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Verity and her Ferrari 612 Scaglietti

Living the dream

Ever wondered what it's like to live the life of a millionaire? Wondered what it's like to step in to their shoes... or even their car? Well, at P1 Supercar members club, you can do just that, and at the snip of the price. **Verity Smart** and **Kate Cowling** join the club that everyone wants to be a member of. Photographs: **Graham Franks**.

Whether you are a millionaire, would like to be one or are a complete petrol head who knows and loves cars of prestige, P1 is for you. Offering all their members the chance to use any car of their choice whenever they want, this club really is the ultimate in quality and exclusivity.

How it works is, that a member pays £2,500 up front and then either £14,500 or £12,500 annually depending upon whether they require the 'Monaco' level of membership or the 'Silverstone'. Each membership buys you a different amount of points and the points buy you the cars of your choice with P1. And once you've joined, the fun begins.

As a member, you receive the key to any car you desire that P1 have waiting for you, and of course, being a high class club owning prestigious cars that most of us haven't even seen on the road before, the cars that this club own are astounding. From Bentley convertibles to Aston Martin's, Porsche's and Ferraris, P1 have them all. Plus, they are the newest models, in various colours with various specifications.

The fact that it is an easy to use service while

being viable at the same time, makes it a very popular club to join. "Some of our members don't even own a car," says Michael Breen (founder and CEO of P1). "And some have prestigious cars of their own and just fancy a change now and then without having to invest in a new car every time one comes out that they take a fancy to."

The service is simple and hassle free. You literally book the car you want and P1 either deliver it direct to the address of your choice or you can collect it from their showroom (leaving your own car to be valeted while you're away having fun.) It is like having your very own virtual garage full of all of your dream cars. As Jeremy Clarkson (the god of all things 'car') said, "P1 brings a little practicality to the mad world of 2ft-high, 200mph supercars."

Verity's drive...

Being invited to be a member for the weekend of one of the most enviable car clubs in the world is a mixture of excitement and nerves (not that dissimilar from being a lottery winner for a day I'd imagine.)

The day before I was due to collect my 'dream'

car for the weekend, to my delight I was informed by Michael Breen at P1 that they had upgraded my car from an Aston Martin to a Ferrari 612 Scaglietti (not that I would complain either way.)

So, excitedly, with butterflies fluttering in my tummy, I arrived at P1 to meet my new weekend pal.

Michael took me on a tour of the impressive garage through to where 'my' Ferrari was waiting for me. "Unfortunately, being a Friday many of our cars have already gone out," Michael informed me. However, it still looked like a Beverley Hills car park to me; we were surrounded by about 20 cars... a Bentley Continental, a Mercedes Benz SLR McLaren (£350,000) which was under wraps since it is so "special," and a couple of Aston Martin's and Porsche's here and there. Now I am no petrol head, but I do appreciate a good car and do enjoy watching the occasional Top Gear episode (and have assisted in fitting a car engine before), so I almost went dizzy from the gleam of the metal and the smell of the new leather that engulfed this garage of some of the world's most elite cars. And then we were introduced.



Kate and her Porsche 997 Targa 4S

"So here she is Verity," said Michael beckoning me over to the baby blue glistening power machine with its large grid smiling at me. "I love it already!" I said excitedly. But still the nerves were there, and luckily for me Michael kindly said he'd drive it out of the garage and give me a quick briefing as they do with all members.

One of the first things that I noticed when I got into the car was that there was no gear stick. Yes it was an automatic. However, you still need one. "You just flick this from drive to reverse," Michael said pointing to what looked more like a light switch. And with that, he parked up and said goodbye. It was my turn.

So the key went in, ignition was on, and off we went roaring all the way.

Now I have been on track race days before in powerful cars, (which I absolutely love), but never before have I driven a car that was almost begging me to drive it faster. The power under the foot pedal of the 5748cc engine, the comfort of the seat and the vibration as it roared, made me just yearn to take this car out on to a track... but no, I had to restrain my weekend pal, but wow did we have fun together.

Being one of only seven in the UK and worth £200,000, she obviously drew a lot of attention, and wasn't easy to miss since surprisingly she wasn't small. For some reason I imagined all Ferrari's to be quite small sports cars (I hadn't had the luxury of driving one before), but this Scaglietti 612 is a large four seater, with large engine yet still the designers have managed to retain a high level of luxury.

As I drove home through London, the attention continued. I recalled what Michael had told me earlier "some of our members do imply to

people that the cars are their actual car as an ego game." And I guess if people are willing to invest in their ego, £14,500 is a lot less than £200,000 (or even £350,000 in the case of the Mercedes.)

