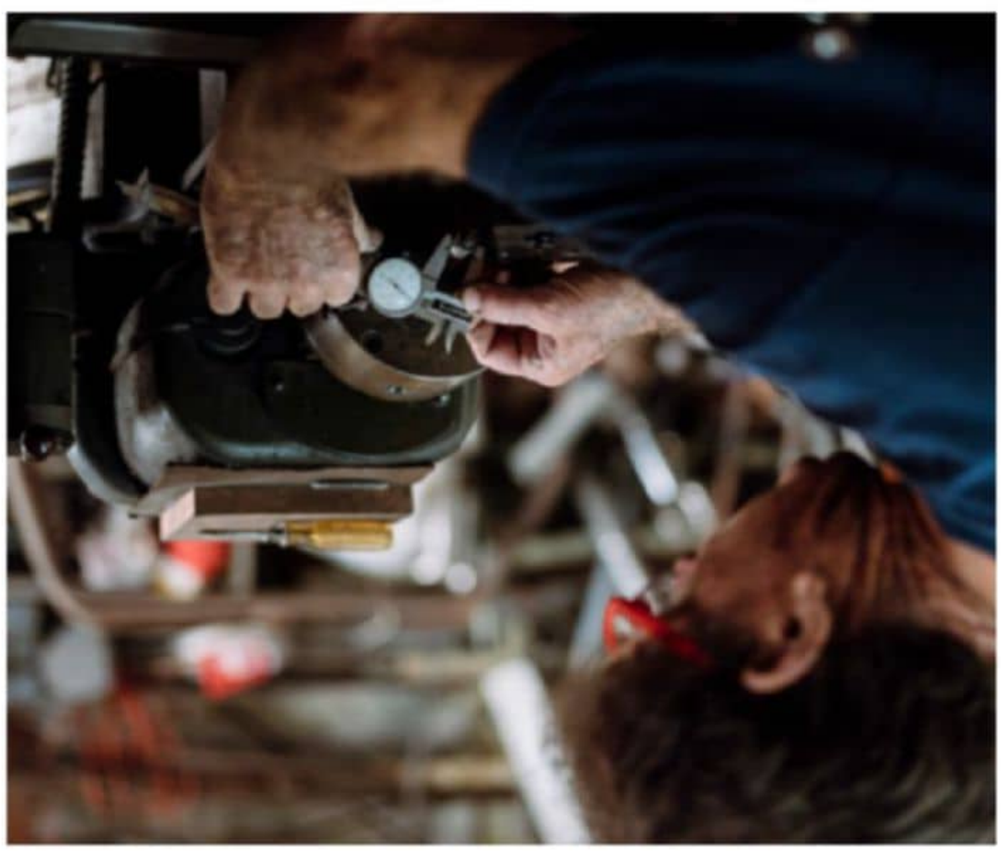
Back at the shop, a steady stream of people visit daily. Some people looking to get odd jobs seen to, others just wanting to chat with the brothers. Bob likes to get in early to get some work done before the interruptions throughout the day. Mark on the other hand welcomes the distraction. 'I'm just here to tell stories', he says with a sense of glee.

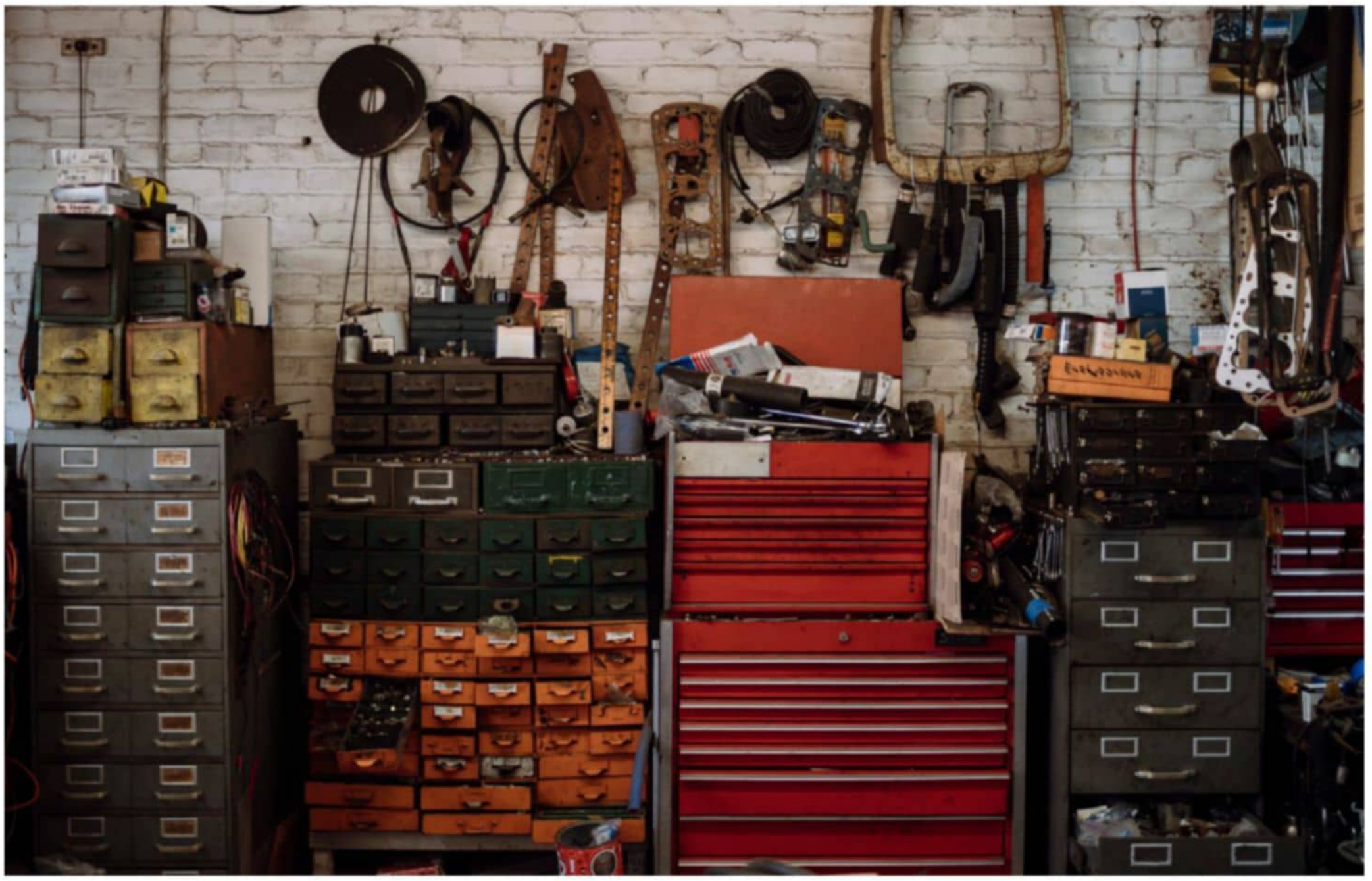
The day to day operation of a welding shop is not all hot rods and motorcycles though. The shop is also used as a film location for Hollywood movies, TV commercials and photoshoots. Michael Bay's 2009 film Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen saw Elco Welding turn into a workshop for Megan Fox's character. A Kendall Motor Oil ad was shot there in 2018 and Robert Redford was photographed at Elco for a piece in the Wall Street Journal in 2015. A set designer could spend weeks trying to imitate the look and feel of an authentic workshop like this, but like most things, the real deal is always better. As most newer mechanics and body repair shops tend to deal with more run of the mill, crash repair type work, Elco seems able to do those odd or unique jobs that other businesses couldn't be bothered hearing about. This is how I originally came across their shop as a mechanic down the road didn't want the liability of making up some hard brake lines for my International Scout and recommended Bob for the job.

