

RETROMOTIVE

ISSUE 16



THE DEVIL Z

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RETROMOTIVE

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THE DEVIL Z

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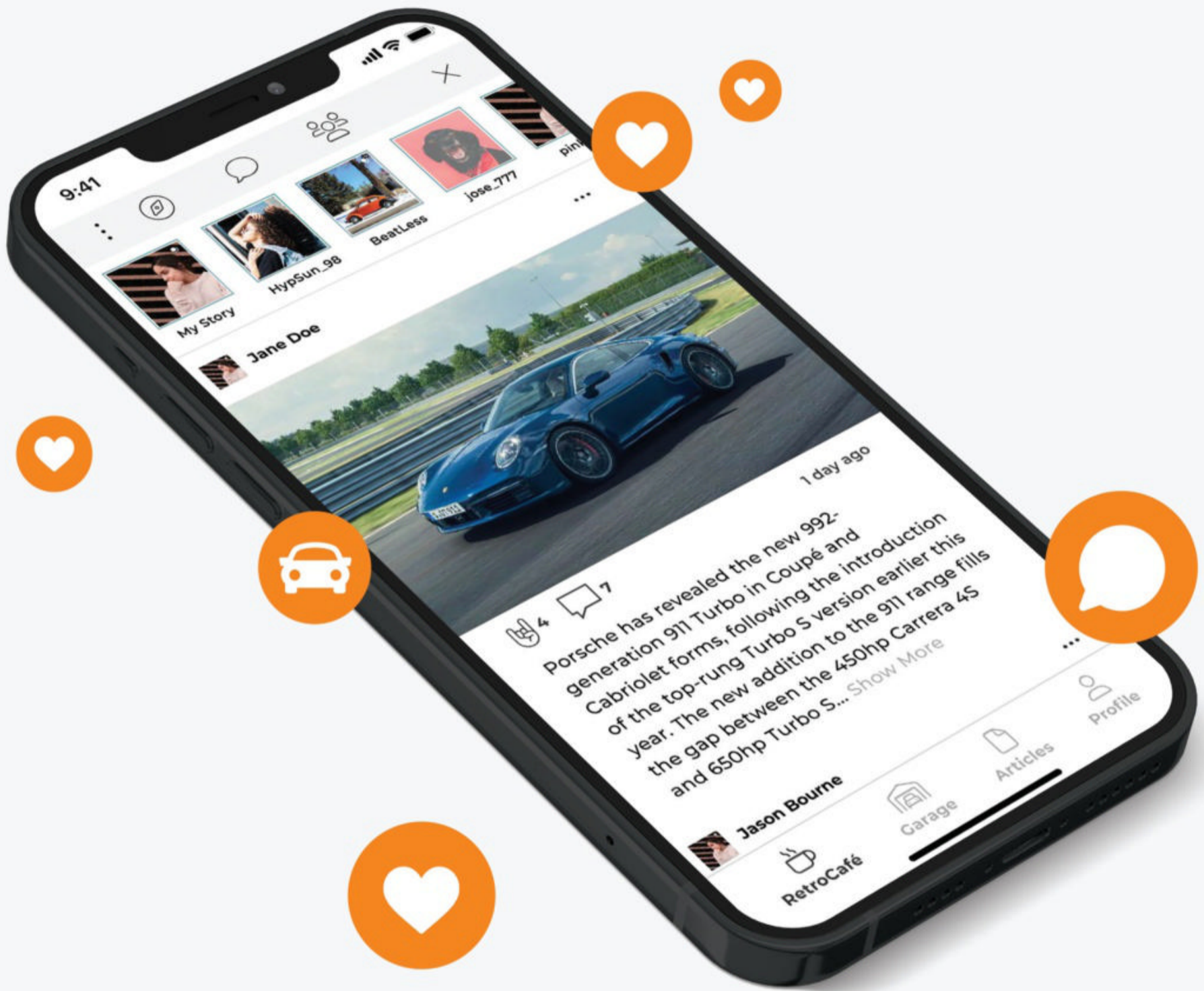
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Greetings and welcome to issue 16. You'd have to be living under a rock (or a Commodore on jack stands) if you weren't already up to speed with the world record achieved by the 1962 Ferrari 250 GTO that was sold at auction by RM Sotheby's for \$48.4 million (USD) just over four years ago now. The price paid was truly eye watering and us mere mortals could only dream of owning such a rare and coveted piece of prancing horse history. Deep down, we all knew that the record would be surpassed, but the car and manner in which that was done on May 5 2022, had the classic car community picking their collective jaws up off the ground. It's hard to fathom the type of collector that has a lazy \$48.4 million to splash on a car, which is ultimately a museum piece. An even harder pill to swallow is the price paid for the Mercedes that knocked the Ferrari off its perch.

While it never had the chance to set any records on the track - The 1955 Mercedes Coupé 300 SLR Uhlenhaut has now set a record that will stand the test of time. Sold at a very secret auction on May 5th was one of two prototypes built by Mercedes Motorsport based off the Mercedes 300SLR. In light of the horrific crash at Le Mans in

1955, Mercedes withdrew from motorsport at the end of that year, thus essentially mothballing the Uhlenhaut Coupé Project. Taking its name from its designer – Daimler-Benz motorsport chief Rudolf Uhlenhaut – it was claimed to be the fastest road car of that era. Uhlenhaut himself is said to have thrashed the prototype reaching speeds of up to 290km/h because he was running late for a meeting. Members of the press were given the keys to test the prototype and they wasted no time doing early morning speed tests on the Autobahn.

So, how much would you pay for a car that has had a relatively short life span on the road? Thrashed in development and put through the wringer by members of the press? €135 million? Yep, nailed it.

It's an amazing car and result for the auction, but is there any car in existence that could possibly topple that record? What could take its place and how much is too much for a piece of motorsport history? Should these types of cars be in a museum for all to enjoy or for the uber rich to squirrel away with the rest of their toys? We'd love to hear your thoughts – send your letters to wheels@retromotive.co

Cheers, Nathan 24/05/2022



When he is not out shooting classics or putting the magazine together, Nathan likes to pretend that he'll actually finish the series 3 Land Rover that still sits in his garage gathering dust. Follow Nathan on Instagram @retromotive_editor

NART SPYDER

★ WORDS **BRUCE MCMAHON** ★ IMAGES **NATHAN DUFF**

The NART Spyder is one of the rarest of rare Ferraris - a valued collectible today yet an orphan car back in the day.





Pininfarina designed the long-nosed, short-tailed 275 Ferrari in the early 1960s as a grand tourer to replace those ever-sweet 250 coupes and spyders. The two-door 275s debuted at the 1964 Paris Motor Show and ran through to 1968 as the 275 GTB and 275 GTS, followed by the GTB/4 – the latter model with four overhead camshafts for a claimed 300 horsepower from the 3.3 litre V12 engine, some 20hp more than the twin camshaft V12s in the first of the 275 berlinettas and spyders.

All these front-engined Ferrari 275s ran with five-speed transaxle and independent rear suspension, a first for the Maranello marque, and the series was heralded then – and now – as among the world's best sports cars of the era. Both 4.3 metre-long GTB coupe and convertible, in left or right-hand drive, sat on a 2400mm wheelbase with the spider running 14-inch Borrani wire wheels compared with the coupe's alloys.

Plus, naturally enough, there was an alloy-bodied GTB/C with specialised suspension for customers









who wanted to hit the local race circuit.

But by 1967 Le Mans racer and North American Ferrari dealer Luigi Chinetti was looking for a convertible version of the quad cam GTB/4 coupe which had arrived the previous season. Chinetti believed a successor to the beloved 250 California Spyder would help spark sluggish sales in the United States and he called on Enzo Ferrari and coach-builder Sergio Scaglietti for a spyder version of the GTB/4 275.

Unveiled at the New York Motor Show in April, 1967 this would become informally known as a NART Spider _ NART for the North American Racing Team which Chinetti had founded to attract endurance racers and sporting types to the exotic Italian machines; some record it as a Ferrari 275 GTS/4, some as a GTB/4S though these cars were apparently only







N.A.R.T FOR THE NORTH AMERICAN RACING TEAM WHICH CHINETTI HAD FOUNDED TO ATTRACT ENDURANCE RACERS AND SPORTING TYPES TO THE EXOTIC ITALIAN MACHINES

begrudgingly acknowledged by the factory.

Chinetti thought to order 25 of these special soft tops for the American market but sales were quite slow and only ten of the original roadsters were ever built by Scagletti from GTB/4 bodies.

But the beauty and performance of those original cars have inspired modern-day NARTs. It's believed there are now some 15 NART Spyder tribute cars in the world, most created from Ferrari GTBs and GTB/4s although one Californian example used a donor 1985 Ferrari 400i, with handcrafted 275 bodywork and suspension, plus a V12 with six-speed transaxle from a 550 Maranello.

In 2003 renown British Midlands outfit RS Panels (Terry Hoyle and

Bob Smith) took to restoring the ex-Miles Davis 275 GTB/4 berlinetta and finished up with a burgundy red 275 GTS/4 Spyder.

Davis, the famed jazz musician, had bought his bright red GTB/4 new in 1967 _ chassis 10669 _ and owned it for two years before it was on-sold in the North American market. By 2002 that Ferrari had made its way across the Atlantic to England and RS Panels for a full restoration.

And here, with roof removed, it became a GTB/4 Spyder for the 21st century before it found its way to Australia, still wearing its English registration, and into the care of Brisbane collector Peter Harburg.

And the Harburgs say this tribute Ferrari remains a remarkable car to enjoy and drive. "You could drive it





DISEGNO DI

pininfarina



ORIGINAL CARS HAVE INSPIRED MODERN-DAY
NARTS. IT'S BELIEVED THERE ARE NOW
SOME 15 NART SPYDER TRIBUTE CARS
IN THE WORLD, MOST CREATED FROM
FERRARI GTBS AND GTB/4S

every day," say Lachlan Harburg. "Drives immensely well for a car of its age. There's pretty responsive steering, the brakes are more than adequate. There's no real compromise. The engine's got a beautiful linear power delivery. And it makes a good noise, obviously. It starts very easily, very un-Ferrari like."

