

FEATURE CAR CLUBS FOR THE WELL-HEELED

Toys for very rich boys

These are good times for the super-rich. And there are more of them than ever before. Hardly a government in the world seems to want to tax them terribly hard. And when it comes to wheels, well, they've never had it so good. With more and more offerings from the likes of Bentley, Porsche, Maybach, Aston Martin, Rolls-Royce, Jaguar, Ferrari, Maserati, and all the rest of them, the rich are spoilt for choice, indeed, more so than at any time since the glorious coach-built era that was brought to an end by Hitler's war.

But there's another, newer phenomenon that is also indicative of a new age of plenty (for the fortunate few): the car club for the uber-wealthy.

The rationale is simple. You're rich. You like cars. But even you can't own everything that catches your eye. So you need the keys to a very special toy cupboard in order to really indulge yourself.

And so, quite a few people have started running toy cupboards for rich hobbyists. Damon Hill gained pole position with his P1 club. Later on came Revo250, which threw in a couple of

Sean O'Grady enters the expensive world of the clubs for those with more money than garage space

yachts, and was based in the South of France, with branches in the wealthy playgrounds you'd expect - Dubai, Marbella, and so on. The club opens in Britain this October, with a branch in London and another in the north of England. It will be interesting to see how they fare against Hill's longer-established outfit.

THE CLUB IS CLEAR ABOUT ITS MAIN ROLE: HELPING TO RELIEVE CITY TYPES OF THEIR HEFTY BONUSES

Then there is the *arriviste*: *écurie25*. As you can see from the table, this is a much cheaper proposition than the other two, with a rather smaller choice of playthings, and more of a focus on London. The club is pretty clear about its main role in life: helping to relieve those

loveable City types of their substantial bonuses.

So, even though their members have got plenty of cash, are these clubs really money well spent?

It is difficult to compare them, not least because they all dispense with talking cash and have invented their own "points" systems. You pay your subscription, you get so many points and you spend them how you wish, with sliding scales for the type of car and the time of year you're borrowing it. Exotic convertibles at summer weekends will burn your points faster than more ordinary vehicles on, say, a December weekday. And they all have different joining rates, too, so the value you get out of your club can vary depending upon how much you use it.

However, some broad comparisons can be made by converting the clubs' points back into sterling, and by finding a common denominator - we've gone for the Ferrari F430 Spider, a car that you'd surely want in the toy cupboard.

Overall, the *écurie25* outfit seems to come out best here, taking into account its lower subscription rates, with Damon Hill's P1 club a bit pricier, and Revo250 somewhat more expensive. Then again, Revo250 is the only club that will let you hop out of the Ferrari and on to a yacht. Interestingly, all three compare well with a typical prestige hire company's rates, providing you ignore those hefty joining charges.

But, of course, I am missing the point a bit. These clubs are not about saving money, they're about spending it. They are not, as they all stress, just alternatives to hiring a Ferrari for the weekend. They organise various events, such as the



Open sesame: joining an élite car club is like getting the keys to a very special toy cupboard TIMOTHY ALLEN

P1 club's near-Formula 1 driving experience, and they offer a certain degree of exclusivity. You might also be able to network through them (although, not being the networking type, and having a low net worth, I couldn't really comment on the feasibility of that).

In reality, the people who join these clubs probably have five or six cars in the garage anyway, and hardly need to worry about the subscription rates. As Rolls-Royce used to say with reference to the fuel con-

sumption of its products, if you need to enquire about such matters as value for

IF YOU NEED TO ENQUIRE ABOUT VALUE FOR MONEY, YOU PROBABLY SHOULDN'T EVEN THINK OF JOINING

money, you probably shouldn't be considering joining one of these clubs in the first place. Typical mem-

bers join because they can't really be bothered to actually buy an Ariel Atom or a Caterham just to have a go in it, and they like the idea of having just that little bit more choice, and fun. Or maybe they just don't have the room for 47 cars. It's possible, I suppose.

Now, I have driven some of the motors that these clubs have to offer - the new Aston Martin Vantage, for example, or the outgoing Ferrari 575M Maranello, and nothing really prepares you for the experience. (The

Aston Martin, by the way, was picked up by me from the Park Lane dealership on behalf of the club, the only time in my life, I suspect, that I am likely to enjoy such a privilege.) However, I have gained as much, if not more pleasure from the quirkier, less flash car club.

Yes, I mean our old friend the Classic Car Club. Even the super-rich might have a job paying for the upkeep of those beautiful but temperamental machines.

Additional research by Tricia Wright

Pay and display

The costs and benefits of joining a supercar club

	P1	écurie25 <small>Intelligent Supercar Ownership</small>	Revo250
Founded	2000	2004	2006
Joining fee	£2,500	£750	£5,000
Annual subscription	£11,750/£13,750	£7,450	£10,000 to £30,000
Membership	250 (+ partners)	45 (+ partners)	98 (+ partners)
Fleet	47 cars	8 cars	20 cars
Rough notional cost of borrowing a Ferrari F430 Spider:			
- for a long winter weekend	£1,237	£1,250	£2,350
- for two summer days	£550	£450	£1,300
Notes	Founded by Damon Hill. Offers two levels of membership - Monaco and Silverstone. Fully subscribed. Events	The newest entrant. Based in London and aimed at City bonus earners; some events organised	Yachts and events too. Based in Cote d'Azur, Marbella, Dubai, Geneva and Milan. London in October



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30 to 40 days in the world's most exotic supercars

écurie25 members enjoy 30 to 40 days and 5,000 miles driving the world's most exotic supercars such as the Ferrari F430 Spider, Lamborghini Gallardo and Aston Martin V8 Vantage.

A limited number of memberships are available at £7,450 per annum plus £750 joining fee.

Based in the City, next to Old St Underground.

For more information, or to arrange to view the fleet go to www.ecurie25.co.uk, or call 0207 159 2543.

Open evening:

Wednesday 10th May, 8.30pm to 8.30pm, 250 Old Street. See website for a map.

écurie25
Intelligent Supercar Ownership