A single day I spent with them saw Bob fixing a mail trolley for a US Postal Service worker, repairing the legs on some chairs for a local café (a common request) and rewelding/sealing a custom motorcycle tank that someone else had welded... poorly. A bigger project he was working on was a cheese or charcuterie table/trolley for another local business. They wanted something raw and industrial and Bob had plenty of parts lying around to facilitate. Old Ford differentials made up the main supports with Chevy V8 conrods for the arms for the handle. Some old hand wheels that a customer dropped off but never picked up years prior got re-purposed and capped the ends of the handle off nicely, almost like this was their purpose all along.

It does appear that Bob is a little more selective of the work he does these days, but I also get the sense that he can't sit idle for too long. This is possibly why they have held out on all the lucrative offers they receive almost weekly to buy and develop their property. It's hold-outs like this that contribute to the eclectic mix of art, people and businesses that make up the heart and soul of Venice. Frankly, Abbot Kinney and Venice are better for it.





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# ISO GRIFO

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**


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Would you buy a car manufactured by Fisher and Paykel or Kelvinator? Me neither. But you may be surprised to learn that like other car manufacturers, Iso's business was very different before World War Two.

It was originally called 'Isothermos' and manufactured refrigeration units before moving into motorcycles and scooters after the war.

Though the company is long gone, it was inadvertently responsible for saving another car company from ruin – BMW.

Iso Autoveicoli designed and produced the Isetta bubble car, a tiny two-seater that opens at the front – kind of like a fridge, come to think of it. About 20,000 of these were built at the Iso works near Milan, but the design was also licensed to other manufactures – the most famous being BMW, who went on to sell approximately 130,000 units, and for each one a royalty was paid to Iso. This gave Iso the capital to move into sports cars and take on the likes of Ferrari and Maserati.

Renzo Rivolta, an engineer and the main man behind Iso, first dipped a toe into the luxury car waters with the Iso Rivolta IR 300 – a stylish 2 + 2 coupé. It blended – like many other hybrids of the period – Italian styling with American power and reliability. He assembled a dream team to work on the follow up.

Styling for what would become the Iso Grifo A3/L (L for Lusso) was done by Giorgetto Giugiaro at Bertone, while the mechanicals were the work of fellow engineer Giotto Bizzarrini. Bizzarrini's last project before joining forces with Renzo Rivolta was the legendary Ferrari GTO. He would later call the Grifo A3/C (C for Corsa) his 'Improved GTO'.

Bertone showed the Grifo A3/L prototype at the Turin Auto Show and Iso showed the Grifo A3/C. Both cars were tremendously well received and Renzo Rivolta then concentrated on getting the Grifo A3/L into production. But Bizzarrini was more


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interested in the competition version, producing friction between the two engineers. This ultimately resulted in Bizzarrini leaving to pursue his own project – the Bizzarini 5300 GT which was a modified version of the original Grifo A3/C prototype.

The first series of the Iso Grifo was powered by a Chevrolet 327ci (5.4-litre) small block V8 with a four-speed Borg-Warner transmission. Approximately 322 were produced.

It's a little ironic then that the Iso featured here started its life in Australia as a beefed-up track car and not a roadgoing GT as Renzo Rivolta had intended. Peter Strauss was looking for a new car to race after parting ways (almost literally) with his Lotus Europa. 'I was racing at Sandown and the steering just started going all over the place. I pulled into the pits and found the body was separating from the chassis. I'd heard that Lotus stood for "Lots of trouble, usually serious", but this was too much'.

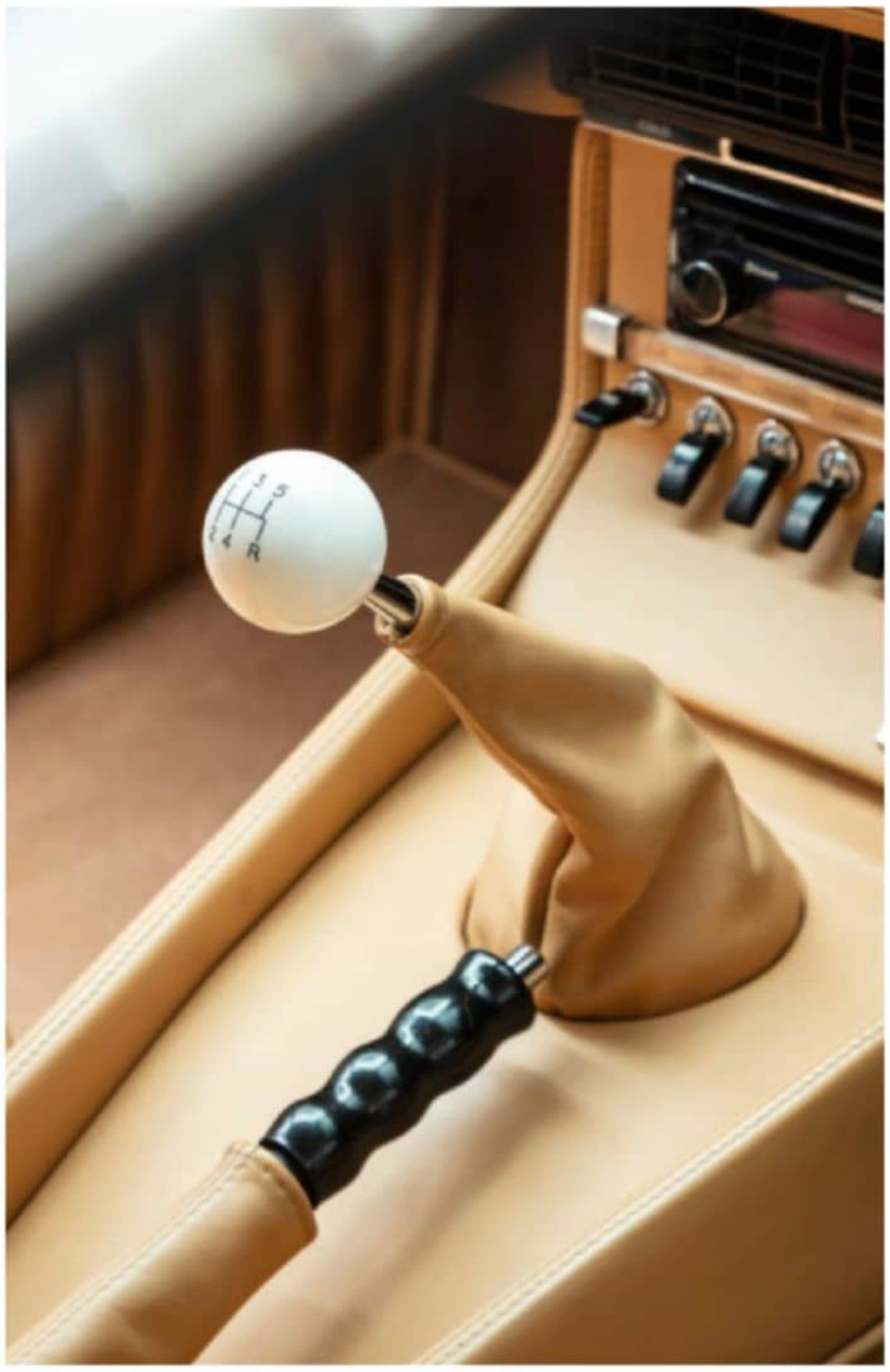
Peter mentioned to classic car dealer, Terry Healy, that he was looking for a new sports car for the track. 'He said, "I've got just the thing for you, an Iso Grifo"". Peter looked at the basics. A Chevrolet engine and running gear, which was tough, reliable and easy to get parts for. The Jag suspension sealed the deal for him. 'I'd always loved Jags, ever since I was a kid. An E-Type was all I ever wanted'.