The first of the original 275 GTS/4 NART Ferraris sold by Chinetti _ for some \$US14,000 _ was raced at the 1967 Sebring 12-Hours. That same car, repainted red, then made a cameo appearance in the 1968 movie *The Thomas Crown Affair* with Faye Dunaway and Steve McQueen, who later bought his own NART. But despite its exotic style, despite its Hollywood-high profile and proven 165mph-performance, the NART Spyder was by-and-large ignored by the enthusiasts of the day.

Yet in August 2013 a rare Ferrari 275 GTS/4, chassis 10709, sold for US\$27.5 million at an RM Sotheby's auction in Monterey, California, a world record for a motor car at the time. Ironically the original owner, Eddie Smith, himself had been an orphan who became a successful US businessman, bought this Ferrari new and reportedly drove it until his death in 2007. Proceeds from the sale were donated to charity by Smith's family.

Sotheby's described the Ferrari NART Spyder as "a vehicle that has stood the test of time in terms of sheer automotive drama, character, and splendour. An absolute thrill on the open road and a sure-fire entry to any concours event on the planet."

The tribute cars carry similar legacies to the original NART Spyder, itself a custom Ferrari.



TOYOTA MR-2

★ WORDS COLIN FABRI ★ IMAGES DICKY MANANA









The beginning of the 1990s was an exciting time for sports cars: A time where the established brands were releasing affordable performance cars at a rapid rate. The early 1990s engine Electronic Control Units (ECUs) were highly functional and combined electronic injection with electronic ignition, knock sensing and O2 control to create intelligent feedback systems. These ECUs were capable of pushing their engines power to greater limits by utilizing the electronics to optimize, monitor, and protect them. High-output engines which were once only the domain of the exotics were being mass produced and, importantly, were highly reliable. Think double overhead cams, quad cams, five valves per cylinder and sequential turbo-charging from mainstream-vehicle Producers like Nissan, Mazda, and Toyota. At this point in time, Toyota was clearly on top of their sports-car game. Instead of just one performance-car offering in their lineup (line-up), they had four! The Toyota Celica, Toyota Supra, Toyota Soarer, and the MR2. Each were designed and marketed for slightly-different audiences: The Supra was intended as the high-power conventional-layout performance car; the Soarer combined luxury with grand touring; the Celica being the cheeky well-priced front-wheel-drive; the MR2's design focused more on being a weekend car which you could drive to the track, you could thrash it







CHRIS HAS LOVED THE MR2S SINCE HE WAS A CHILD. WHEN HE WAS SIX-YEARS OLD, ONE OF HIS FATHER'S COLLEAGUES HAD INVITED HIM TO SIT IN HIS BRAND-NEW MR2!

around all day, and drive it home – and, for ten years in my twenties, I did just that! The MR2 introduced me to a life-long passion for motorsport.

The MR2 story started in the early 1980s with Toyota's aim to develop a car which was "enjoyable to drive", had good performance and handling characteristics, yet still provided good fuel economy. Playing around with different engine placement, Toyota settled on a mid-transverse engine design in a prototype named SA-X, that was completed in 1981. A further two years of development saw that project develop into the SV-3 concept car displayed in October, 1983, at the Tokyo Motor Show. This concept car went into production in 1984 under the new name, "MR2". The MR2 name means mid-engine rear-drive two-seater; and this first-series AW11 model was produced for domestic and world markets between 1984 and 1989. The first series MR2 had a 1.6-liter inline four-cylinder with DOHC and four valves per cylinder. Its 120 horsepower only had to push around 2,281 pounds – so felt sprightly. In the middle of production, a super-charge version of the same engine was released adding 25 ponies and 220 pounds.

For 1989, the MR2 was completely updated with a new smoother, streamlined body and larger cabin: earning the nickname, the "baby Ferrari" due to its exotic look which was more akin to the Ferrari 308 and 328. Importantly, the engine from this new series MR2 was increased to two liters and now produced 163 horsepower from its naturally-aspirating engine. Also, a turbo-charge and inter-cooled model was released in many world markets: pushing the engine output to the magic 200-horsepower figure. Overall, the second series MR2 was highly successful and built by Toyota for over ten years.

Although a third series was developed and sold from 2000 onward, it had, at that time, become a different car. Only sold in convertible form, the series III power output and size had dropped and was attracting a less-performance-orientated audience. This has left the second generation MR2 –known as the SW20 model – like Chris' to acquire cult-like status.



FOR 1989, THE MR2 WAS COMPLETELY UPDATED WITH A NEW SMOOTHER, STREAMLINED BODY AND LARGER CABIN: EARNING THE NICKNAME, THE “BABY FERRARI”

Thirty years on, the MR2 has aged like a fine wine. With dedicated clubs, computer-gaming fame, and a host of after-market parts and body kits, its status as a “classic” has gained world-wide attention. MR2 clubs are, of course, a big thing in Japan; however, clubs have popped up in heaps of countries all around the world. Their following has also been boosted by featuring in gaming culture – particularly, in the highly-popular Gran-Turismo and Forza-Motorsport series. Kids grow up with these games and, eventually, became old enough to purchase the real-life ones; therefore, creating a new demand some years down the track.

The yellow beauty which you see here is owned by Chris – a Photographer living in Hong Kong. Chris has owned three of the second generation MR2s. His first-ever car was a red naturally-aspirated model; followed by a second – also, red model – this time with the turbo engine. Last year, he came across this yellow model: A 1993 model which he was keen to modify and update to suit his taste.

Chris has loved the MR2s since he was a child. When he was six-years old, one of his father’s colleagues had invited him to sit in his brand-new MR2! He remembers it clearly: It was a white 1997 turbo model. The car made such an impression on him that he knew, even from this early age, he must buy one, one day.

In the year since purchasing this model, Chris has customized both the looks and performance of his vehicle: In particular, Chris wanted a replica of the Toyota Racing Development (TRD) 2000GT. Just as AMG is Mercedes and Motorsport’s “M” division (focused on design and performance) for BMW, TRD is a subsidiary of Toyota, that is focused on performance parts and enhancements for specific Toyota models. Each of their enhancements are purposeful; each designed to improve the performance on and off track. For the MR2 model, specifically, TRD created 35 “TRD 2000GTs”: sold in Japan only and each individually numbered. These 35 were clearly





differentiated to the standard model by a fiber-glass wide-body treatment which increased the body width by four inches. All had engine enhancements; as well as, suspension and handling modifications. The entire package was influenced by the TRD 2000GT MR2 race car which was successfully running in the Japan Grand Touring Championship, at the time.

Chris' bright-yellow MR2 Turbo has had the full-TRD-2000GT kit applied; plus, modified front and rear bumpers, side skirts, and rear spoiler. The roof scoop provides a track-like look; and forces cool air, direct from the roof down, into the mid-engine bay and directly pumped to the air intake. The combination of the full-body kit and bright-yellow paintwork makes Chris' car stand out in a crowd.

Power has been upgraded by the addition of a boost controller which lets Chris choose how much boost the turbocharger can make from "factory" to "wild". Power is transferred to the wider tires via the five-speed closed-ratio transaxle which combines an upgraded TRD-limited slip differential. Completing the package are upgraded Brembo six-piston calipers clamping on oversized vented discs, that complement the high-performance package and give great confidence when speeds are high or corners are near.

Chris enjoys his highly-personalized MR2 every chance he gets! Mainly on weekends, when he has the chance to take it out for a run either with friends or with the Hong Kong MR2 club of which he is a proud member. Chris' plan for the future of his MR2 is to simply drive it and "keep it clean". While he has no plans to change vehicles, he would love to add a Supra Mark 4 – another Toyota classic – to his garage, one day.





THE DEVIL Z

✦ WORDS **YVETTE STEPHANIE HALLAM** ✦ RENDERS **STEVEN CHANG**





A car cloaked in infamy. A car masked in mystery. A car playing a facade for the devil.

The Devil Z – the scariest car to have ever existed – slaughters those who dare to go behind its wheel. This car has one thing on its inhuman mind: death and destruction.

Searching the web, it is difficult to find any information on this infamous car. Even diving deep into reddit, it is a challenge to find out more. It makes me wonder if it has an Artificial Intelligence in its mechanics; and, every day, races through the internet, searching for itself, and deleting all mentions. Maybe I should search the dark web? Maybe there we could find all the entangled stories ... nope, too dangerous! Even with the small stories that I found, others would contradict and create a new storyline.

It has fictitious origins, and some believe that its whole story is clouded in fiction. The Wangan Midnight series is a collection of Manga (from Japan) which follows a fictional street-racing scene in Japan. When the protagonist, Akio Asakura, is determined to drive the fastest car, he finds a Nissan Fairlady Z S30 – the Devil Z – which has a haunting past.

The car has an absurd amount of power and speed – what is the compromise?

C o n t r o l .









Causing multiple accidents. With its first owner, it was tuned by Ekibasa, but the current owner took it to Air Breathing Research Hosoki. According to the manga, the Devil Z has a highly-modified L28 motor; it has been bored and stroked to three liters; it has a triple twin-barrel carburetors; and a twin turbo with intercooler which can reach 600 horsepower. The exterior features an S30 race aerodynamic kit, standard S30 lights, fog lamps, and a set of RS Watanabe F8 eight-spoke wheels. In the manga, Akio Asakura originally owned the car: where he crashed and died. Two years later, a young man of the same name (the protagonist of the series) purchases the car ... At this point, it is barely a car; but Asakura restores it to its original glory.

The manga series took inspiration from the stunning Ferrari Testarossa Corsa red and the Nissan Fairlady Z – the latter car being more prominent. The Nissan Fairlady Z (as it was sold in Japan) was also sold as the Nissan S30 and the Datsun 240Z: It is the first generation of Z FT three-door two-seat coupés produced by Nissan. It was manufactured between 1969 and 1978. The engine was based on the Datsun 510's four-cylinder; produces 128 horsepower; and came with a four- or five-speed manual transmission.

