



# IN THE BOX SEAT

**SHORT OF £100K OR SO TO BUY YOURSELF A NEW FERRARI? WELL, HOW ABOUT BORROWING ONE FOR A FEW DAYS? AARON WEDDELL LOOKS AT A COMPANY WHICH CAN MAKE YOUR SUPERCAR DREAMS COME TRUE**

**WELL** how hard can it be to lend a few people a few cars?" Erik Fairbairn chuckles. Erik is the Managing Director and one of the two founder members of London-based supercar club *écurie25*. Fellow founder and Marketing Director Flora Heathcoate chips in with the answer to Erik's tongue-in-cheek reply to my line of questioning about just what inspired them to create their increasingly successful venture. "Very hard indeed is the simple answer!"

But that is the basic idea of *écurie25* - lend a few (carefully vetted!) people a few cars in the form of a members' only fractional car ownership club, or as per their credo,

'Intelligent Supercar Ownership'. A 'few people' is just over 100 at the last headcount, increasing at the present time by a self-regulated ten new members each month; and despite the fact that the business is only just approaching its first birthday there is a not insubstantial waiting list. The cap of 250 members is expected to be reached within the second operating year. The 'few cars' presently stands at a £1.2m selection of some of the finest new cars on offer - with an average price of £92,000, including a £170,000 Lamborghini Murciélago.

The idea for *écurie25* (*écurie* is French for stable) was a development of Erik's ▶



experience gleaned from running a number of successful race teams for the previous five years. In order to make the race team successful, the team concentrated on removing all the stress about the car from the driver, leaving him nothing but actually driving the car to worry about. It was this culture that Erik and Flora chose to apply to high-end performance vehicles: Remove all the hassles of ownership, and leave the driver with just the pleasure of driving the world's finest supercars. This was then combined with the insight that no one was offering this trouble-free approach to supercars directly to the City of London, hence the creation of *écurie25*, and its position right in the centre of the City.

Utilising Erik's knowledge and love of all things automotive and Flora's marketing know-how – learned through a successful publishing company – together with their academic qualifications as graduates of the Cambridge University Entrepreneurship School, the pair then spent the next ten months putting in 70-hour weeks; setting up contacts, arranging for the purchase of the necessary stock and finding the ideal premises in the heart of the London. Although most start-ups spend a lot of time

and effort on market research, Erik and Flora were sure that they had hit upon a winning idea. Between the apparently constant ringing of phones and the buzz of the Blackberry, Erik manages to catch a few breaths and expand on their research strategy. "Seriously, if everyone tells you it is a bad idea, then that is probably an indicator, but *écurie25* was quite the opposite – everyone told us it was a fabulous concept."

But Flora and Erik concede that fabulous idea or not, even with their own, admittedly highly relevant experience, would take them only so far in the business world. "What is just as important as that experience is the ability to recognise where a team is lacking experience – and to get someone on board



who can fill that gap. A successful entrepreneur is not an expert at everything, he or she is an expert at knowing what they can't do, and hence what they need help with," elaborated Flora.

With a first-year turnover in excess of £1million, their initial enthusiasm appears to have been well placed but the first few months were tough; ventures such as this are often treated with scepticism by the consumer. With the increase in the general popularity of fractional ownership clubs there are a number of businesses who appear online claiming to offer similar experiences but they lack the financial backing required and/or experience and can fall at the earliest of hurdles. In such a climate

**“The ‘few cars’ presently stands at a £1.2m selection of some of the finest new cars on offer - with an average price of £92,000, including a £170,000 Lamborghini Murciélago.”**

The guardian angels of financial recruitment

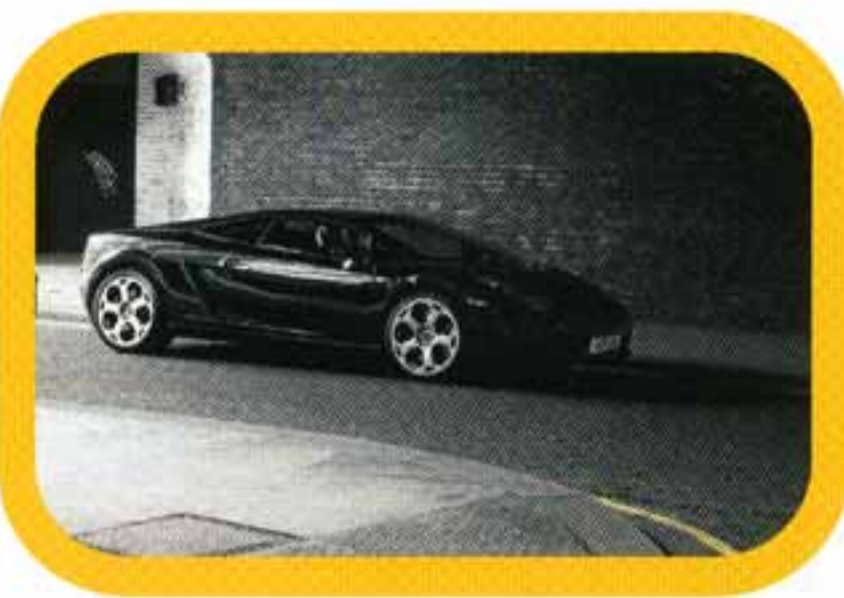
[www.asl-jersey.co.uk](http://www.asl-jersey.co.uk)