Peter's Grifo was originally owned by Lord Litchfield – his mother was Queen Elizabeth's niece. He was a well-known fashion photographer at the time and was given the gig to take the official photographs for the wedding of the Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer in 1981 and subsequently became one of the UK's best-known photographers.

LIKE MOST OTHER RACERS OF PETER'S ILK, SIR JACK BRABHAM HAD A HUGE INFLUENCEON HIM FROM AN EARLY AGE.

'Initially, it was just a race car for me, so the history really wasn't that important'. Coincidently, Peter had been looking through houses in England for inspiration for renovations back home when he caught a glimpse of his Iso on a TV in one of the properties. There was Lord Litchfield stepping out of Peter's Iso complete with '70s hairdo and get-up. (Google '1970s Lord Lichfield at his Country Estate | Kinolibrary'.)

The car was delivered in three trailer loads and took approximately six months to get into shape for the track. 'CAMS had me on a permit for five years because they couldn't figure out what to do with the Iso – they called it everything but what it was'.



THE FIRST SERIES OF THE ISO GRIFO WAS POWERED BY A CHEVROLET 327CI (5.4-LITRE) SMALL BLOCK V8 WITH A FOUR-SPEED BORG-WARNER TRANSMISSION.


Zio Grifo

In the end, the car became too valuable to race and Peter had it restored back to a road car. 'I only had it back for a week before someone ran up the back of it – too busy on their phone and didn't even see me'. Due to the rarity of the car, it took another three months to get it back on the road. 'Spares just don't exist anymore – you have to have everything made'.

THE CAR WAS DELIVERED IN THREE TRAILER LOADS AND TOOK APPROXIMATELY SIX MONTHS TO GET INTO SHAPE FOR THE TRACK.

The Iso was to be the last sports car Peter raced on track. The retirement of the Iso coincided with the acquisition of Peter's first Brabham – a 1963 BT-6 Formula Junior. Like most other racers of Peter's ilk, Sir Jack Brabham had a huge influence on him from an early age.

'I was about sixteen at the time and on one of my exits from boarding school, I went to Sandown raceway and managed to get into the pits – which wasn't that hard in those days. There was Sir Jack'. At that stage, he was three-time World Champion. 'He spent about 15 minutes chatting with me and actually let me sit in his race car. I'll never forget that day'.

'The Formula Junior taught me aspects of open-wheel racing and from there I progressed to Jack's 1969 Tasman car – the BT-31. I chased that car for 10 years. Bib Stillwell had it at the time of his passing and his kids auctioned it off, but I was outbid by a guy in England'.

The BT-31 eventually came up for sale again but the owner was committed to racing it in New Zealand before selling it. 'I gave him a significant deposit and told him I'd pay the balance after it finished the race in one piece. While I was there, I heard of a BT-11 lying under a house in Auckland. A guy had won the lottery and bought the Brabham. He drove it twice and it scared the shit out of him, so he put it under the house and that's where it stayed until I bought it'.

Peter did end up getting that E-type – three of 'em, a roadster, coupe and Le Mans Low Drag replica. But it's the Iso, hands down, if he is touring anywhere. 'It's the only car I'd take on tour. It's comfortable and can fit a heap of luggage in the boot – particularly the way the spare wheel is mounted in this one. Power steering, air-conditioning, plus it's a very unusual car which means it gets accepted at almost all events – highly unlikely you'll see another one of these – not like a Ferrari'.

# JENSEN INTERCEPTOR - VIGNALE

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

Craig is a man who embraces his passions wholeheartedly. For instance, when he started a band and needed a decent rehearsal space, he decided to build his own large studio at the back of his cabinetry workshop. When he saw his first Interceptor, he was never going to be satisfied with just one. In the last three years he has collected no fewer than six specimens, including the second one off the production line, built by Vignale in Turin.

As we begin to chat, six polite but sullen looking young men pass into one of the rehearsal spaces where they proceed to make a mockery of the soundproofing – smashing out the kind of metal that would have made me foam at the mouth 25 years ago. A sign of my age and my inability to hear Craig above the racket, I suggest we move to a quieter part of the studio. We move through a hall of glass cabinets housing guitars that I lusted after as a teenager. We retire to a couple of plastic chairs and some bottled water, away from the noise – how very rock'n 'roll of us!

Craig is a talented furniture craftsman and is at the stage in his career where he can become selective about his clientele and focus on his passion – Jensen Interceptors. Cars aren't something new


INTERCEPTOR

# INTERC E

## MEET AUSTRALIA'S FIRST JENSEN:

EVERY GT dreamer must finally come up with an answer that's the kissing cousin of England's Jensen Interceptor as the embodiment of everything a car should be.

Australia's first Interceptor has been cruising the streets of Sydney, leaving spectators slack-jawed. It's owner — a Sydney businessman — bought the Jensen in London and toured Britain and Europe in it before quietly slipping back home. It was no impulse buy, either. The Interceptor was ordered in advance and chosen from all offering in its price range as being the most likely bet for Australia. And the 10,000 miles the Big J has notched up have completely justified its owner's faith.

The Sydney car was one of the first batch made and, in fact, has a Vignale-made body. Several more later models are on the way to Australia. All are private imports since there is not a Jensen agent in the country.

In an era of miniaturisation, the Jensen is a big, bold, handsome GT that looks as though it could ask a lot of the driver if he over-played his hand — or right foot. But it has been designed for docility, too. That comes from its 383 cu in. 6.3-litre Chrysler V8 engine and three-speed Torqueflite automatic transmission. Power is 325 bhp (gross) at only 4600 rpm with a massive 425 ft/lb of torque out at 2800 rpm.

It is only a very moderately tuned engine, really. It is the same as in the Dodge Phoenix, except the higher compression and four barrel carburettor. Compression ratio is highish at 10 to 1, but desirable for