Whether or not the manga series took inspiration from a real cursed car, many people believe that a Devil-Z car – possessed and all – exists! And it has been claimed to be a red Nissan Fairlady Z – but highly-modified with 680 horsepower (600 at the wheels). The engine is a L28E, sourced from a





1983 Turbo 280ZX; triple Mikuni side-draft carburetors; twin Garret T3/T04 hybrid turbochargers; HKS SuperSequential Blow Off valve; custom fabricated intake plenum; two-inch velocity stacks; custom grind camshaft; forged internals; ceramic-coat forged dished pistons; Midnight Club Air Breathing Research (ABR) S130Z. Modifications include a capacity increase to 3,100cc with forged 89f pistons; ABR original rods; ABR original crankshaft; ABR original 268-degree camshafts with half-inch lift; intake, 1.8 inches; exhaust, 1.5 inches; twin IHI RHC-6 VX55 compressors; and 3P-13 turbines. Engine management is a Nissan-genuine 16-bit



WHETHER OR NOT THE MANGA SERIES
TOOK INSPIRATION FROM A REAL
CURSED CAR, MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE
THAT A DEVIL-Z CAR - POSSESSED AND
ALL - EXISTS!



ECU; GReddy PROFEC and RBIC III; HKS GCC. The drivetrain is Z31 300ZX Turbo five-speed transmission; ABR original special LSD. The suspension uses specially-modified Bilstein dampers with TRD springs. The brakes are R32 Nissan Skyline GTR calipers with TRD Supra Race rotors. Wheels are Panasport C5R. Tires are Bridgestone RE71. Exterior modifications include an autometer tachometer; Blitz EGT; HKS water temperature, oil temperature, oil pressure, and boost gauge ABR original rollcage; Recaro LS passenger seat; Sabelt four-point harnesses; and Nismo D-shape steering wheel. After all the modifications, it is titled the “Air Breathing Research S130z”.

I have only found one owner, Toshi from Tokyo, Japan. No last name or number plate because he is a member of the Midnight Racing Team – a club which is frowned upon by the Japanese police. Toshi’s answer for why it is so heavily modified:

“To win against my rivals, that is all.” Toshi has pushed the car to 216 miles per hour – that means it would be the fastest street-legal (maybe not exactly street-legal) Z in Japan!

There has been additional evidence of the Devil Z being a part of the super-secret super-elite Mid Night Club back in 1978.







THERE HAS BEEN ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE OF THE DEVIL Z BEING A PART OF THE SUPER-SECRET SUPER-ELITE MID NIGHT CLUB BACK IN 1978.

Diving deep into the rabbit hole which we call the internet, I found one horrific story. One night, during a usual Mid-Night-club meeting, a gang of motorbike riders arrived and started antagonizing the car drivers. The heat rose and the revs roared. And they raced! However, because the motorbike riders were not familiar with the routes, they engaged the car drivers in a detour. Unfortunately, this left the highway and collided with civilization. An accident arose. The Devil Z ran over someone. The motorbikes ran over multiple people. One death. Many injured.

As stated earlier, it is incredibly difficult to decipher the facts. Some believe the Devil Z (or Air Breathing Research S130z) surpassed 680 horsepower and reached 800 horsepower. Others believe

that it set a record time of four minutes and 54 seconds on the C1 loop. Some say its top speed is 168 miles per hour – others say it is 216 miles per hour. Some have stated that the crew used the real cursed car when filming the live-action Wangan series. Others have stated that the real cursed car won the 21st East African Safari Rally, in 1973. Some are adamant that the Devil Z (or Air Breathing Research S130z) is real, possessed, and extremely dangerous. Others are adamant that it is all wrapped up in storytelling.

At the end of the day, no one knows the hard facts. Maybe a Mid-Night Club member summoned the Devil to help them win ... Maybe there is an incredible troll out there by the name of Steve ... Maybe we will never know.

MONTEVERDI SAFARI

★ WORDS **NATAN TAZELAAR** ★ IMAGES **ANDREW WALKINSHAW**







The popularity of the SUV knows no ending and even traditional, luxury, and sports-car Manufacturers are cannibalizing their brand values and butchering their heritage to find a way into the over-crowded segment. Swiss Motorsport Specialist and Car Manufacturer Monteverdi was a true visionary when he offered a coach-built luxury SUV as early as the 1970s.

Peter Monteverdi never reached the ranks of Enzo Ferrari or Ferruccio Lamborghini, but his boutique workshop was no less intriguing and his level of ambition easily matched that of the two famous Italians. His small Binningen-based (near Basel in Switzerland) company started in the late-1950s, under the name “Monteverdi Basel Motoren” (MBM): designing and racing single-seaters with the ambition of racing in the Formula 1. After an early retirement in a non-championship Formula-1 race, in 1961, and writing off his only Formula-1 car shortly after, Monteverdi shifted his attention from racing and back to his successful Ferrari, Rolls-Royce, and Bentley import companies. Meanwhile, new management in Maranello kept pushing him to increase his off-take while having to pre-finance the cars himself – even though, his sales numbers had been well-above average. This motivated Monteverdi to not only abandon his position as one of the five official Ferrari Distributors in Switzerland, but to turn against the might of the prancing horse. In that regards, Monteverdi and Lamborghini are not that different; although, Lamborghini’s story became more and more mythical over time – while hardly anybody ever heard of the Swiss Entrepreneur.

Eventually, the fed-up Monteverdi decided the time was ripe and he started his own luxury-car company. He believed that there were customers with an appetite for the exclusivity, power, and looks of a Ferrari, but with creature comforts like an automatic transmission, power steering, and other amenities. He preferred the



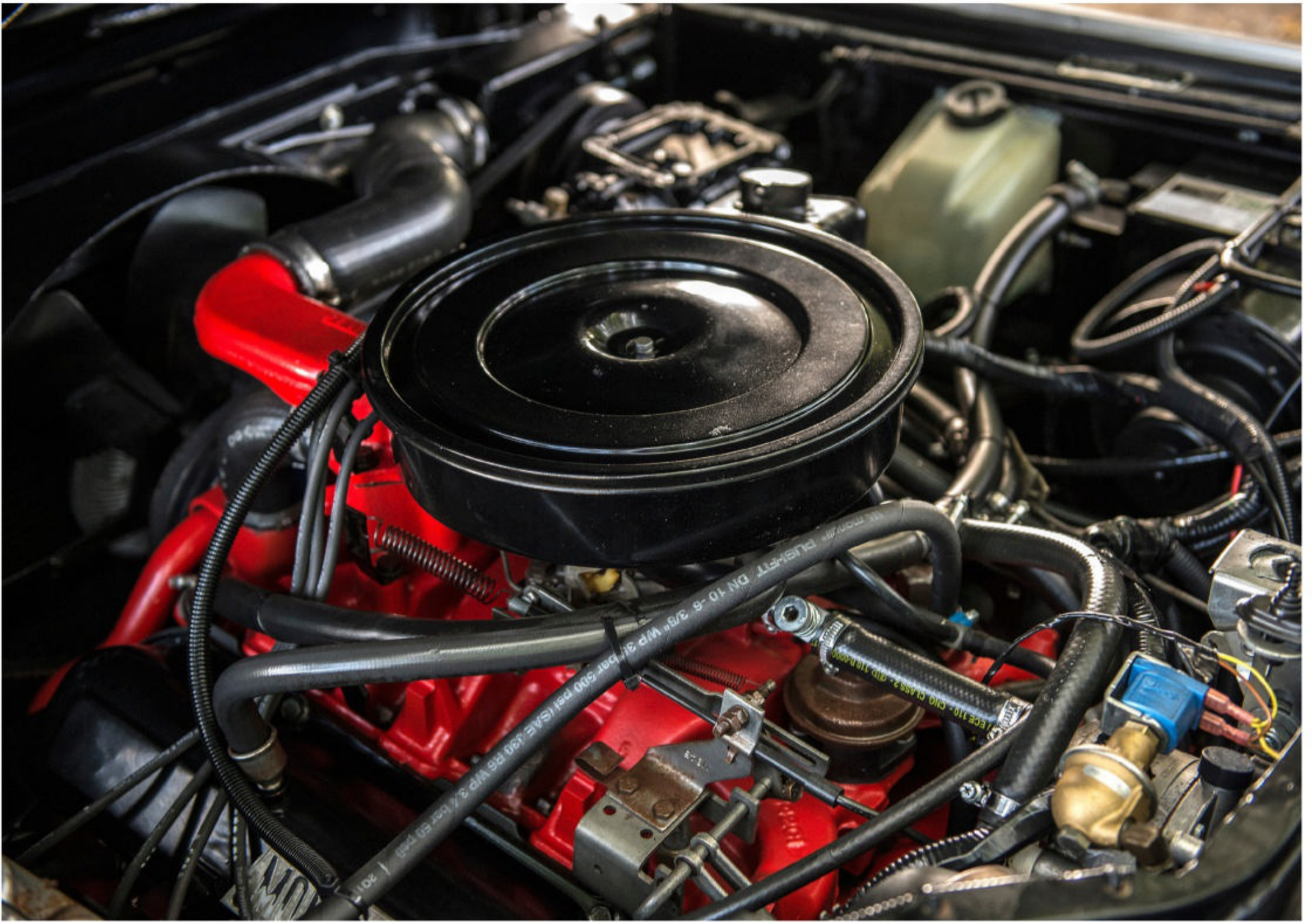
BY THE MID-1970S MONTEVERDI MADE A RADICAL DECISION: THE EXCLUSIVE AND EXPENSIVE HIGH SPEED MODELS WERE ABANDONED AND THE COMPANY ENTERED THE RELATIVELY-NEW AND UPCOMING SEGMENT OF LUXURY OFF-ROADERS

brawn of Detroit V8 muscle over the daintiness of Italian V12 engines; and took a serious amount of additional horsepower as a bonus. The ambitious first attempt to enter this niche market was the High Speed 375 S, in 1967. This elegant GT was designed and built by the Italian company Carrozzeria Fissore; and, after a positive reception, a 2+2 followed and became the base model. More variants were added: like a convertible called the 375/C and an extremely-cool sedan carrying the name 375/4.

