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Car club fuels need for speed

By Andrew McCredie - Business Examiner - Fraser Valley -
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Harvey Sanghera, with some of the finer pieces in his collection (from left): Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera, Porsche 911 Turbo and Bentley Continental GT Speed.

Chung Chow

Pity the poor super car addict.

Unlike a well-heeled gourmand who can savour a different decadent dish three times a day, or a wine connoisseur who can uncork a fine vintage every day of the week, those afflicted with the need for cutting-edge speed often depend on the same old Ferrari or Porsche to get their four-wheel fix.

Only the wealthiest speed freaks – the Bill Gates, Jay Lenos and Sultans of Brunei of the world – have the kind of dream garages gearheads fantasize about.

Surrey entrepreneur Harvey Sanghera wants to change that for a few dozen or so autophiles.

Sanghera is the founder and president of Empire One, a new luxury car club with a stable of super cars that would make even a Sultan salivate.

To call this a new business is a bit of an understatement, as the entire concept of a club like Empire One is totally new not just in B.C., but nationwide.

“Our vision is to turn car lovers’ dreams of driving the finest luxury vehicles into reality,” explains Sanghera, who moved to Surrey from his native England two years ago and immediately recognized a business opportunity on the car-crazy West Coast.

“Inspired by the success of luxury car clubs in the U.K., I wanted to bring the ultimate driving experience, coupled with a fantastic vehicle selection, to the Canadian market,” he says.

That ultimate experience comes at a price, of course, and while Sanghera says the final figures are still being worked out, he offers some ballpark figures.

“It will cost about \$7,500 to join Empire One and annual dues will be around \$33,000,” he estimates.

Members who can pony up that kind of dough will have access

to an impressive array of high-end cars (see sidebar) for approximately 55 to 70 days of the year.

The club works by offering a combination of points – the more exotic the car, the more points – and kilometres to be used toward a designated number of driving days per year.

For prospective members, there are benefits other than simply driving amazing cars.

“They also rid themselves of the practical aspects of owning a luxury vehicle,” Sanghera notes. “Instead, our members’ only concern is the thrill of driving.”

If all goes according to plan, Empire One will eventually add what Sanghera describes as “old school muscle cars with modernized components” to the fleet, along with some eccentric classics and “obscure Euro cars” from model years gone by, such as the original Audi Quattro and BMW 2002.

“There is an element of money and profit to Empire One for me, but ultimately I’m doing it because I love driving these cars and enjoy others doing the same and experiencing them,” says Sanghera.

As to the steep price of membership to this exotic car club, Sanghera defends it by noting the annual maintenance fees, insurance, depreciation and storage costs of owning just one of the Empire One vehicles can be fairly substantial.

“And where would be the fun of driving the same car all year long, no matter how wonderful a vehicle it is,” the Empire One founder asks, adding in his distinctive English accent, “Our members are ones who want to have a go in all kinds of cars.”

For those super car addicts who can only get their fix by, how shall we say it, testing the limits of these vehicles, Empire One is planning track days so that members can find out what these

machines really can do.

Sanghera expects his membership roll to be filled with people “from all walks of life” – what they will share, no doubt, is a need for speed and a love of style befitting the tastes of the super wealthy.

Empire One’s four-wheeled offerings include: a Bentley Continental GT Speed, Ferrari F430 Spider, Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera, Audi R8, Porsche 911 Turbo, Maserati Quattroporte Sport GT, Maserati Gran Turismo S, Aston Martin Vantage, Range Rover Sport Supercharged, BMW M3 and Nissan Skyline GTR

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