STORY AND PHOTOS BY IAN FRASER

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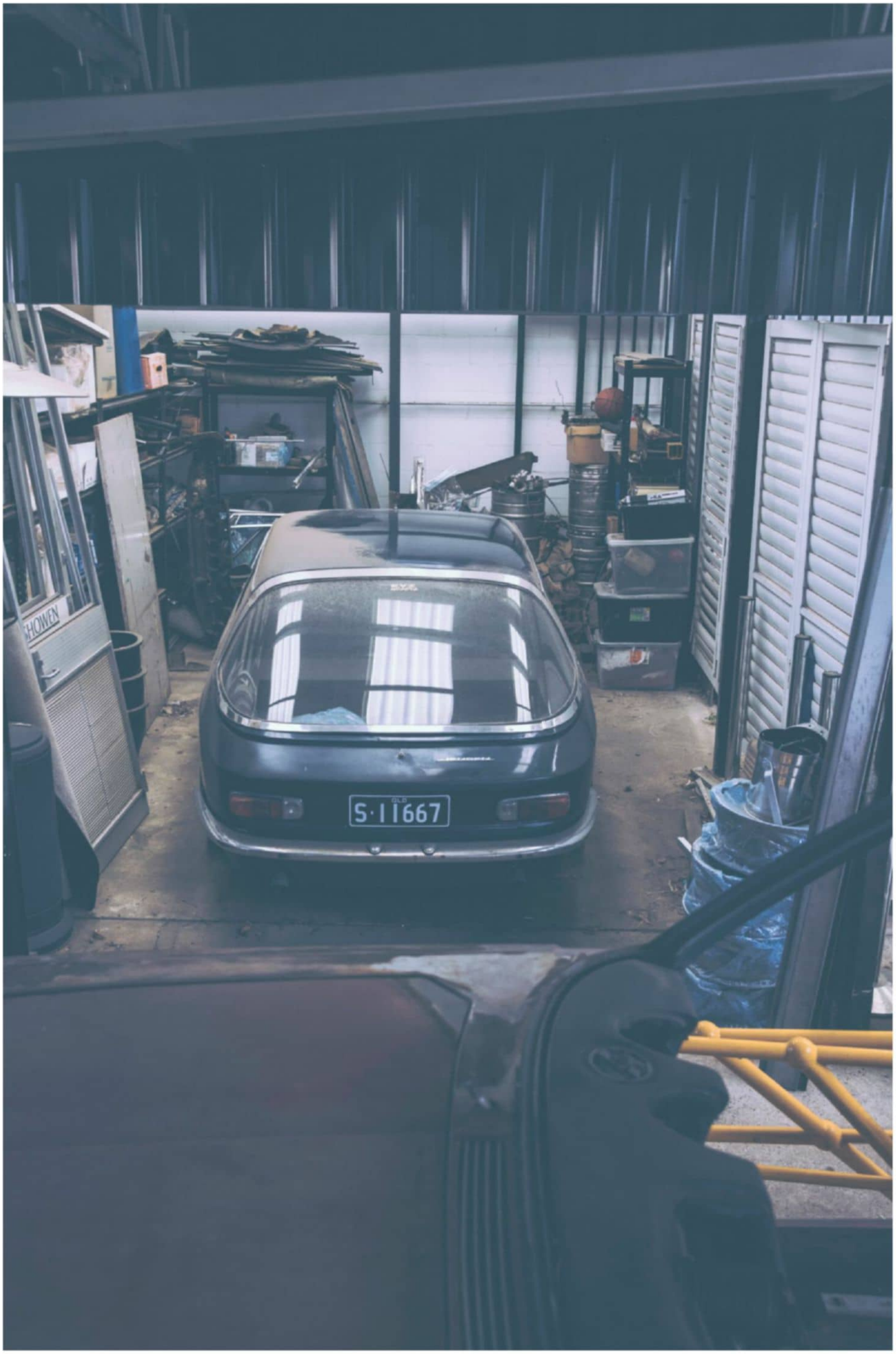
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for him, but he only discovered the love for this model in 2015.

'I went to do a quote on some furniture restoration out at Jimboomba', (a semi-rural suburb about 50km south of the Brisbane CBD). Craig motions to his fully restored Mark III. 'I saw that car out in a paddock with a tree growing out of it, and just had to have it'. Despite the dirty big tree and wearing a coat of white house paint, the vehicle was in pretty good order and the restoration process was relatively simple.

In four short years Craig has found another three Interceptors within the same region, and two more sourced from Tasmania. With the exception of the Vignale-bodied specimen, all these Interceptors are in the process of restoration.

'I'M DAMMED IF I DO AND DAMMED IF I DON'T. COLLECTORS WANT IT THE WAY I FOUND IT'.

Before the Interceptor, Jensen kept all design and manufacturing duties in house. Ironically, The Jensen brothers (Alan and Richard) really had no hand in the design of the Interceptor, most likely the most famous car to bear their name. The brothers had sold the company 'Norcross' in 1959 but had stayed on to continue running it. They knew the fibreglass-bodied CV-8 was in need of an update and they also needed a solution to fill the inevitable gap the Jensen-Healey project would leave once the contract expired. The brothers tasked chief engineer Eric Neale with design duties on project P66 (for 1966).

Newly appointed deputy chief engineer Kevin Beattie wasn't a fan of what Eric Neale had produced so he got in the ear of the Norcross board members and convinced them that the P66 was 'not fit for purpose' and asked for permission to outsource the design to an Italian firm.

The design was penned by Touring's studio and Vignale got the nod to complete the builds. However, Vignale had no experience with using fibreglass, which was traditionally used on Jensen bodies, so the Interceptor would be steel.

The Jensen brothers weren't altogether happy with the way things had turned out and wanted to pursue the P66 design, believing it was more in line with the traditions of 'their' company. But they couldn't swing the votes on the board and both brothers resigned from the company shorty afterwards.

The Vignale builds were problematic from the outset – build quality wasn't up to Jensen's expectations


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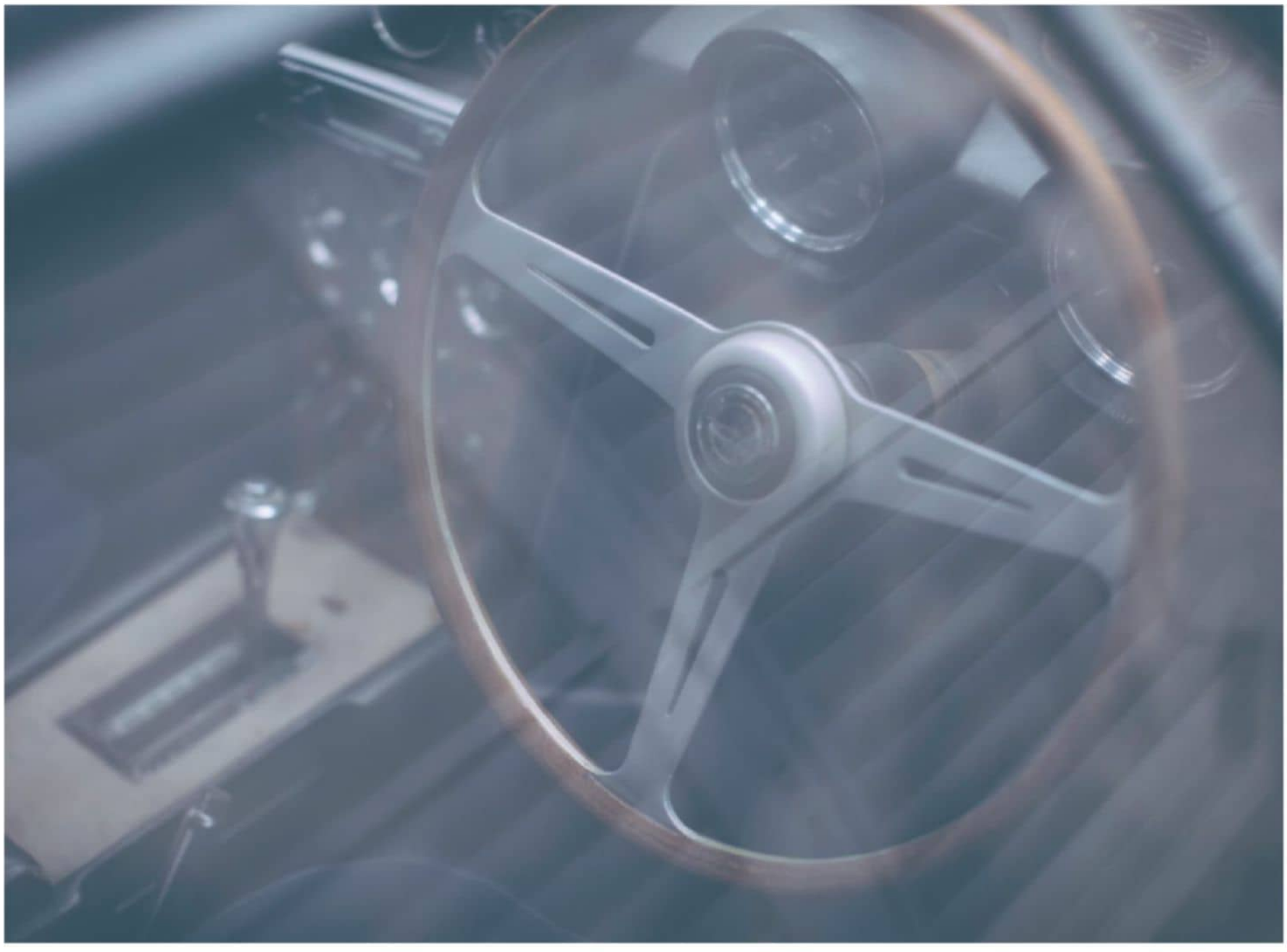