By the mid-1970s – after the global oil crisis of 1973 and 1974 – Monteverdi made a radical decision: The exclusive and expensive High Speed models were abandoned and the company entered the relatively-new and upcoming segment of luxury off-rovers – talking it up against Range Rover and Jeep with the Wagoneer. In 1976, the Monteverdi Safari was shown to the public in Geneva – marketed as an even more exclusive alternative to the aforementioned models. Unlike the English and American competitors, Monteverdi used

the underpinnings of an existing vehicle – in the form of the rugged International Harvester Scout – making the Safari a coach-built vehicle. Like the Range Rover, the Safari was only available as a three-door with a split tailgate. A few years later, though, Monteverdi would cleverly secure a slice of the lucrative Range-Rover cake for himself: He developed and built a Fissore-designed five-door variant of the Range Rover; then, began to sell it with permission from Land Rover. Now that coachbuilding is experiencing a renaissance these days – with increasing amounts of showpieces and one-offs finding their way into the private collections of well-to-do car aficionados and speculators alike – these Monteverdi Range Rovers are set to become coveted collector's items. Get one while they are still affordable! You will thank us later ...

As a result of the American underpinnings, Monteverdi was able to offer various V8 engines: ranging from large to ridiculous; all linked to a three-speed automatic or an optional



AS A RESULT OF THE AMERICAN UNDERPINNINGS, MONTEVERDI WAS ABLE TO OFFER VARIOUS V8 ENGINES: RANGING FROM LARGE TO RIDICULOUS

four-speed manual. Three engines came from Chrysler: starting with a 318 ci (5,210 cc) with 152 horsepower, followed by a 360 ci (5,899 cc) version with 182 horsepower, and the 440 ci (7,206 cc) with 305 horsepower – this one being the top dog. The most-common powerplant for the Safari was the base 345 ci V8 (5,654 cc) from International Harvester – as found under the bonnet of the car which you see on these pages. From a mechanical standpoint, you could brush the Safari aside as a cheeseburger with a dab of pesto and a slice of Swiss cheese, but we prefer to see it as an international (no pun intended) blend of carefully-chosen ingredients: resulting in one of the most-desirable SUVs from the late-1970s and early-1980s – until Lamborghini crashed the party with their stupendous LM 002.

As we tour the Dutch countryside, the sound of the 5.7 V8 is obviously American – with a deep and dark rumble at tick over, turning into a nice background burble at speed. With well over two tons to haul around and only 165 horsepower, the Safari is far from quick and the word “agility”

never reached its vocabulary. Primarily, this is the result of the ladder frame, the rigid axles, and leaf springs which came with the American inheritance. The automatic three-speed adds one more typical-American character trait, forcing the driver to take it easy and let the 292lb-ft of torque do the work. Surprisingly, the ride is smooth and comfortable, but potholes and ridges occasionally send a shiver through the ladder chassis because of the enormous unsprung weight. Adding to that comfort are large and soft seats; as well as, the generous amount of cabin space. Only the steering wheel is covered in real leather, with faux leather covering the seats for practical reasons. This shows that Monteverdi intended the Safari as a practical off-road vehicle for his mainly-Saudi customer base – in a time when these vehicles were still used as intended, rather than being mere trophy trucks for self-promoters. The fact that front-wheel-drive had to be engaged and the drivetrain was rear-wheel-drive by default were regarded as big pluses for both the handling of the Safari and the fuel consumption – that was a







WITH WELL OVER TWO TONS TO HAUL AROUND AND ONLY 165 HORSEPOWER, THE SAFARI IS FAR FROM QUICK AND THE WORD “AGILITY” NEVER REACHED ITS VOCABULARY

strong point just after the oil crisis.

At its launch, the Safari was a bit of a surprise; but it was not seen as a step down from the exclusive GT cars which Monteverdi offered before. Actually, his status and reputation were proofs of quality: so the Safari was regarded as a welcome extension to the portfolio. If there is anything to complain about, it must be small add-on parts both inside and out: Some of the switch gear in the interior came straight from the shelves of International Harvester and the rear lights, for instance, are from a Peugeot 504 Break. This may look out-of-place on a hand-built exotic, but let us not forget that, back in those days, this was how small Manufacturers had to cut costs without sacrificing quality. Calling the Safari the first luxury SUV would be an alternative fact because that ancient battle is between the Chevrolet Suburban and Jeep Wagoneer. It is fair to say that this Swiss luxury off-roader was the first hand-built exotic in this segment: only to be followed by the Lamborghini LM002, in the mid-1980s – a few years after production for the Safari had ended, in 1982.

Not long after the car production had ended, the head office in Binningen transformed into the Monteverdi Car Collection, in 1985. Monteverdi's urge to get into Formula 1 was as strong as ever, though. With the acquisition of a 50-percent share in the Onyx Formula-1 team, in 1989, Peter Monteverdi took a second shot at pursuing his dream in the 1990 season. This time, his team managed to attend ten races and claimed a seventh place at the Monaco Grand Prix with Swiss Driver Gregor Foitek behind the wheel. Once again, financial problems kept Monteverdi from staying afloat and the team withdrew after only ten of the 16 Grand Prix races that season.

Looking back on the extensive history of Monteverdi, it is easy to see mainly setbacks and failures: but those with a fascination for exclusive cars and racing will only see highlights and masterpieces! Peter Monteverdi may not have achieved what his main rivals managed to pull off, but his legacy is truly impressive, and the Safari is a true testament of his keen sense for unique and exotic cars.





DEVAUX SPYDER

★ WORDS **BRUCE MCMAHON** ★ IMAGES **NATHAN STIRLING**









machine cloaked in the mystique of the 1930s and Monte Carlo summers _ a long way from the 21st century and Melbourne's tram-tracked streets.

The first Devaux was a coupe, a glorious two-door tourer from the pen of Australian designer David Clash, drawing inspiration from French and Italian designers and coach builders of the 1930s. The low-slung, long-tailed car, fashioned from GRP over a steel chassis, debuted in 2002 after a long and proper gestation.

It was a homage, David said, to the glories of 1930s' automotive art, a blend of styling cues from the days of Bugatti Atlantics and such. This time with modern power from a 5.7 litre V8 and badged Devaux, his mother's maiden name.

The Australian-built coupe caught the eye of enthusiasts from around the world; scored

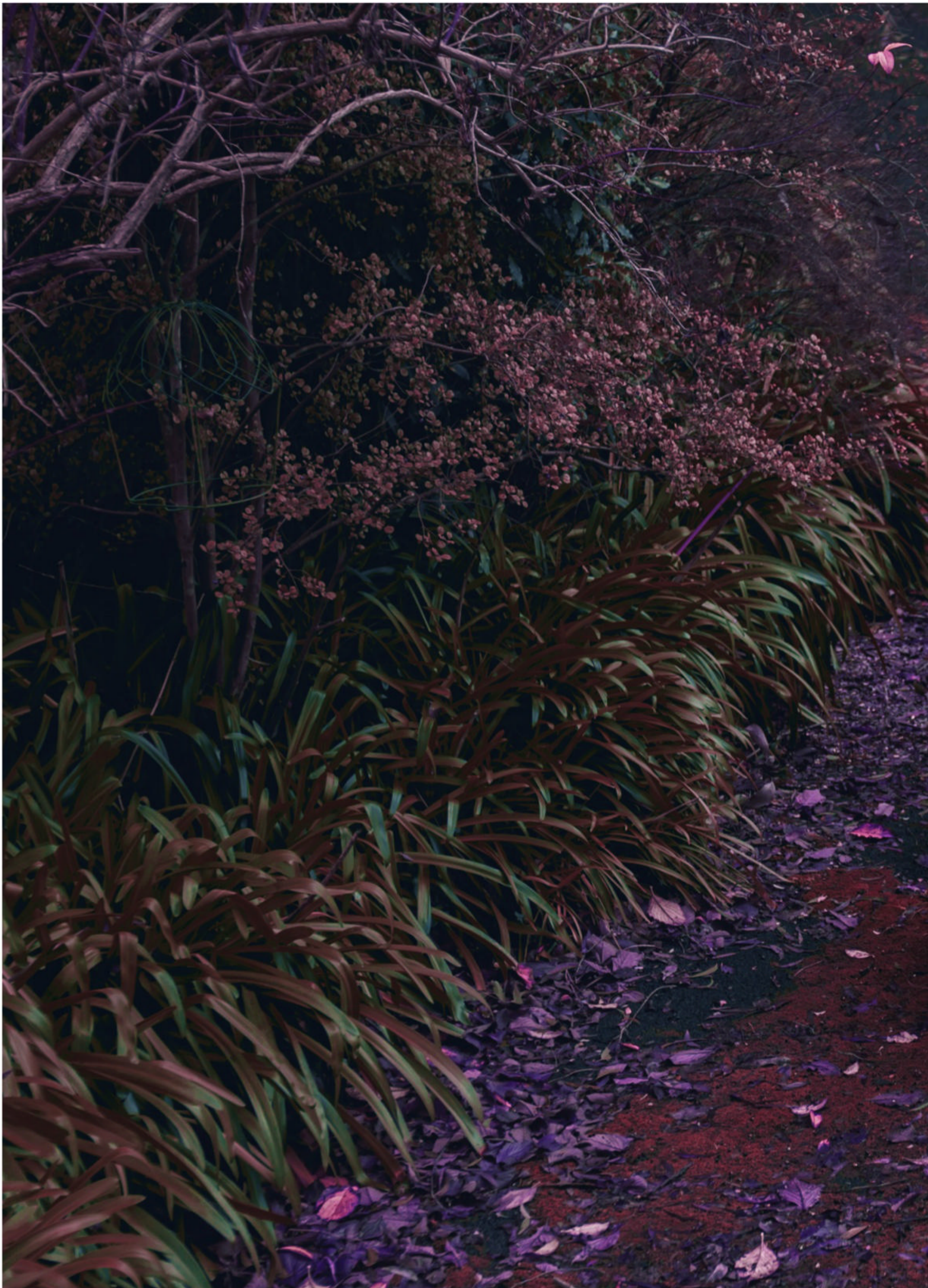
David an invite to Jay Leno's garage. "But once that car was built _ the prototype and then production _ I realised there was a Spyder in there and thought that'd be fun," says David. "Coupes are great but they're small, they can get warm inside, where the Spyder is an open car, it's accessible and a bit more friendly in some ways. The coupes are always a bit more mysterious."

David an invite to Jay Leno's garage.

He saw he could make the convertible Devaux without changing much of the original mould, or changing major body parts, by removing the roof and fashioning a rear deck which dropped in as an insert in the mould.

While that idea worked well, and there were now two models of Devaux, the devil was in the detail.

