

HOW TO MAKE A QUICK BUCK

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Murcielago gets the thumbs up from both Hartley Sr and Jnr ✦



BMW CS1 Cabriolet ✦

"This will be a massive hit with girls," says Hartley. But at around £20,000, it's hardly worth his trouble.

Like the look of a Geneva show exotic? Who better to guide you than Tom Hartley, the dealer who wouldn't touch anything priced at less than £50,000

If you love cars and amuse yourself by flicking through the Porsche and Ferrari adverts at the back of the magazine then you will have seen Tom Hartley's moniker. He's the bloke who sells cars that most of us can only dream about: very exotic kit. Have a burning urge to own a Porsche GT2? Hartley will find you one. Want to be the first F60 owner in Britain? Call Tom.

What Hartley doesn't know about the top-end car market ain't worth knowing. So we



BMW 7-series ❖

Our man doesn't think the new 760iL will reverse the 7's trend for poor depreciation



Lamborghini Murcielago ❖

"I'd give £10K over list for a new Murcielago," says an enthusiastic Tom



Maserati ❖

New Spyder and 4200 Coupe look superb and "feel very well-made"

carted him around Geneva Motor Show to get the lowdown on the exotics being exhibited, of which there are plenty in an industry that's gone exotic mad. Mercedes has brought along a clay model of its Maybach, VW has its new Phaeton luxury saloon, BMW the 760iL and of course, there are the usual purveyors of untouchable kit such as Ferrari, Lamborghini, Aston Martin and Bentley.

Hartley will tell us what's hot, what's a stone and what you must stay clear of if you don't want to end up shirtless.

Let's wade straight in at the BMW stand. Star of the Bavarian show is the CS1 concept car. To me this cabriolet looks a real pigs ear, but Hartley rather likes it. "This is going to be a massive hit with the girls," he says. However, at a likely price of £20,000, the CS1 will be too far below the £50k minimum average of his stock to be worth Tom's trouble. Still he reckons it should be a hit.

Not so the Z8 convertible sitting next to it. "It's too expensive for what it is," says Hartley, "and of course it's left-hand-drive. I bought one the other day for £50k and sold it for £4k profit. It was only a year old, which means it's lost about £32,000 in 12 months."

What about the BMW 760iL? Will this one depreciate as heavily as the old 750iL? Hartley has bad news for those worried about residuals: "Trends don't alter over night. It takes more than a model change to reverse a car's history of hefty depreciation. Another thing about this car" he adds, "is that it could be a bit too complicated for its own good."

Now here's another reason why you might have heard of Tom Hartley: he's famous for having employed his son Tom Jnr when the boy was only 12 years old. Young Tom is now 18, made his first million ages ago and



Honda NSX ✧

Father and son Carl discuss whether the new NSX will be as unsuccessful as the old one



Mercedes SL55 ✧

It's the right-hand-drive SL55 that will be the most successful for Hartley and son

has owned half the business since last April. Hartley has with him youngest son Carl, who at 14 is already well-versed in the trade. When I was in my early teens I couldn't be trusted to buy the groceries, let alone buy and sell £100k-plus motors. Like his old man, Carl is immaculately suited and booted.

The Maserati stand. This should be interesting. I have a soft spot for these cars and the new Spyder and 4200 Coupe look superb. Hartley likes them, too. "They feel very well made to me. Very solid- a bit like a bay 550 Maranello." But it's only the second-hand cars that get Tom excited: "The 3200 GT is very good value second-hand. Automatics are the most popular and command the best prices, and you'll be able to find a really nice manual 99 3200 GT with, say, around 20,000 miles for about £35,000. You won't see them on a Maserati dealer's forecourt for that, though, because the importer would rather have a forecourt full of £50,000 cars than make it obvious that the cars have poor residuals."

Honda have the new NSX on its stand, which gives me the chance to ask the expert why this Japanese supercar is so unloved. "Simple. No breeding or history," says Hartley. And if it had a more exotic spec, like a high revving V12? "No difference."