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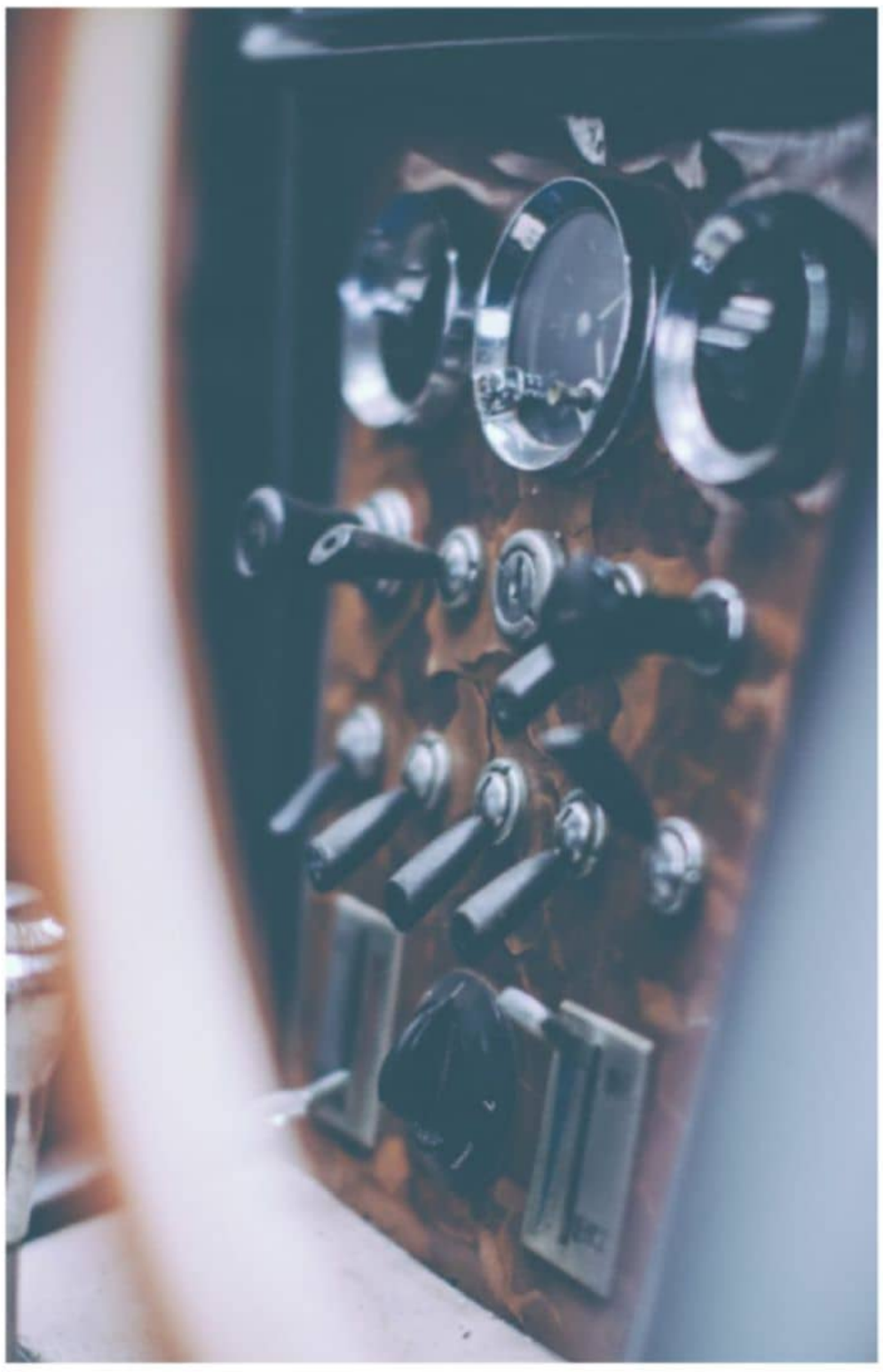

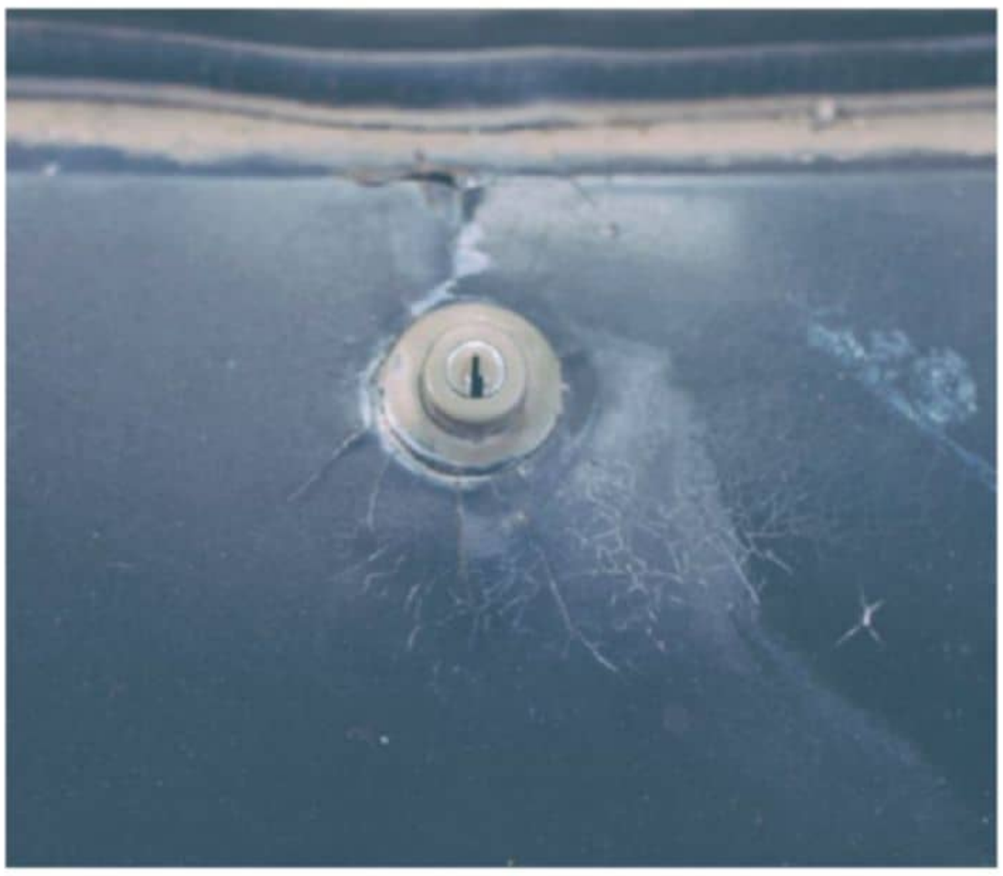

and it took a considerable amount of work to get the Interceptors to a standard that Jensen was happy with. Eventually, the company pulled the pin on the relationship and later cars were fully produced at the Kelvin Way Factory in West Bromwich.