"Then there's obviously all the finishing for the screen. all the rails, drains and seals and all that stuff which is more of a challenge. It's always the details. The Spydere are in some ways more simple but then there's things not in my control, like trimmers for the hood. Stuff like that. I ended up, between the painter and the trimmer and various other things, I waited 11 months to get stuff done.







You can't really build cars like that...I can imagine Hyundai scratching their head over it, waiting 11 months." David laughs.

"A Spyder might sell for \$200,000 plus but if you take the hours (into account) I think I'm down to about \$5.50 an hour. I'm just slow I guess."

Two of the eight Devaux built to date are Spyders. The blue car's been sold into Queensland after a conversion to right-hand drive, the second was completed in early 2022 for another customer.

At close on five metres long, the rear-drive Devaux Spyder has a right royal road presence from the retro sweep of those front guards, louvered bonnet and stand-alone headlights through to the boat-tailed rear. It sits on 16-inch spoke wheels and Dunlops to suit with Panhard rod and coil-over dampers at the rear, adjustable double wishbones with coil-over dampers up front.

And with some 270kW and 470Nm delivered by the Chev V8 through a four-speed auto, the 1125-kilogram Devaux Spyder can be moved along at a fair clip. Yet it's more the cruiser, an air-conditioned roadster loaded with fine and painstaking detail in keeping with the 1930s era. Wood trim and

aluminium dashboard, analogue instruments and a wooden-rimmed steering wheel. There is a myriad of small 'wow' factors in the Spyder's hand-crafted details.

Yet the second Spyder just completed may be the last of all Devaux. This one was a life-saver through Covid lock-downs, says David, and he was grateful for the job. But the business of trying to meet different engineering rules across Australian states, a lack of consistency with regulations, has complicated the building of special cars. "I'd consider another order, depending on where the customer lives. It does get a bit tricky now."

He also found it problematic in trying to break into the North American market. His burgundy coupe (now for sale) and the blue Spyder were built to go to the United States. "We were going to take them on a bit of tour, try to crack the American market. Fantastic. But there are so many issues with getting cars into America. I perhaps should have gone down _ though I don't like using it _ the kit-car route. I would've been a quite wealthy guy I think. But I was a bit arrogant and I wanted to control the build and the look of the car and so I made a rod for my own back.







‘Well, it’s going to have wire wheels whether you like it or not’ and, some guy’s going to say ‘put mags on it’ and the whole thing gets lost.” If David Clash started over, with a clean sheet of paper, he’d use more computer technology to design his Devaux, perhaps look at an electric platform and maybe tweak proportions a tad. As a designer you’re never happy.....that should be a bit longer, this could be a bit wider, that a little taller. That’s what car companies do, build full-size clay models in the studios

push them out, look at them. Sometimes they push them back in as quick as they push them out.” David sees some fantastic style cues, and some abominable, in current cars, and is always gratified when bystanders favour a Devaux over some modern European roadster parked alongside.

He understands he may be out of synch with some contemporary design but remains fascinated by art deco _ buildings, furniture and automobiles. He admires the work of 1930s



coach builders such as Figoni and Saoutchik. “I do like that mysterious place of the 30s, a fun place. Art deco was such a big thing, that’s why it’s hung in the design world for as long as it has.”

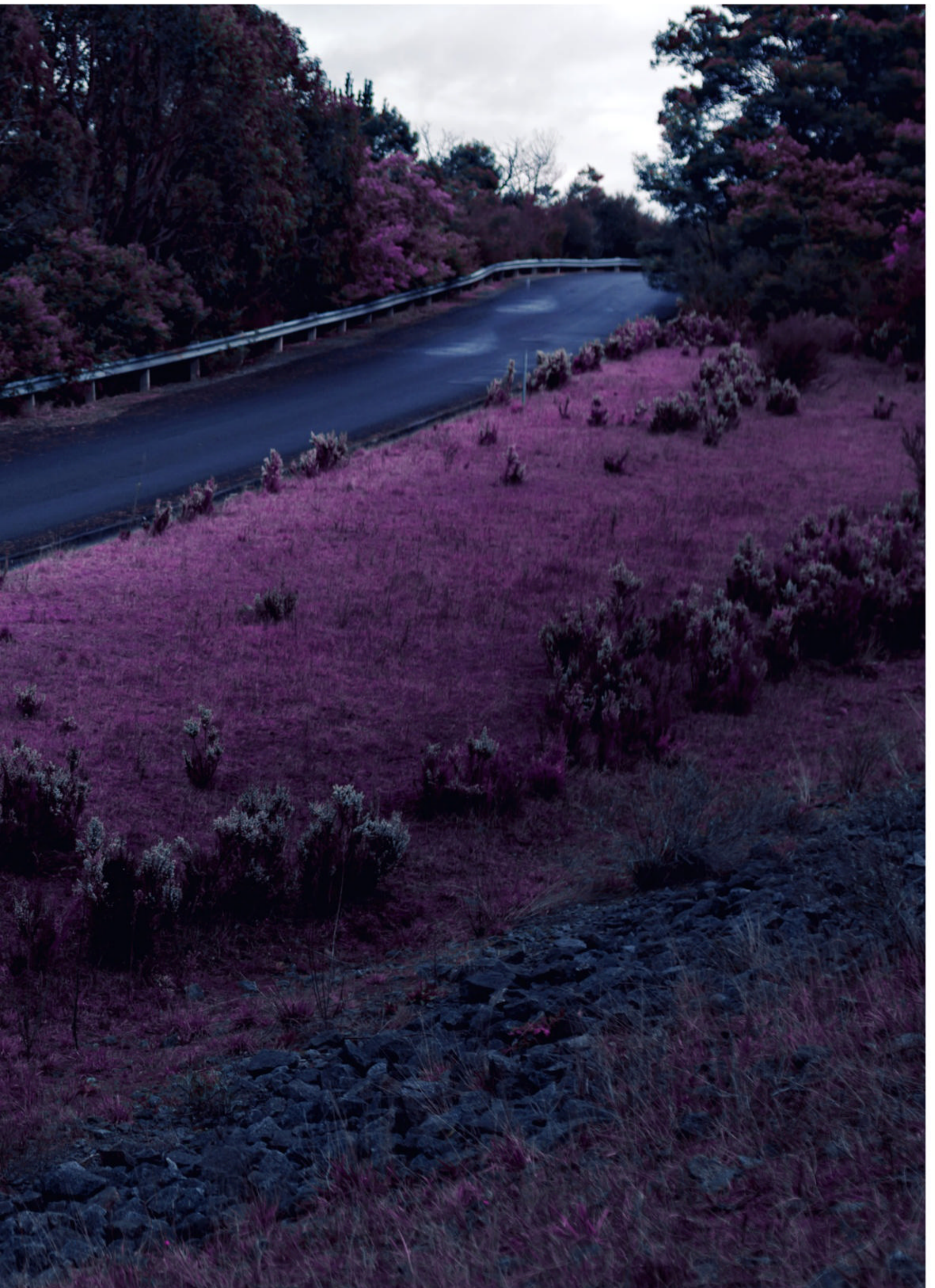
And he took his penchant, and portfolio, of elegant retro designs with a particular pitch when he visited Leno’s garage.

“I designed a sort of retro car, a 30s’ car, a bit like a Devaux. My pitch was to get a wrecked Tesla, get the undercarriage and then build like

a 1930s Alfa coupe. With big torpedo guards, all that sort of thing, and have a sound card. Have it like you’ve found it in a barn, with patina and that sort of stuff, and present it as if it’s just been discovered. And then reveal it’s an electric car.” He laughs again.

For while David believes everyday transport options need to change for the sake of the planet, he thinks there’ll long be folk out and about with hobby and bespoke cars such as his Devaux Spyder.





ICON 917K

★ WORDS MALIA MURPHY ★ IMAGES DAN SHERWOOD







The invigorating aroma of the morning's fresh dew permeates the clouds hanging over Wisbech, England, the steam rising from the parking lot's asphalt while last night's rain begins to evaporate after a rare appearance of the sun. Once a thriving port and agricultural center of 18th-century Britain, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire was a prosperous community known for its magnificent Georgian architecture and small-town atmosphere, devoid of the usual noise pollution caused by cars and planes — though now, not entirely quiet.

On this particular morning, Wisbech's industrial center is not just a place of business: Now, it is 1970, and the third round of the World Sportscar Championship season is in full swing. A Porsche 917 rounds the corner down the street with a thunderous downshift, its stiff suspension creaking as it makes its way over the hump and through Icon Engineering's gate; the engine idling; then, shutting off with a satisfying clunk.

Ferdinand Porsche famously said: "The last car that will be built will be a sports car" — a statement which would remain the Automakers' mantra to this day. Though we have since lost the automotive great, we have not lost his legacy — and Icon Engineering is here to prove that true.

They say an Engineer's work is never done, and that may very well be correct. When

you have a naturally-inquisitive brain, a completed project never marks the end of curiosity. To experience lifelong learning is to experience the lifestyle of an Engineer.

Sunday, April 12, 1970: A 13-year-old Dave Eaton stared, utterly transfixed by the winding-road circuit in front of him. The windswept track littered with debris brought on by Kent's absolutely brutal and unyielding British weather. Then, it happened. The leaves began to stir, the asphalt began to tremble while the raw screech of the flat-12 preceded the behemoth while it ripped through the corner: sucking the debris underneath its chassis and ejecting it out the back in a dramatic spray — like a grander marlin emerging from the depths of the sea. A wet-weather specialist, Pedro Rodriguez had made up five laps — following his pit exit — piloting the 917K to a 1-2-3-4 Porsche victory and cementing his name in racing history — history Dave had witnessed, firsthand. There, still mesmerized by the downshifts of the Kurzheck, he had made his decision: "It was that race that I decided I needed a 917, even if it had to be a recreation ... but a good recreation!" And good it was.

The memory of that day has clearly never left Dave's mind. Pursuing a highly-lucrative career in automotive engineering, he found himself designing and managing both commercial and concept projects for a menagerie of OEM brands: including the likes of Ford and Bentley. From Japan to Germany, he has provided his expertise to like-minded professionals around the world.







His garage has seen an Alfa Romeo Montreal and Lamborghini Espada nestled within – poster cars which many of us would only dream of. But, after an incredibly-fruitful 40-year-long professional career in the industry and an equally-rewarding personal life, something was still missing, and Dave knew the answer: “I blame Pedro,” he admitted with a smile on his face.

