Ride With Me

A novel car club makes every day a good driving day. BY RACHEL BOWIE

Life is about tough decisions. Do you go to that celebrity golf tournament, the VIP party, or on the hot date? The truth is, it’s not where you’re going but how you get there that really matters. And with John Caron’s Otto Club, you have plenty of options.

The Otto Club, based in North Andover, is a private club that provides members with access to the world’s most exotic sports cars and luxury vehicles. After paying an annual fee, members can choose to drive a Ferrari 360 Spider, a Porsche 997 C2S Cabriolet, even a Lamborghini Gallardo whenever they desire. For a car enthusiast, committing to owning just one luxury vehicle is difficult; the Otto Club eliminates that problem.

“Car enthusiasts like them all, not just one,” says Caron, president and owner of the club. “Here they have access to a virtual garage that is just going to get bigger and bigger.”

With 25 members already on board, interest continues to grow. The setup is simple: members typically join at either the black or red level. The black level comes with a $28,000 fee that allows for 40 to 60 driving days a year; the red level costs $18,000 for 20 to 30 driving days. The annual fee includes insurance, maintenance, and delivery of the car to a member’s home or office. The Otto Club even stores your own car and gives it an interior and exterior cleaning in time for your return. Members usually reserve cars for long weekends, special events, or vacations, and, as Caron explains, it’s all about the variety.

“If you join at our top level, every other Thursday for five months we can bring you a different car,” he says. “If you think about it, that is significantly more driving than most people would do if they owned the car. We’ve got a couple members who could write a check and buy the whole collection. Everyone has to get the ownership thing out of their system. Maybe it will stay in their system, but they can own a couple and use us to augment their collection.”

A married father of three and a car enthusiast himself, Caron remembers the day that he quit his job in the tech industry to follow his passion and build his dream garage. “I just believed in the opportunity so much,” he says. “I think the club is an indicator of a significant change in the automotive industry. I wasn’t opening another car dealership; I was truly forging new ground.”

As membership in the Otto Club grows, Caron has many ideas for its future. First and foremost, he wants to ensure that the collection is kept up to date. To help select the cars, he relies on an advisory board and input from the club’s members. “I personally deliver and pick up a lot of the cars because I want to talk to the members and hear what they think,” Caron says. “We change the car collection to provide the type of experience they want.”

Most members work and reside in the greater-Boston and Metro West areas and the North and South Shores. Although the vehicles are currently stored in an airport hangar at the Lawrence Municipal Airport, Caron is planning to open a new facility next spring in the city. “Right now, more than half of our deliveries are done at the hangar,” Caron says. “People make the trip because they want to see the rest of the cars.”

And why wouldn’t they? “For a true car enthusiast, it’s not about the price tag or the attention that some of the cars get,” says Caron. “It’s what’s behind the wheel—the angles, the lines, the art forms.”

The Otto Club, 888-OTTO-CLUB; theottoclub.com.