THE JENSEN BROTHERS REALLY HAD NO HAND IN THE DESIGN OF THE INTERCEPTOR

Craig's Interceptor was the second of three cars wholly produced by Vignale as test vehicles prior to their release at the 1966 Earls Court Motor show. It was originally numbered JM/EXP/116 but was later renamed by the factory 115/2496 upon arrival back in England. The first Interceptor has been restored and is owned by Jensen specialists Cropredy Bridge, located in Banbury, Oxfordshire. The third was written off in 1970, never to be restored. Essentially, Craig's is the most authentic prototype in existence.

JM116 was first bought by a Sydney businessman who took delivery in the UK and then used the car to travel around Britain and Europe. It returned to Australia with him in September 1967 and joined the fifteen Mark I Interceptors sold new into Australia.

You had to be fairly wealthy to afford one; to put this into perspective – an Aston Martin DB6 was, says Craig, about 800 pounds cheaper than the Jensen Interceptor at the time. They haven't, however enjoyed the same surge in value as Aston Martins in recent years.

'Parts are extremely expensive, when you can actually find them – hand-making them is a much better option and keeps the restoration cost down – otherwise restoring one of these cars could easily blow out to $100K – and that's probably all such a machine is worth at the moment'.

It took some time, but thanks to a lifetime of specialised cabinet-making. Craig found he could naturally put his hand to the metal to create the required parts. 'It's about feel, but I've chucked a few things in the bin that's for sure!'

The real struggle, however, is whether or not to restore the Vignale or leave it as he found it. It's essentially in good running order and it doesn't need major work to make it an acceptable driver – just sills and floorpan and a few other bits. Thankfully, Australian conditions have preserved it well, despite the fact that the Vignale-bodied Interceptors had little or no rust protection.

'I'm dammed if I do and dammed if I don't. Collectors want it the way I found it'. But Craig concedes he'd love to see this Vignale example returned to its former glory and once again turn heads on the city streets.

But for now, its safely tucked away while he contemplates its future.

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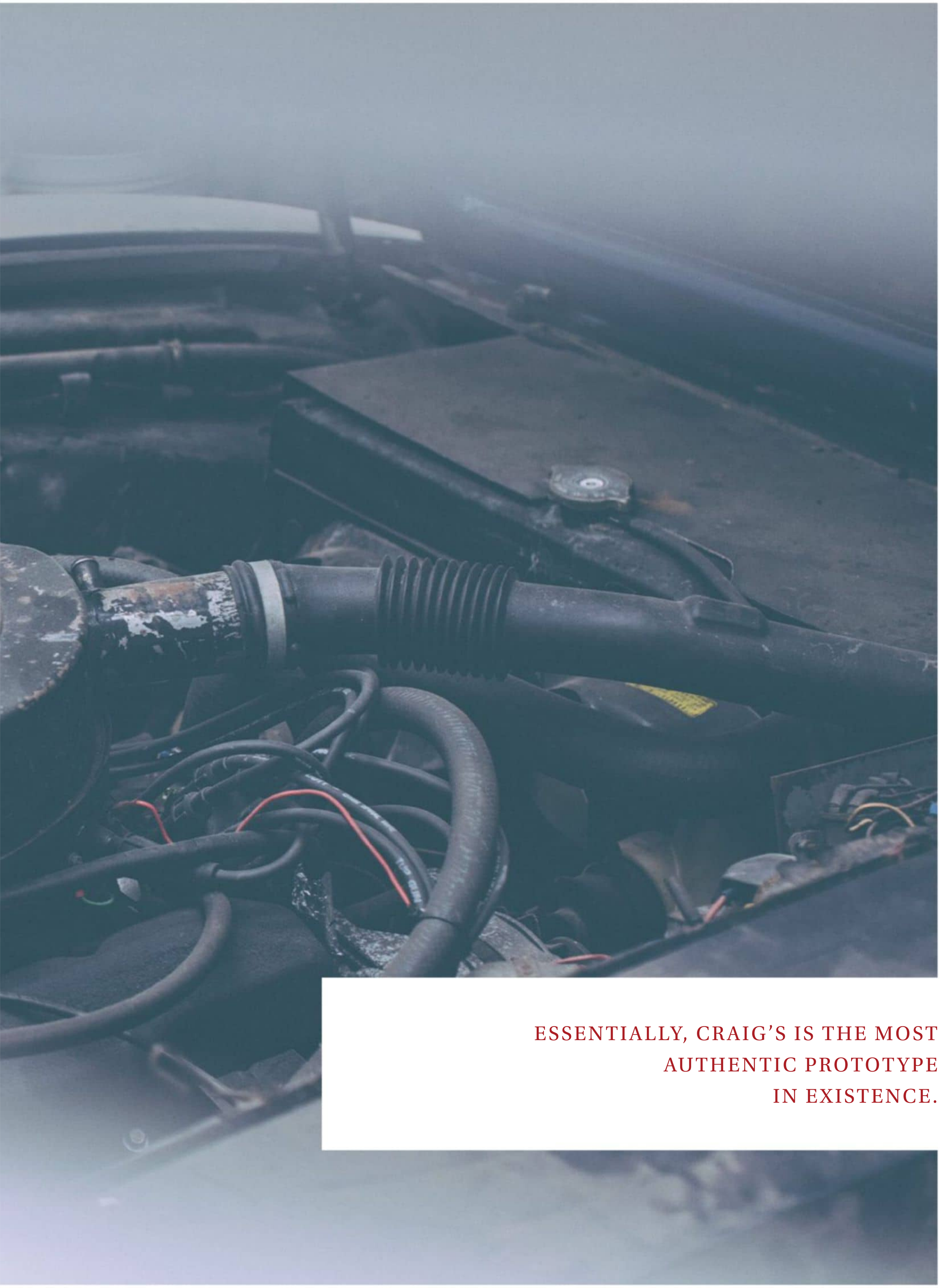