The why was there, but not the how. A capable Engineer like himself could navigate the replica project, but finding the parts? That was the hard part. It is not like motoring icons just pop up on the classifieds or could be ordered online ... or could they?

Fast forward four years later to August, 2011: A listing pops up on the classifieds – a little blip on the radar; a lost ship straying into unknown waters; a wild-card. Exactly what Dave needed.

The PistonHeads description of the 917 bodyshell in question was rather depressing. Ideas circulating in the comments saw the bodyshell being used as everything from a kit-car exterior to a downright mad “edible jelly sculpture ... [centerpiece]” for a Le-Mans-themed party. After contemplating its uses, many enthusiasts seemed to reach the same conclusion as the article: agreeing that “sadly, it looks like buying [the] bodyshell; then, building a car around it isn’t as easy as it sounds.” Terrified by the alternatives,

this 917 skeleton was certainly praying for its savior, who happened to be a stalwart Englishman who “took umbrage to” his fellow PistonHeader’s (PHer’s) remarks. Now referred to as “that idiot that bought that shell” on the PistonHeads forums, it was time to prove everyone wrong, though it indeed would not be as easy as it sounded. Eagerly inducting his friend and fellow Engineer John Hartman into his new world, the “10 Years of Lunacy” would begin – under the newly-founded Icon Engineering namesake. Determined as they may be to realize this dream, there was no denying the grandeur of such a task.

Eaton was not deterred, and neither was Hartman. Their combined decades of engineering experience was a “major asset” and catalyst to their vision. With widespread industry contacts and a deep understanding of the idiosyncrasies of design, Eaton was confident in his approach. Excel spreadsheets organizing everything from material receipts to hours worked were documented: bills of materials, Gantt Charts, blueprints — the whole nine yards. Good engineering stems from good organization – something that Dave learned well over the course of his career. He said: “I used that philosophy on our 917K project.” While the two automotive veterans were well-versed in many aspects of reverse-engineering







prior to tackling their replica project, there was one factor left to complete the equation: CAD.

In the automotive sector, modern technology continues to improve. You use technology to make better technology, and the cycle seemingly repeats itself. The same can be said of computer-aided design (CAD), that is largely used by the engineering community to plan, visualize, and execute both simple and complex design systems. As Eaton puts it, “it’s not just CAD that’s important; but, also, the complete genre of modern technology which has evolved over the last 30 years.” Reverse-engineering processes which would normally take months are now completed in a matter of hours: The fiberglass shell was laser scanned and automatically populated into the industry-standard 3D software, Catia, as a complete model: allowing for efficient and accurate sizing of the chassis. By bypassing the step of painstakingly taking dimensions with physical tools – that may have large error tolerances – the digital method aims to reduce human error. Eaton confirmed that, while this process could have been “done manually, [like what] Porsche did back in the late-1960s to build sixty cars,” it would have been far more tedious. If the Icon Engineering team really wanted to build their historic replica the historic way, that

would have meant “perhaps three 25-[foot]-long drafts [of various dimensions] ... to layout mylar sheet; and, then, start manually adding the points to each view”—an option which could have been explored, for nostalgia purposes.

Instead, relying on scale drawings of the original aluminum chassis from his 917 books, Dave and John were able to determine a scale factor for the new steel chassis using the shell’s dimensions as a constraint and begin the process of mapping out the chassis nodes in CAD: therefore, solidifying the backbone of the Porsche. Bends and joints between cage tubing could be created digitally: a task which, when approached manually, “would have taken months; and, then, to machine manually would have taken [months more].” With modern technology, Dave and John simply sent “220 CAD files to the laser cutters; and, [two to three] weeks later, [got] 220 tubes back.” All of which fit perfectly together, as expected. From there, running stress and force simulations on components or starting the manufacturing process is far easier – especially with today’s widespread use of finite element analysis (FEA), computational fluid dynamics (CFD), and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) softwares, that are often built into the original design program. Though the Icon Engineering team did not

seem to hit any snags, unique challenges arose once they began tackling the topic of road legality: The major culprit was the United Kingdom's Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA) test, that utilized a fifty-page manual indicating the safety benchmarks which must be met by a specific vehicle's design. Dave said: "Everything in that I already understood ... [but we had to design] specific [safety] items." A process which he was comfortable embarking on thanks to his own credentials and those of his network: "As an industry insider, I had the contacts to run CAE on all these items, so [I] had confidence that everything would work during the build process." And he was right!

Dave said: "Without CAD, [I] would have never attempted this project; also, having the complete project in CAD enables us to manufacture accurate replicas for customers." Which can then be built to the same standards of quality time after time.

The replicas – of which only five are being built a year for lucky customers – come equipped with a modernized flat-six, as opposed to the original flat-12. Icon's objective with the first set of replicas was to make them "evocative of the originals" while retaining the bang-for-your-buck experience. But the nostalgic heart of the beast, the 50-liter flat-12, has been replaced

by an air-cooled 3.6-liter flat-six plucked straight from a 964 911: with the option of a watercooled or turbocharged variant — a build thoroughly vetted by John, who has built many Porsche engines over the years. Hartland said he is "very pleased that the engine's on full chat and sounding gorgeous." And our ears certainly do not disagree! Diligent attention to detail in the engine-tuning process means the exhaust sounds as close to the original power plant as it can sound – sans six cylinders, of course. Add in the delightful tones of the standard transaxle five-speed rowing through the gears, and you are already sold! Though the replica already claims a seriously-impressive 95-percent build accuracy compared to the original, Dave said they are not done yet. "Now [that] we have an accurate recreation ... next could be a reverse-engineered [flat-12]," largely due to a cohesive chassis design which Dave reckons is "roughly [0.4 to 0.6 inches] [within] the original" — the final piece of the puzzle which could be set, if the elusive 1.2-million-euro powerplant could be sourced and financed.

For those who would prefer a future-forward replica, Icon is determined to acknowledge the demands of an evolving industry. "Having the complete project in CAD ... [enables] us to use the CAD to manufacture a composite tubular chassis and moulds for





composite body panels. We are already looking at an electric version ... having everything in CAD will enable us to package the complete electric driveline and any chassis modifications; and, [then], design any new mounting brackets prior to manufacturing anything.”

When asked how this undertaking challenged their professional experience, Dave responded honestly: “The project challenged our professional experience, but only relating to new areas we had

no experience with. But we always found solutions to any of the technical issues.” For the seasoned Engineers, the journey was just as sweet as the outcome. Both John and he were fascinated by the opportunity of diving deeper into technology which they had not previously focused on in their careers. Eaton said: “It was fascinating because we had to develop magnesium wheels, collapsible steering columns, [and] assess various safety-critical items, such as [the] front end impact ...



to get road legality. We learned a lot more about engineering from the project ... and, now that we have a running road- and track-legal prototype, it feels very positive because the car generates such positive feedback.” American Engineer James Kip Finch once said: “The Engineer has been, and is, a maker of history” — and he would be right. As Porsche has made history with the 917K, Icon Engineering has honored it, and perhaps made its own history in the process.

“Satisfying,” that is how Dave described the outcome of Icon Engineering’s “10 Years of Lunacy”, and for good reason. Dave said: “There are dozens of GT40 replicas, but I wanted something much more individual; [though], this is not the real reason [for the replica project].” The real reason remains frozen in time on that rainy day in 1970, at the Brands Hatch circuit in Kent, England. And that is as good a reason as any.

CAPETOWN COLLECTOR

✦ WORDS **WILHELM LUTJEHARMSI** ✦ IMAGES **PEET MOCKE**





Based outside Wellington — a 90-minute drive from Cape Town, South Africa — we find a passionate Land Rover Collector. You cannot call the place a garage. It would have made a perfect lounge or elaborate dining hall: instead, Jacques Smit (nicknamed Nekkies) filled it with some of the best and most-collectible Land-Rovers in South Africa. And, rather appropriately, proudly displayed on your right as you enter the hall, is a lovely collection of model cars. Until recently, he had a beautiful classic two-door Range Rover, but that has gone to a new home. Not only is “all things Land Rover” Nekkies’ passion, but it is his business, as well: He services, maintains, restores, and customizes these cars through his company, Gateway Offroad Centre.

As is often the case, Nekkies’ interest in all things Land Rover started at a very young age. “I grew up in a farming community and was used to seeing and experiencing 4x4s. In 2000, I bought my first Defender: a Series 2. It was in

a terrible state because I couldn’t afford a better example. I restored it and, from here on, the bug bit! And, since then, I’ve restored a number of Land Rovers. In 2004, I had the option to go farming, but rather chose to join a business which specializes in repairing, restoring, and the maintenance of Land Rovers and Range Rovers.”

All perfectly reversed parked, this collection spans a number of decades.

One of the Land Rovers which immediately draws attention is the yellow 1996 Camel Trophy Discovery 300 Tdi. Nekkies said: “A friend of mine phoned me and said that he would run into marital problems if he buys another Land Rover, but he knows I would appreciate this Landy! One of the previous owner’s requirements was that the car must go to a good home. You often don’t get the chance to purchase 4x4s like these, so I took it. This car was Team UK’s car and, when I joined the Camel Trophy Club in UK, they admitted to not knowing the whereabouts of this car.”

Nekkies decided not to restore this Discovery because it has such a storied history. “I cleaned







THESE LIGHT-WEIGHT MILITARY VEHICLES WERE SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR THE BRITISH ARMY, SO THEY COULD BE HELICOPTERED INTO A WAR ZONE

the car when I received it, but I don't want to restore it: All its marks are part of the car's patina and its history. Mechanically, we went through the car: cambelts and fluids were replaced. But, cosmetically, we left it untouched — it is really part of the car's character.”

The oldest car on display in his collection is a 1956 Land Rover Series 1, complete with its foldable windscreen and the removable rooftop. It has received a significant amount of work, but Nekkies admits the aim was plainly to tidy up the car and bring it back to its original state. Nekkies said: “I've found a 1950 Land Rover Series 1 which is quite special. I'm busy restoring it, so when that is done, I'll decide if I'll keep both or maybe sell the 1956 model. When you find one of these classics Land Rovers, you need to keep them original because that is what current owners and Collectors are interested in.”

