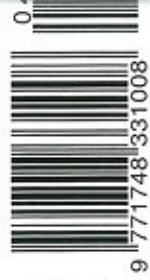


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SIT JACK BRAND INSIDE A SUPERCAR, AND HE'S LIABLE TO BE OVERCOME WITH EXCITEMENT. SO IMAGINE THE POOR MAN'S REACTION WHEN HE SAW THE WEALTH OF AUTOMOTIVE FINERY ON OFFER FROM CAR CLUB P1...

Once you've retired from Formula 1 racing with a world championship title and an enviable reputation to your name, what do you do next? If you're Damon Hill, you go on to co-found a pioneering, high-end motoring enterprise that gives us mere mortals a chance to sample some of the most powerful and desirable vehicles in the world. Christened P1 (after the pitboard signal used during F1 races), its model of charging clients an annual fee in exchange for access to an exotic fleet of supercars is one that's spawned numerous imitators since its launch in October 2000.

Said fee in P1's case is a one-off membership cost of £2500, followed by an annual subscription of some £14,500 a year, with those harbouring more modest driving ambitions able to pay £12,500 instead, should they

wish. That's a fair amount of cash to be paying without having anything to call your own at the end of it all, so what's the appeal? If you're unfamiliar with the topsy-turvy world of sportscar economics, allow us to explain...

HOW much?

Let's be clear about this, owning your own set of mega-wheels from a big-name marque is a hugely expensive and often risky business. Beyond the initial outlay, which as we all know can be stratospherically high depending on what you're prepared to spend, there's the running and maintenance costs to bear in mind.

High octane show-stoppers from the likes of Lamborghini, Aston Martin and Bentley might offer plenty of thrills and spills, but also staggeringly poor





Porsche C4S Coupé



Lamborghini Murciélago

fuel economy, which is increasingly harder to bear in this day and age. Factor in the hefty insurance premiums and exorbitant servicing costs you can expect to pay just to keep such beasts on the road, and it all starts to add up with frightening speed. Consider this: to ensure that their Murciélago remained in fine fettle, P1 once had to spend a grand total of £37,391 over the course of just 12-months. Ouch.

As for the small matter of resale depreciation, should you want or need to part with your mean machine, don't get us started. We've all heard the horror stories about how much gets knocked off the market value of certain Ferraris the moment you drive them off the dealer's forecourt, never mind a year or two later down the line. All of a sudden, that 14½ grand starts to look much more reasonable.

After all, what it buys you is the opportunity to put not just one vehicular masterpiece through its paces, but upwards of a dozen throughout the year. If you find the idea of putting pedal to the metal and roaring off with the power of Italy's finest propelling you forward at pulse-quickenning velocities in any way appealing, then it's an enticing prospect indeed.

A cornucopia of class

Despite the increased competition that the performance car club sector has started to see in recent years, P1 is still ahead of the pack in terms of the choice and quality of rides its members get to choose from, more on which in a moment. Before that though, it's worth taking a look at the company's rather stiff entry requirements.

Firstly, P1 is a pretty exclusive place; membership is strictly limited to just 250. Application involves having to volunteer information regarding your driving history, including the cars – performance or otherwise – that you may have owned in the past, complete with full disclosure of any previous driving penalties or convictions. While minor instances of the former shouldn't torpedo your prospects completely, possessing the latter isn't likely to do you any favours. Progress beyond that stage, and you'll then be expected to shell out an additional £495 for a day's supercar training before being let loose in P1's powerhouses on your own.

And, my, what powerhouses some of them are. Divided into six separate groups, P1's line-up is fairly diverse, and thanks to its established



Porsche Cayman S

reputation among dealers, able to boast several examples of auto exotica that enthusiasts aren't likely to find available under similar terms anywhere else.

Group 1 gathers together what one could perhaps arguably refer to as the 'lower end', more attainable offerings. Still, considering this selection includes a Caterham Roadsport SV, a BMW M3 V8 Coupé and a Porsche Cayman S, that's rather stretching it. Moving up the scale, Group 2 takes in a Jaguar XKR and a Range Rover Sport (perfect for making a good impression during the grouse hunting season), with Group 3 boasting a Maserati GranTurismo, an Audi R8 and a Mercedes SL55 AMG, among others.

Groups 4 and 5 is where you'll start to find the serious stuff. As well as the aforementioned Murciélago, Lamborghini's Superleggera and the super-rare Ford GT are ready and waiting for those who feel up to the task of showing them a good time. Here also are P1's most notable new additions – a Ferrari 430 Scuderia and an Aston Martin DBS. Top of the tree, meanwhile, and off-limits to all but the most trusted and responsible members is Group 6, consisting of just the one car – a Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren. All told, it's a fleet that petrol heads are likely to crazy for.

What do points make?

In order to get behind the wheel of these beauties, members need to part with points. The £14,500 p/a 'Monaco' membership scheme gives you 1000 points and 6000 miles, with the £12,500 p/a 'Silverstone' membership offering 750 and 5000 respectively. How you allocate these and what you get in return will largely depend on the group you're interested in, the season and day of your choosing. Making use of Group 1's BMW Z4 M Coupé from Monday to Thursday in January will only set you back two points a day, for example. In contrast, take P1's Bentley Continental GTC for a three-day weekend spin in August and the damage will be a far more sustainable 60 points per day.

Once you've decided on your car and desired date, you can opt to either collect it from P1's bases in Surrey and Cheshire, or have it delivered to and collected from your own front door in exchange for a nominal charge per mile. Certain postcodes in Central London get this service gratis – if you're not sure which ones this might apply to, chances are that your locale isn't one of them. It should also be mentioned that P1 members presently enjoy, on average, around 50 to 70 days driving per year.

Club class

So there you have it – a top-notch service that could make your wildest driving dreams come true. Damon Hill himself may no longer be directly involved in the running of P1 – co-founder Michael Breen bought out Hill's share in 2006 – but the club continues to go from strength to strength, adding newer and more spectacular cars every year, and regularly putting on glitzy events and trips for its members. If you've got the driving chops, the means and the burning desire to know what taking to the road in a magisterial motor really feels like without having to bear the burden of all the attendant expense, then you owe it to yourself to check out what they have to offer...

For further information: www.p1international.com



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P1's Ferrari F430 shot by Alex Howe

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