The surprising thing about driving this supposedly 'mean machine' was that it didn't feel like an aggressive racing car. It was comfortable. Yes, you could feel that the suspension had been tightened, so every inch of the road is felt, but that adds to the whole experience making it feel raw. As a whole, it was a delight to drive and instinctively I felt like I had something special at the end of my fingertips.

It really is the perfect car for the long distant driver; which makes P1 the perfect service for couples who do a lot of weekend trips (partners are automatically added on to membership) or for the business person frequently travelling across the country.

With plans to expand to Dubai and Sydney, P1 members will also be able to use their membership while abroad.

"They'll be met at the airport and handed over their car for their trip, just as they can here in the UK," said Michael.

So after a weekend of driving throughout the city of London in comfort and feeling really quite elite, it was time to reluctantly bid goodbye to my supercar experience in the Ferrari Scaglietti.

I had been surprised at what a comfortable and practical car to drive it was, but had also found the P1 one service friendly, reliable and hassle free. It is definitely a value for money select club. I now know what's going on my Christmas wish list!

Kate's drive...

Not so long ago I watched a very special documentary about positive thinking. Now, I am certainly not a 'glass is half empty' kind of girl, but I am fairly sceptical, or should I say, 'was fairly sceptical' about making things 'happen'. But I watched this programme and thought, 'well, I might as well give it a go'.

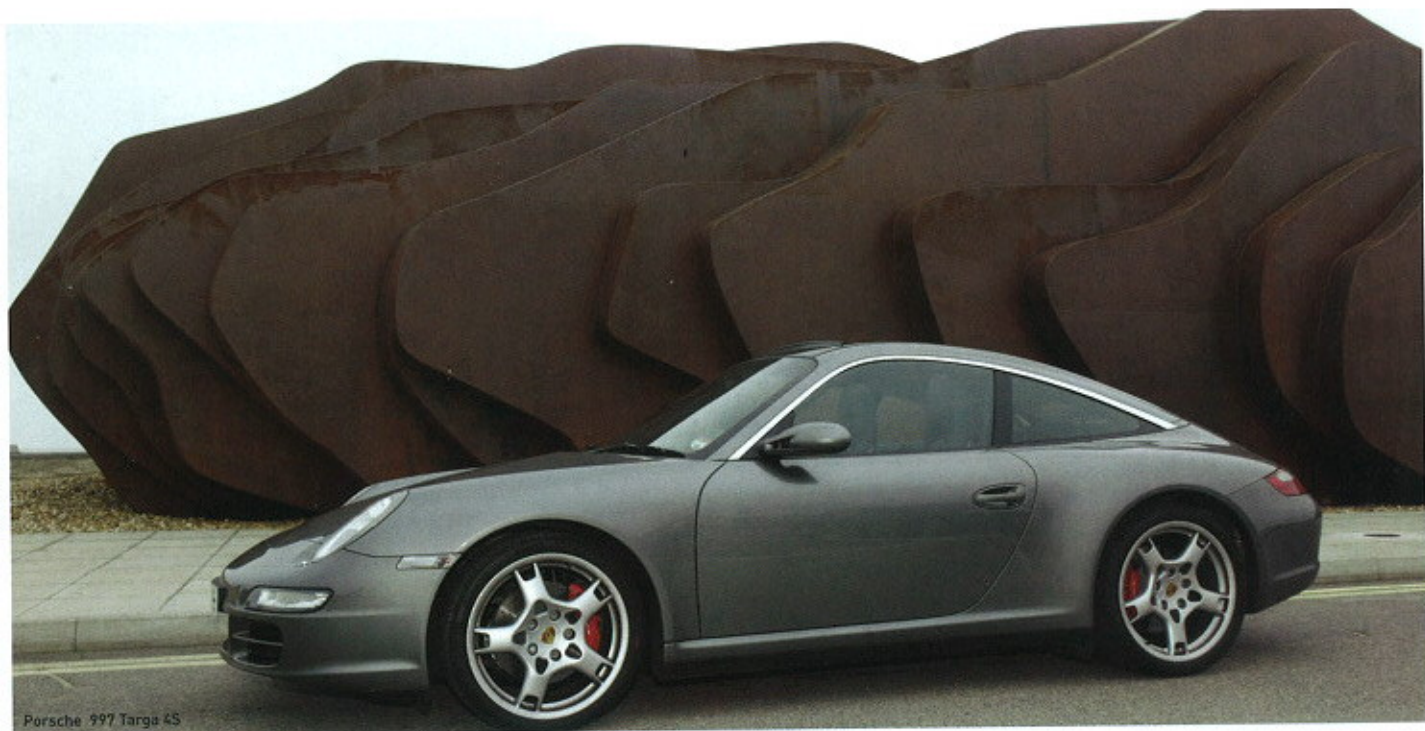
The documentary suggested that if you think about something over and over again, it will happen - people were coming into millions through this simple mind game, one man even ended up living in his dream home as a result of positive thinking.