The various colors of the Land Rovers and Range Rovers are as interesting as the variety of the derivatives. Another special car — and one rarely seen on any road — is the 2002 Land Rover Defender TD5 147. “Only ten of these six-door Defenders were ever sold and

all of them came to South Africa. The aim was to sell them to high-end game reserves. A few years later, Land Rover manufactured another three which are being used at the factory to ferry visitors around.”

Whether it is Land Rover or Range Rover, Nekkies appreciates all of them. “I bought my first classic Range Rover three-door in 2012. When one client wanted to restore his three-door, we decided to do both together.” The result is the beautiful light-blue classic Range Rover: complete with its 3.5-liter V8 engine and plush interior.

It is a challenge to do research on early Land Rovers which came to South Africa. As Nekkies said, the early cars came to South Africa in knocked-down kits and were assembled in Blackheath, Cape Town. Unfortunately, Land Rover kept minimal records of these kits which were exported to South Africa.

We take the Camel Trophy Discovery and the Land Rover Series III “Lightweight”, manufactured between 1973 and 1983, to Nekkies's Land Rover graveyard for our photoshoot. Based on a Defender, this is the vehicle which Angolan Military Leader





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*WHEN YOU FIND ONE OF THESE CLASSICS LAND ROVERS,
YOU NEED TO KEEP THEM ORIGINAL BECAUSE THAT IS
WHAT CURRENT OWNERS AND COLLECTORS
ARE INTERESTED IN.*

Jonas Savimbi used during his guerrilla war. It is fascinating to hear the stories about this Defender and how many Collectors from across the globe have shown interest in this Land Rover.

These light-weight military vehicles were specially designed for the British Army, so they could be helicoptered into a war zone. Following the release of the Westland Wessex helicopter, in 1958, the army was finally able to transport a vehicle by air ... the only catch was that the vehicle needed to be lighter than 2,500 pounds. Of course, a standard Land Rover Series II was too heavy, so Engineers went back to the drawing board.

The first vehicle they stripped down was the Series IIA (88-inch). Apart from removing several panels and any equipment deemed unnecessary for military use, the Series II was made narrower by four inches: this meant that everything down to the half shafts had to be cut and lighter panels were fitted in certain places. Crucially, this new model had to fit on a standard NATO pallet — perfect for air travel. It is claimed that the Lightweight served with the armed forces for more than 20 countries.

“I purchased it in 2005. My brother’s friend

mentioned they had this interesting Land Rover on their farm. Knowing I was a Landy fanatic, my brother called me. I went to have a look and bought it on the spot.” Following his purchase, Nekkies investigated its history. It entered South Africa in 1986 from Angola. Back then, thankfully, one could still import left-hand-drive cars to South Africa. Nekkies’ research revealed it had been used by none other than the leader of UNITA, in Angola, Jonas Savimbi. Although it now looks relatively “civilianized”, when it was used during the war, it was fitted with an M40 4.2-inch recoilless rifle. This 463-pound anti-tank gun was placed in the middle of the vehicle, protruding over the bonnet between the split windscreen. Plus, there was ample seating for troops on both sides of the loading bay.

These are, undoubtedly, two special Land Rovers which are maintained by a true enthusiast. After a brief drive back home, we quickly exchange thoughts about the new Dakar Classic. I guessed, having already crossed Africa in Land Rovers, that such an event is something Nekkies would be very interested in competing in — no doubt, in a product from Solihull.







BRABUS

★ WORDS **NATAN TAZELAAR** ★ IMAGES **INGMAR TIMMER**





In times of green influencing and environmental clashes it might not be woke to shoot through traffic in a gigantic black classic Mercedes-Benz, blasting past commuting EVs and hybrids at every possible opportunity, simply to enjoy the surge of 705 Nm of torque and the subdued and glorious sound of a V12. I could not care less though, because I am driving a childhood dream and I am not in the mood for adolescents who only take off their Bluetooth headset and look up from their screen to vent their obtrusive and largely unsubstantiated world-saving opinion. I am in my own safe space here, a concept that had a very different meaning in the early nineties, and while quietly thundering along it strikes me that hardly anybody notices this extraordinary creation from the industrial village of Bottrop in the German Ruhr area. This is a strong point of most Brabus creations, because even though these cars are highly exclusive and outrageously powerful, you can move

through traffic without hardly anybody noticing your dressed-up Benz that is more exotic and more valuable than for instance an Aston Martin or a Rolls-Royce.

Back in the early nineties this 6.9 variant of the 600 SEC - in Stuttgart known as the C 140 E 60 - was the pinnacle of what Brabus had to offer. The original was launched at the 1992 North American Auto Show in Detroit, next to the 500 SEC V8 variant. At that point Brabus already had their 6.9 engine ready, because it was based on the M120 V12 that made its debut a year before in the 600 SEL sedan at the 1991 Geneva Auto Show. With 48 valves and CAN bus technology this V12 was very advanced and in standard configuration it developed 408 horsepower from 5.987 cc and a torque figure of 570 Nm. That was not enough for Brabus and even though they were still a relatively small company, they managed to put themselves firmly on the map by developing a powerplant that became an icon in the European tuning scene.

For the story about the development of this mighty 6.9 engine we visited Bottrop to talk



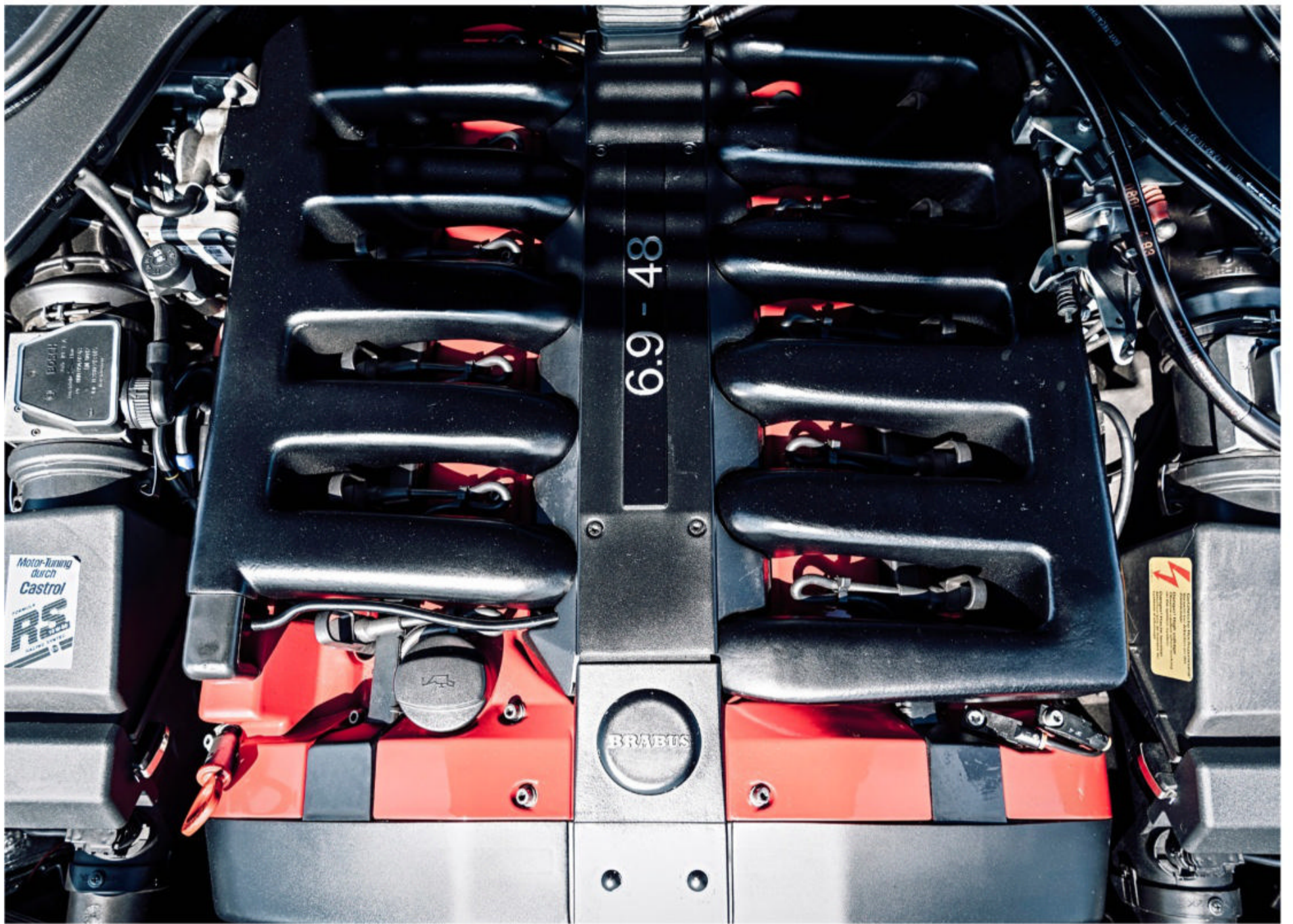




BACK IN THE EARLY NINETIES THIS 6.9 VARIANT OF THE 600 SEC - IN STUTTGART KNOWN AS THE C 140 E 60 - WAS THE PINNACLE OF WHAT BRABUS HAD TO OFFER

to Ulrich-Joachim Gauffrés who operates as a Senior Consultant for tuning company Brabus after he retired as technical director last year. ‘I started at Brabus in 1985 after I worked as an engineer on turbocharger and compressor technology at Daimler’, Gauffrés begins. ‘Brabus was still very small with less than ten employees and many people were surprised that I left a stable and promising job at Daimler for what looked like an uncertain future.’ What makes it even more surprising is the fact that Gauffrés’ meeting with Brabus founder Bodo Buschmann was a coincidence. ‘In 1984 I was meeting the Dutch turbo specialist Willy Mosselmann for Daimler at the Automechanika tradeshow in Frankfurt. We met at the Brabus booth and when Herr Buschmann heard that a Daimler engineer was on his booth, he came to have a chat. A year later I moved to Bottrop and this shows how seemingly small things can have a big impact in life’, Gauffrés memorizes. He then explains that Brabus initially worked on predominantly four- and six-cylinder engines and that AMG focused

more on V8 models. ‘We were definitely competitors back then, but we focused on our own segments. The takeover by Daimler was the big game changer, because all of a sudden AMG lost its freedom and had to comply with the stringent regulations of the new mother company. ‘That is how the top segment became available to us almost overnight and we thankfully made full use of that.’ The most important step in that regard came when Gauffrés saw technical drawings of a future Mercedes-Benz V12 in a German technical trade magazine called *Motortechnische Zeitschrift*. ‘For tuning companies, it is paramount to keep the time between a new model or engine and the tuned variant as short as possible so you can be the first on the market. Based on the drawings and specifications in the magazine I made a prototype from papier-mâché to work out the possible margins.’ Gauffrés’ expression changes from serious to cheeky and he then reveals, ‘From a friend at Mercedes-Benz I borrowed a crankshaft and I got on a plane with it to visit our crank supplier in the UK. Based on this original crank and







my calculations they milled a new crankshaft and with new pistons and conrods and of course a lot of machining on the engine block, we eventually had our V12 with 6.9 liters.'