A big part of Hartley's skill, and the reason he's been so successful, is that he knows exactly how long he can charge a premium for a car. We're peering at the new Mercedes SL55, several of which Hartley has already brought in to the UK in left-hand-drive form and sold on at a healthy premium. For this car there is a narrow window because right-hand-drivers will arrive soon. He'll charge a premium on those - a harvest time that could last a year or more.

"Our best business is done with the Ferrari 360 Spider," says Hartley. "There's still a

good 25k premium on these cars and we sell around 10 a month." While we're on the Ferrari stand we get our man to give us the run down on the other models. "The 456 is a dated car now. We sold a six-month-old one the other day for £100,999. Remember that they cost £160,00 new."

The 550 Barchetta is another horror story. "The first one I had we sold for £250,00. Six months later we could only get £150,000 for one. You've really got to know your market. The 360 Modena holds its value well because Ferrari sensibly keeps production low. The opposite tactic is what does Maserati values - there are just too many churned out."

The new 575 Maranello should be more stable. "Pity that Ferrari didn't do more with the shape, to make it look a bit different, to extend its life and make it look fresher. There is likely to be a £5000-£10,000 premium on it, but that will probably only last two or three months"

Much to Hartley's disgust, all we can see of the Maybach is a clay model behind a wall of smoked glass. We can only just make out its massive outline. "I think this will appeal to the die-hard Mercedes enthusiast who has to have the best model available," says Harley, "and think that the Maybach will be perceived as exactly that."

Not quite as luxurious as the Maybach, but an imposing piece of kit nevertheless, is the Volkswagen Phaeton. "Interesting car. Will be bought by people who want to keep low profile. It's the perfect car for a recession when a company boss wants his luxury transport but can't be seen to be spraying money around."

The Bentley stand is not for those who have such worries, Bentleys are in favor at the moment, whereas Rollers are most certainly not. "A Seraph will loose half of its value in the first year," says Hartley. Although, of course, the new Rolls- Royce is till a year away and is not at Geneva, I'm interested in Hartley's view of it. " Many of my old Rolls-Royce customers are pretty confused. Several have asked me just what it is they're buying: a Rolls, VW or a BMW? I don't hold out big hopes of the new car being a huge success."

For the first time ever Hartley is looking at a Lamborghini as a nice opportunity to charge a healthy premium. "I'd give 10k over list for a new Murcielago. You can see Audi's influence: quality is hugely improved. Diablos were a nightmare. You'd take one in for a service, be told it would be about a grand, then get hit with a monster bill that could be as high as £10,000. Lottery winners and people who couldn't tell one end of a car from the other thought they should have a Lambo in the garage bought the Diablos."

" The Pagani Zonta is the perfect for lottery winner's motor. I've dealt with many winners over the years and they often buy like mad with no restraint."

Lotus has its latest Esprit on show at Geneva and has apparently flogged the entire 2002 production run. This fails to impress the Hartleys: it seems like Lotuses are a real no-go area. I can almost see the fear in the man's eyes. "Won't touch these with a barge pole. Sometimes we get them in part exchange but we sell them within the trade or at auction. They're too dated and potentially problematic," says Hartley.

And Porsche 911s? Any bargains? Unfortunately not. Hartley deals in a ridiculous number of 996 Turbos. "It's been fantastic business, this car: we've sold well over a hundred. Even now we can get a 10k premium. At the beginning it was 25k. The GT2 is hot, too - you're looking at a 15k premium."

So is there a car that the family hasn't sold? "A McLaren F1," says Hartley "but I'm on the trail of one at the moment."



Ferrari ❖

Hartley is a big Prancing Horse fan - the cars from Maranello tend to hold their value



VW Phaeton ❖

Tom and Carl examine the Phaeton, a car they believe will be bought by those who



Mercedes Maybach ❖

"The Maybach will appeal to the di-hard Mercedes enthusiast who has to have the best model available"



Lotus Esprit ❖

"like to keep a low profile"

The new Esprit gets the big thumbs-down "they're too dated and potentially problematic"



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