And so I began, immediately.

My DREAM car is a Porsche, a 1968 Porsche 911 Coupe. And if I am going to be fussy, preferably in white, silver or even black for that matter, with tan leather seats too (but only if it's a black Porsche!)

Now I don't have a picture of one stuck on my fridge but I started dreaming anyway...

This was three months ago and what happened? Last week a Porsche landed on my doorstep - well not literally, as that would be silly, but sure enough, a gun metal grey Porsche 997 Targa 4S arrived at 10am and it was all mine (only for the day I hasten to add). Michael from P1 was as arranged, there to deliver my supercar to my door - an outstanding gold star service I must say! So without any hesitation, I jumped into the passenger side - yes I know, the wrong side but I certainly wasn't going to get behind the wheel before being briefed on the car's ability and on one of my main concerns, any hidden 'quirky' features - ejector seat, revolving number plates... that kind of thing.



Porsche 997 Targa 4S

To my relief, Michael informed me that no, there weren't any sneaky features to worry about, the only difference was to start up the engine, you had to keep your foot on the clutch - no problem, I won't forget that I thought. "Oh and the roof?" I asked. "Ah yes", Michael replied. "To get the roof down, just flick this button". And sure enough, the elegant, large glass roof slid back into the glass rear hatch, blending sleekly into the classic lines of the Porsche and leaving a light, airy interior. "You're not put off by a few spots of rain Kate, are you?" "You must be joking" I replied. I have a Porsche for the day with a sliding roof, and I am going to take full advantage of it I thought. Michael started up the engine and what a beautiful sound. It was more like a panther than a car and we were off, driving through my neighbourhood and stopping a short while after to swap sides. Now I was nervous. Very. But I am not sure why. I come from a car mad family. My dad is an ex racing driver, I learnt to drive on my dad's knee when I was about eight and I used to spend numerous days and nights prancing around my dad's garage watching him tinkering away on his cars. But I was nervous because this car wasn't mine! What if I pranged it? What if I stalled it? A girl in a Porsche, stalling it - god forbid! But nerves aside, I jumped straight into the drivers side, adjusted the seat, adjusted the mirrors and what the heck, put my foot down! WOW. I had only driven five seconds up the road, and I didn't want to give it back, but I had all day in it, so I was going to make the most of it. Michael then left me to it and I was off - it's just you and me kid I thought, let's have fun. First stop, the office as I needed a driving companion. I didn't have the day off of course, but I was on an assignment and that meant, driving where I liked, when I liked and for how long as I needed to feel the full benefit of the Porsche and of the service that P1 offer didn't I? With my colleague Sarah in tow, we roared along the seafront, and I felt really quite at ease and for once in my life, I wanted the time to go very very slowly. So, I thought, I have a fast car for the day, where do I go? Well, I clearly

couldn't go abroad in it, even though that was tempting, the closest thing to that was taking a cruise along the coast.

The Porsche Targa 4S has a 6 speed gearbox, reaches 0-62mph in just 4.9 seconds and has a top speed of 179mph. Now I don't think I reached quite that speed but I had a fair go.

With a smooth yet fairly stiff clutch, I truly felt like I was in a proper race car. With short, swift gears, the car stuck to the road like superglue [I don't think that is the correct petrolhead jargon] but it did. I felt totally safe in this car. This is mainly due to the fact that it's 4 wheel drive and feels utterly stable whilst on the road. With my foot hard on the gas, we sped along, and with roof fully retracted, we were still able to hear each other talk.

The thing about this car is that it isn't to 'show'. Yes it's stunning and it got quite a few double takes but it's still stylishly subtle. And the funny thing is, is how many more sports cars and supercars you notice on the road, when you are driving one yourself and everyone either waves, nods or smiles at you - I have finally joined the club, even if the clock was ticking away at a rate that I didn't like! So from the coast and back, I couldn't resist a quick drive through Brighton, or maybe two.

So that was my day and I have to say it was such a thrilling, enjoyable and fun day. And guess what? I didn't stall it! Maybe broke the speed limit, but that was the plan - only kidding!

P1 International Ltd
Imperial Park
Randalls Way
Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 7TA
Tel: 01372 374400
www.p1international.com