Only one word is needed to describe how this engine operates: perfect. Brabus offered their 6.9 in every Mercedes-Benz that came with a V12, so not just the 600 SEC but also the four-door 600 SEL and the 600 SL Roadster. Later Brabus would also offer the 500 E (W124) with a V12, but that is a project of an entirely different category (See text box 500 E V12). The most impressive aspect about the 600 SEC Brabus is the relentless shove in the back while you have no other clues as to how fast you are going unless you check the speedometer. That is how a (I) came to the shocking conclusion that I possibly might have broken the local speed limits, on multiple occasions. It is evident that this powerhouse has no issues to push until well over 190 mph, because speeds of up to 120 mph are a picnic for this Autobahn stormer. When pulling away and at low speeds it is important to feather the throttle, because even with standard ASR, short for Antriebsschlupfregelung or traction control, the 285 rear tires stand no chance against the might of 705 Nm and they express that by squealing and smoking vigorously. The power delivery of this large V12 is wonderfully progressive and with a little self-control you can be outrageously quick, while the occupants have no clue about the actual pace. What makes this Brabus into a dream car for lovers of craftsmanship and traditional mechanical engineering is the fact no turbo compressors or software fiddling were used. In the nineties the use of turbos at Brabus was as far in the future as commercial space travel and trading digital currencies. In a time when excess was regarded as a form of prestige, Gauffrés developed engines according to a motto dictating that lots of engine capacity can only be replaced by lots more engine capacity. 'I always had direct contact with most customers, and many said they wanted more power while they unknowingly wanted more





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1	Alu	1
2	St	1
3	Alu	1
4	St	1
5	Alu	1
6	St	1
7	Alu	1
8	St	1
9	Alu	1
10	St	1
11	Alu	1
12	St	1
13	Alu	1
14	St	1
15	Alu	1
16	St	1
17	Alu	1
18	St	1
19	Alu	1
20	St	1

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Nockenwellenverstellung entscheidend dazu beigetragen
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und viel Leistung bei hohen Drehzahlen nun gemeinsam
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SINCE THE GOLDEN DAYS OF THIS V12, TUNING HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY AND GAUFFRÉS IS ALSO OF THE OPINION THAT WE HAVE PAST THE PEAK

torque. This mostly turned out during test drives, because torque gives the sensation of fast acceleration and power only offers a higher speed. The latter is often a byproduct of an engine with a high torque figure, so powerful cars almost always have high top speeds.

Since the golden days of this V12, tuning has changed dramatically and Gauffrés is also of the opinion that we have past the peak. He is not necessarily referring to the rise of electric cars, but more so the trend of ever smaller combustion engines with more and more turbo pressure, to adhere to ridiculous emissions legislation invented by politicians falling over one another for voters and media attention. This leaves a relatively small margin for only the best and most experienced tuning companies. Gauffrés explains that a number of so-called chip tuners make claims that are not even true and that it is relatively easy, for an experienced engineer, to prove that with calculations as he did on a number of occasions. The way Brabus operates is completely different and this resulted in an impressive reputation which was taken over by Constantin Buschmann

after his father's premature death in 2018. An important aspect is also that Brabus does much more than simply adding more power, because the interior and the exterior can be customized to a level that is unattainable to most manufacturers. With 450 employees in Germany and a global network we are curious if and how the current (geopolitical) situation is affecting Brabus. Gauffrés' reaction is as calm as it is direct: 'That has basically no effect on us. We have waiting lists in all our large markets around the world so that means we can sell more than we can produce. If sales in Russia declines, we can shift sales to other areas and still have more demand than supply.' There is no doubt that Brabus is in a very fortunate position, but sadly things look gloomy for fans of large combustion engines with Guinness Book of World Records performance levels. As a consolidation it is good to know then, that Brabus still offers their variant of the M120 V12 to this day and this one is even more powerful and more impressive than the 6.9 that we experienced, making it not only the apogee in the career of Gauffrés, but also a milestone in German automotive history.







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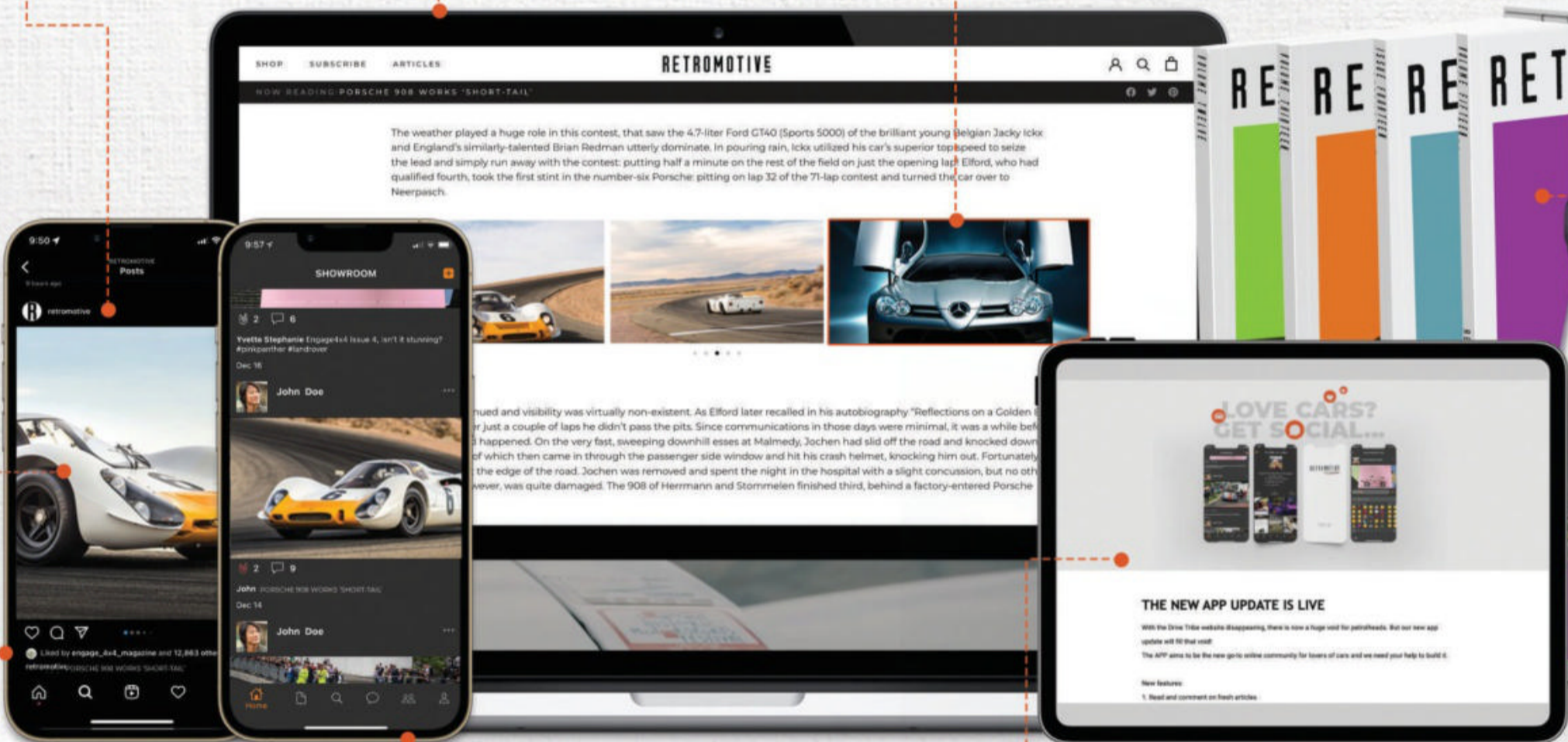
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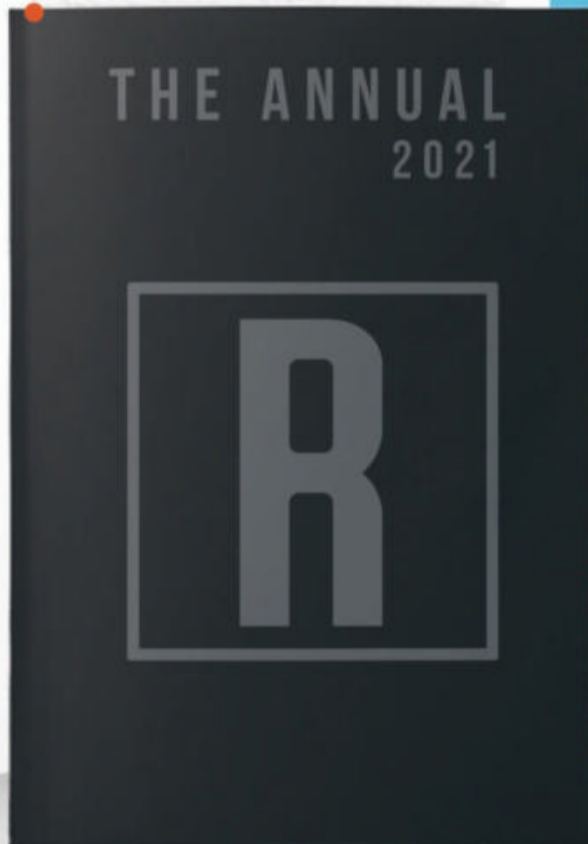


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