

Life & Family

Driven by the beauty of the machine

Rare and luxury car collections celebrate art, history and power

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Peerage Capital's Miles Nadal with, clockwise from left, a 1965 Aston Martin DB7, a 1967 Ferrari 275 GTB4, a 1955 Mercedes Benz 300SL Gullwing, a 1997 Porsche Twin Turbo, a 1973 Ferrari Daytona Spider and a 1964 Ferrari Lusso. PHOTO BY MICHAEL FURMAN /Peerage Capital

Whether for their artistic merit, historic significance, or association with status, rare and luxury cars are fascinating to people young and old, and for those with extensive collections, there

seems to be a desire to share them with the world for a variety of different reasons.

“Cars are like pieces of art,” said Glen Stenabaugh, owner of Yesterday’s Auto Gallery, an Edmonton-based collection of approximately 60 classic cars and motorcycles dating back to 1926. “There are very few alike in classic cars. They are history; our grandparents can explain this better.”

The collection contains some exceptionally rare vehicles, including a 1955 Packard Four Hundred, believed to be one of three known in all of Canada. Gallery staff say it is one of 7,206 made, and the Packard registry lists only 42 in the world. The gallery has also displayed a 1930 Auburn, model 6-85, possibly the only one in Canada.

Stenabaugh has been collecting cars since he was a boy, owning his first three by the time he was only 14 years old. He says his interest continued from there, and today his favourites among the collection are the 70 Cuda Convertible, 71 Challenger Convertible, Super Bird, and Dart.

If art and automotive history are indeed synonymous, some iconic museums outside Canada are worth visiting.

America’s Car Museum in Tacoma, Wash., houses the LeMay collection. Harold and Nancy LeMay once amassed the largest privately owned collection of cars in the world. The LeMay Collection numbered over 3,000 vehicles at its height, along with thousands of additional artifacts. It chronicles the American auto industry throughout the 20th Century.

Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles, Calif., stands out for its movie cars – a recent blockbuster display is Bond in Motion, celebrating the 60th anniversary of James Bond with up-close views of the most iconic 007 cars from the franchise. There is also the museum’s famous vault, through which visitors can access an additional 250 cars.

For public figures as notorious as Bond, wealth and status go hand in hand with incredible car collections.

Hassanal Bolkiah ibni Omar Ali Saifuddien III, the 29th and current Sultan of Brunei, has the largest car collection in the world, comprised of 7,000 cars at an estimated net worth of US\$5 billion. The Sultan reportedly owns more than 600 Rolls Royces, 450 Ferraris and over 380 Bentleys.

Jay Leno, Jerry Seinfeld and Lady Gaga are among several celebrities with enviable car collections, some of which represent important moments in automotive history.

Leno has collected an estimated 181 cars and 160 motorcycles, which he keeps in Big Dog Garage, in Burbank, Calif. Made up of models from every historical era, the collection is reported to include a 1906 Stanley Steamer Vanderbilt Cup Racer, 1911 Packard Model 18, 1928 Bugatti Type 37A, 1931 Bentley 8-Liter, 1941 Plymouth Special Deluxe Business Coupe, 1957 Buick Roadmaster, 1963 Corvette Split-Window Coupe Fuelie, 1971 DeTomaso Pantera, 1981 DeLorean DMC-12, 1986 Lamborghini Countach, 1992 Dodge Viper, and 2017 Ford GT.

Seinfeld has long been associated with rare and luxury cars, building his Comedians In Cars Getting Coffee interview series around selecting a special vehicle for each episode and introducing its historic characteristics before taking his celebrity guest out for a spin. Seinfeld's private collection consists of 150 cars, including the world's most expensive Porsche collection. Notable among his cars are a 1960 VW Beetle, BMW 300 Isetta, 1957 Fiat 500, 1964 Morgan Plus 4, 1958 Cadillac Eldorado Seville, 1971 Ferrari 365 GTB, 1967 Austin-Healey 3000 MK III, VW Karmann Ghia, and 1969 Lamborghini Miura. Among his Porsches are a 1970 911 S, 1949 356, 1994 964 Turbo S Flachbau, 2004 Carrera GT, and 1959 718 RSK Spyder.

Car collecting is not just a man's game. Lady Gaga (musician Stefani Germanotta) owns a more modest but nonetheless impressive collection of iconic and modern luxe cars.

Her Rolls Royce Phantom VIII is the most luxurious of the lot, but she also owns a slice of history with her 1965 Lincoln Continental Convertible, 1967 Ford Bronco, Chevrolet El Camino, 1993 Ford F-150 SVT Lightning, and a more recent 2017 Lamborghini Huracan LP610-4 Coupe.

Here in Canada, philanthropist and founder and executive chairman of Peerage Capital Group, Miles Nadal, comes by his eclectic car collection from humble beginnings.

"I grew up in very modest circumstances," said Nadal. "My father never owned a car – I had to take the bus most of the time. That's probably why I found cars so compelling. When I was just eight years old, the Aston Martin DB5, the car driven by James Bond, was released. I promised myself that one day I'd own that car. I never lost sight of that goal – or that car! My first collectible car was a 1998 Aston Martin DB7, then a 1972 Mercedes 280, and it slowly grew from there. In 2000 as my passion grew, I started adding significantly to my collection."

Nadal, like Stenabaugh, is of the mind that cars are not simply status symbols, but true masterpieces.

"Cars are works of art," said Nadal. "To me, their functionality, their mobility and their aesthetic only enhances the appeal because, unlike a painting, you can touch, feel and fully experience them."

Throughout the past two decades, Nadal's collection has evolved with his passion, and the past 12 years in particular have shown that evolution through new additions.

"The collection became what it is today in 2010," said Nadal. "The addition of the Mercedes Benz Gullwing, marks the point when my collecting went from being fun to something far more serious, a real passion. My dad's favorite car in the world was the 1956 Thunderbird, so of all the beautiful vehicles in my collection, that one has a special place in my heart. That said, cars are like children, I love all of the cars; some have greater appeal at different times of the year and different moods. But overall, we are very blessed to have the opportunity to enjoy and share this remarkable collection."

The fascination might be with their beauty, their evocation of better days, or just their demonstrative power, but for Glen Stenabaugh, the nostalgia that rare cars bring makes him want to help others.

With his first collection display last summer, and this year's opening in May, proceeds from various activities at Yesterday's Auto Gallery, including a car raffle prize, are donated to Little Warriors, a recovery camp for children who have been sexually abused.

"It has always been a dream," said Stenabaugh. "I like to give back to the community and help young kids."

For parents wishing to introduce their kids to rare and artistic cars, Stenabaugh's gallery is also an immersive experience – aside from the extensive classic car display, there is an on-site, retro diner and kid-friendly vehicles. Stenabaugh aims to allow families to pick a car to take on a family cruise during their visit.