“Guiding you every click of the way”

Telephone 01534 871185 Email [personnel@asl-jersey.co.uk](mailto:personnel@asl-jersey.co.uk)

**asl** PERSONNEL SELECTION  
FINANCIAL RECRUITMENT SPECIALISTS





**☞ have the team do as much as possible but similarly, when the business needs a new member of staff, don't hang about – get someone in to do it! ☞**



Erik Fairbairn and Flora Heathcoate

it can be difficult for such businesses to secure the required membership fees from cautious potential members - £9,200 in the case of *écurie25*, including a £750 joining fee. Members get between 35 and 40 days use and an upper limit of 5000 miles overall in any of the range of vehicles which presently sport a combined brake horse power figure of approximately 5,500. The upside to this is that the difficulty in starting such a venture has meant that it remains a niche market and *écurie25* has little direct competition. Thanks to their astute business sense and strong financial backing they succeeded where others have fallen by the wayside.

From those testing early days *écurie25* has gone from strength to strength and is already widely recognised as one of the market leaders in its field. The original team of Flora and Erik working out of a small office has now

expanded to a ten-strong company – six full time, and four part time in addition to three experienced business advisors who are called upon as and when. As with all businesses, expansion is carefully considered with one eye constantly on the overheads in order to remain as lean as is reasonable. Erik sums it up as "have the team do as much as possible but similarly, when the business needs a new member of staff, don't hang about – get someone in to do it!"

So one year in, with a collective total of 250,000 miles having passed under the tyres of Erik and Flora's stable of supercars and £1.8m having been spent on keeping the fleet fresh (for example four different Ferrari F430s and three Lamborghini Gallardos have passed through *écurie25* shutters - each being replaced once a company-set mileage threshold has been

reached) what does the future hold for *écurie25*? Flora and Erik are cagey over revealing too much of their plans but their enthusiasm cannot hold back on divulging details of the new vehicles on order including pretty much every major new model from the likes of Bentley, Ferrari, Lamborghini and Porsche as well as Audi's forthcoming supercar.

The immediate future will concentrate on expanding the London base, up to the aforementioned 250 membership cap and 35 cars, but there are occasional, tantalising references to the lack of Europe-based supercar clubs and the opportunities represented by this. However, Erik is happy to state that "2007 will be a very exciting year for *écurie25*", and if 2006 is anything to go by that may well prove to be a huge understatement.

**JOHNSTONES**  
UNIQUE RECRUITMENT SOLUTIONS

**City Based - County Wide**

Winners of the EDP 2006 Rising Star Award.

T: 01603 666674  
F: 01603 617009  
E: info@johnstonesrs.com  
W: www.johnstonesrs.com

**GREATFLEET**  
plc

Johnstones Recruitment Solutions Ltd is one of Norfolk's leading specialist recruitment consultancies. Built on sound ethics and a determination to develop a consultancy entirely focused on candidates within East Anglia.

Johnstones is differentiating itself from the more traditional view of recruitment with non-commissioned and experienced consultants, flexible rates for clients of all sizes, and career advice offered without obligation.

The company was established in early 2002 when it was known as Lovewell Blake Search & Selection. In July 2005 the experienced team, led by Lisa Johnstone, completed a management buy-out, since this time the team has grown considerably. In July 2006

Johnstones was successfully acquired by Greatfleet plc – an impressive London based specialist recruitment search consultancy.

**Johnstones recruits in the following sectors:**

- Accountancy
- Sales & Marketing
- Legal
- HR
- Office Support

Whether you are at the start of your career, newly qualified in your profession or a senior individual looking to reach your full potential – discover the difference with the unique service we provide.

To arrange a confidential consultation, please contact us.