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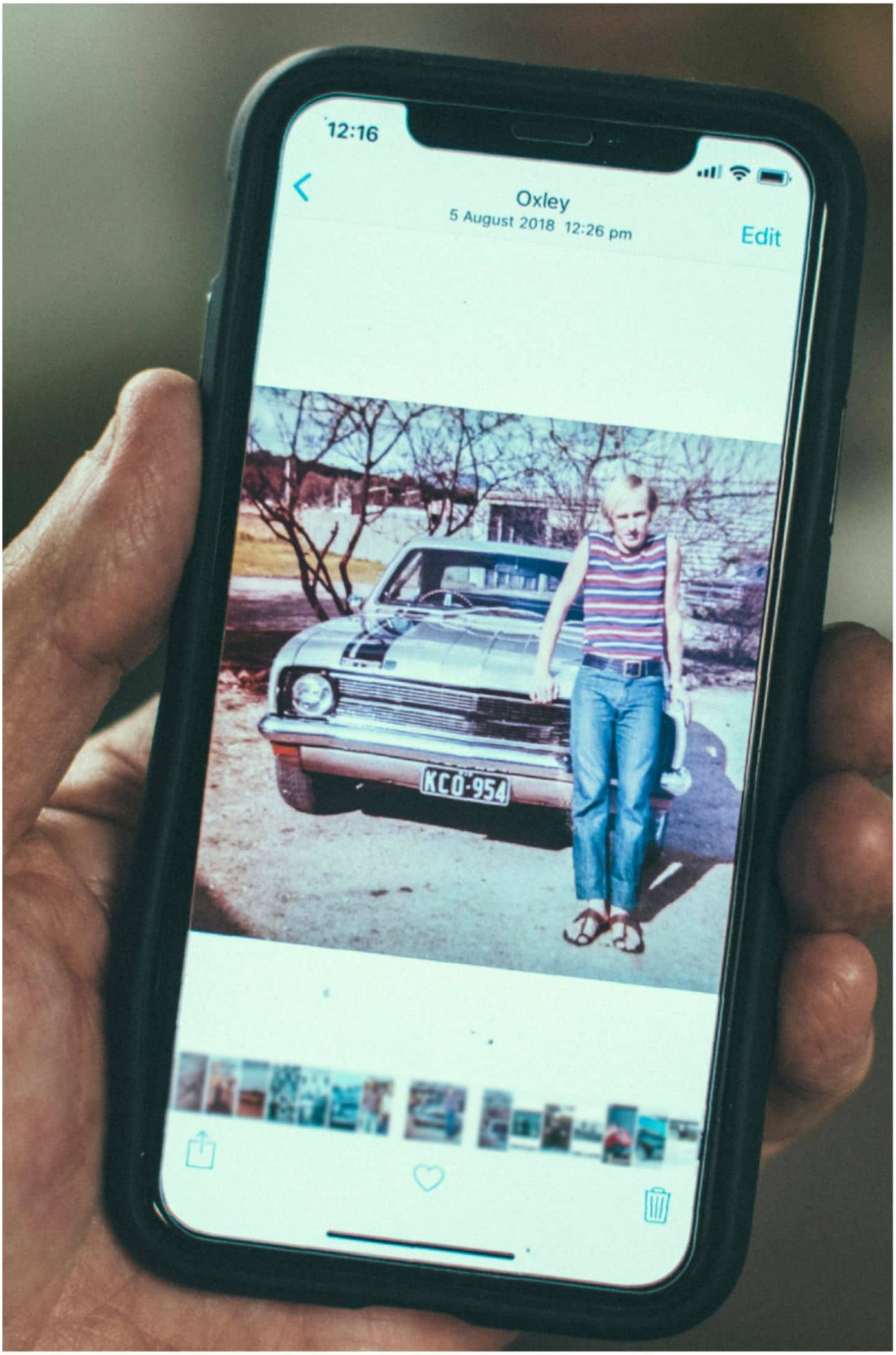
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AUTOMOTIVE ARTIST

# MARTIN DE LANG

WORDS **BRUCE MCMAHON**

PHOTOGRAPHY **NATHAN DUFF**

Martin de Lang is an automotive artist of rare talent and shy demeanour. Loves sketching, painting portraits of cars yet often isn't sure about meeting and greeting fans.

'I get very nervous, a bit uncomfortable', says the artist with thousands of paintings, and prints, of hundreds of cars, racers and road cars, to his credit. He'd rather be hiding away, working in a little studio under his Queensland house, researching and filling another canvas.

Martin's more recent works grace the programs of Australia's Motorclassica. Older works are found across the world, England in particular. And while a stunning print of Norm Beechey's HT Monaro at Warwick Farm is among the more popular here in Australia, the artist's favourite subjects are German racers; Silver Arrow Mercedes-Benz and Auto Unions with the likes of Hans Stuck at the wheel. Maybe Bernt Rosemeyer standing alongside. Or Juan Manuel Fangio leaning into a turn.

It's the ex-dozer driver, ex-commercial artist's attention to painstaking detail, from mountains of research, which bring Martin's works to life. He repeatedly watched a 1991 video of Peter Brock's Bathurst shootout run to get suspension and wheel angles right as the Commodore ran on the ragged edge over Mount Panorama. He


LOVES SKETCHING, PAINTING PORTRAITS OF CARS
YET OFTEN ISN'T SURE ABOUT MEETING
AND GREETING FANS.


BELL BROS
PTY. LTD.

climbed in and under a 1965 Mustang to get all the elements right for a dramatic impression of Bob Jane's Ford hurtling upside down over the fence at Katoomba's Catalina Park circuit.

'I don't see the point in drawing straight off a photograph', says Martin. 'Because it's already there, that image is already there. It comes from within, that creativity'.

Martin de Lang arrived in Australia as a five-year-old in 1952. His Dutch family settled in rural Victoria and his fascination, and sketching, of passing cars led to suggestions he should take up art. Instead a young Martin, also fascinated by heavy machinery, became a dozer driver across Victoria in the 1960s and then on big projects in the north of Western Australia. These were creative jobs such as survey tracks, he says. 'I wasn't just pushing stuff into a pile, I was doing projects but everything comes to an end and I always wanted to be an artist'.

'I ALWAYS WANTED TO GO WHERE A CAMERA COULDN'T'

He returned to Victoria in 1973 and was accepted into art college, and work experience at studios, before joining advertising agency George Patterson as a commercial artist.

Martin loved it, worked on a number of accounts including Holden's; his artwork and line-drawings featured in brochures for the VB Commodore. (He bought a four-cylinder SL, on the advice of the late motoring writer Bill Tuckey, then working at the agency, and has also owned an Austin Healey and a Monaro GTS.)

In 1982 Martin and his young family moved to Brisbane to a job with Australian United Foods – maker of Peters and Pauls ice-creams – before that work was centralised to Melbourne and he decided to go freelance in the mid-1980s.


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‘I had no money, no work. But I always wanted to paint cars and that’s when I started doing it’.

Early work as an automotive artist included a series of prints for Bob Jane, highlighting the racer’s various track machines from Mark 2 Jaguars to Toranas. Many of his first originals were photo-realistic but Martin retains a unique style and approach to automotive art.

‘I always wanted to go where a camera couldn’t’.

He’s not afraid to adapt cars – in particular those beloved postwar Mercedes-Benz – to different backgrounds, different racetracks while keeping an era’s details correct. He’s been known to lower a classic Bentley a touch so it didn’t look like a tractor, says he can always make an ugly car look good.

‘But, yes, I do like the German stuff, liked that era. I was a great fan of Fangio, adored him, saw him at Sandown in the W196 in 1978. I was so rapt. And I liked the shape of Mercedes, liked the noise’.

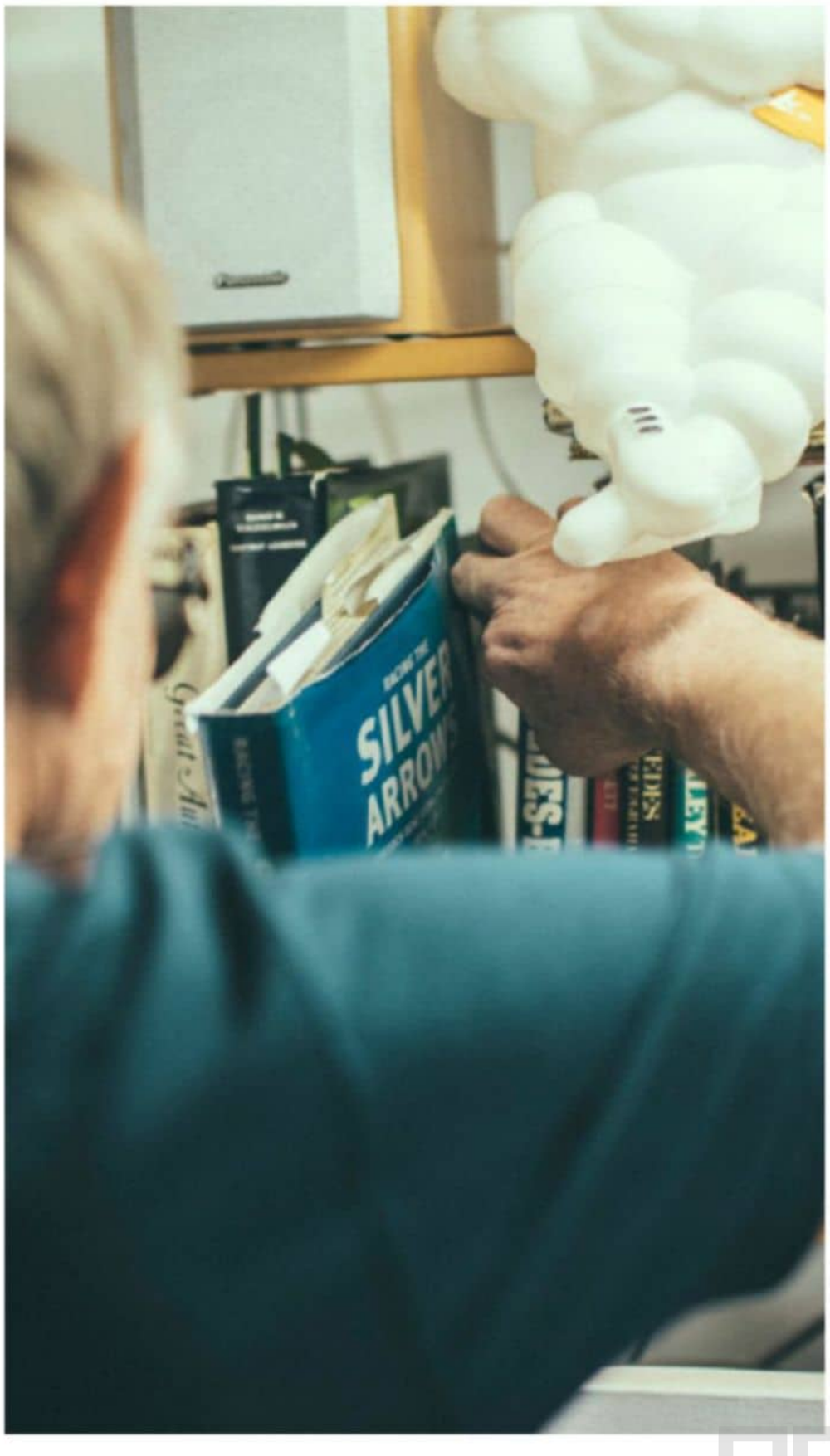
‘I HAD NO MONEY, NO WORK. BUT I ALWAYS WANTED TO PAINT CARS AND THAT’S WHEN I STARTED DOING IT’

Martin uses books, videos, magazines and memories for his sketches and then acrylic paints on canvas. He admits he can become impatient with his work, wanting to get to the next segment of the canvas – and acrylics dry fast, unlike oils. Even so, some paintings can take five weeks to complete.

And while he says there’s no real money in it, the time and skills involved perhaps not always appreciated, Martin still loves his work. His best price for an original was $15,000, but many have been ‘given away’ to help pay bills.

‘I never did it for the money, I did it for the enjoyment. Had to have that stimulation’.


SL/E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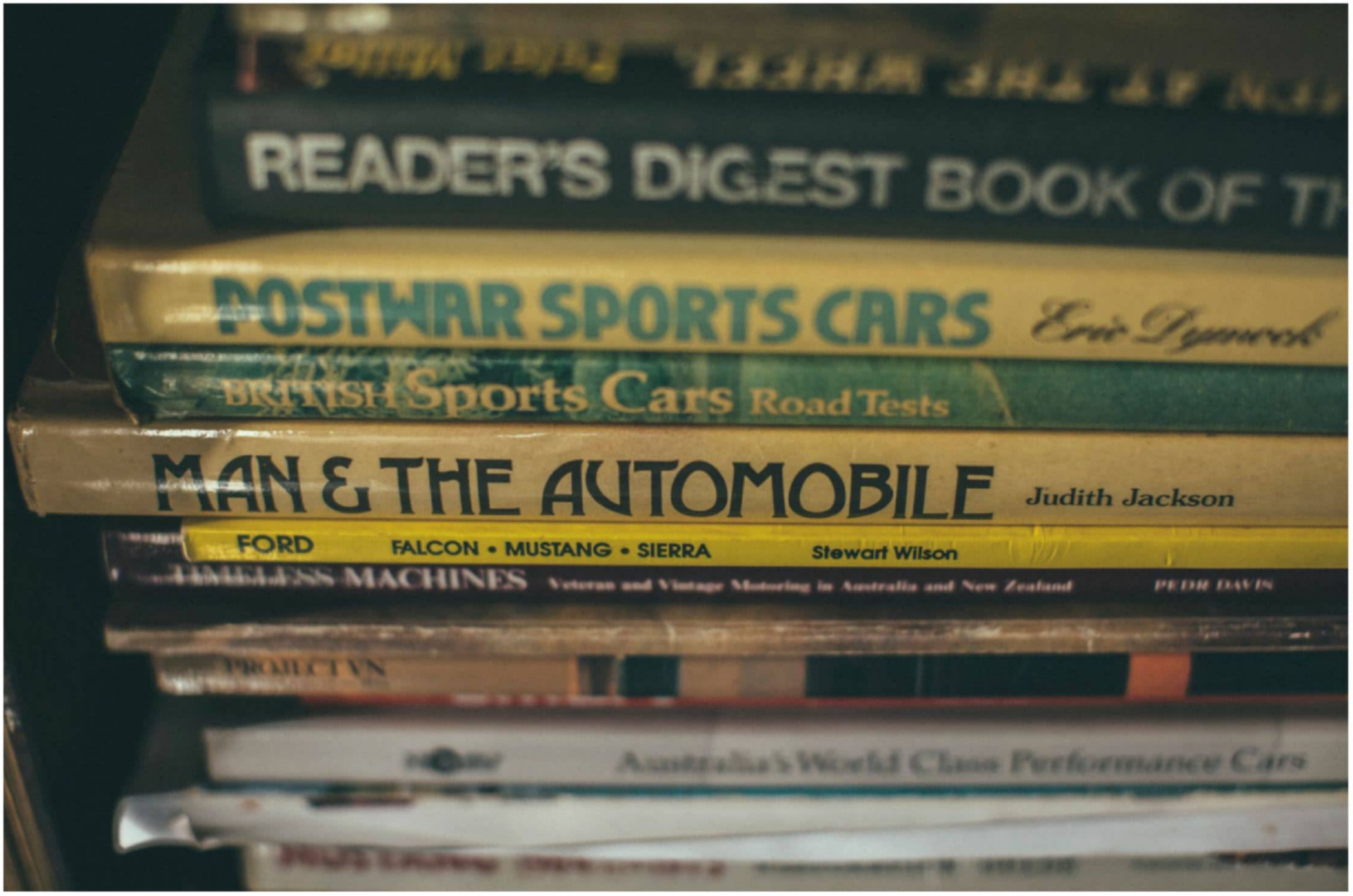
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