



PHOTO BY BRETT HILLYARD



AUTO EROTIC

By Kedric Francis
Photography by Brett Hillyard

An OC couple collect million dollar iconic autos at their hidden Orange County headquarters. If you're lucky, they might even sell you one of them..

Melissa Mohlman recalls with vivid clarity and residual anguish the night that her husband sold their prized possession for \$1 million. She and her husband David were having dinner with close family friends when the terms were agreed upon. "The two men went to shake hands on the deal, and I'm trying to push them apart," Melissa says. "'Let's just finish our wine and enjoy our dinner,' I told them, but in my heart I wanted to scream 'No, she's not for sale!'"

The couple had nurtured the prized possession for nine years, after all, and knew her to be one of a kind—perfect in every way.

The possession in question? A stunning Ferrari 330 GTC Pininfarina Coupe, circa 1967.

David and Melissa Mohlman taking a pit spot on the tires of a Team Penske race car that was driven by Danny Sullivan in the 1990 Indianapolis 500, one of the many amazing vehicles in the Costa Mesa showroom of their company DJM Investments. Above: The Mohlman's prized Ferrari 330 GTC at Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. Photo by Royce Rumsey Photography.

David Mohlman in the DJM Investments showroom in Costa Mesa

Opposite Page

Top: One of the many Momo racing helmets in the collection worn by sponsored drivers.

Center: The Mohlmans also collect vintage racing posters and memorabilia.

Bottom: The immaculate interior of the Mohlman's 1965 Jaguar E-Type.



The make, model, mileage and year alone make for an incredibly valuable vehicle, prized by collectors of the world's finest automobiles. Add in the fact that it's green (only two came from the factory in the color) with red interior (make that one), and the price skyrockets.

But \$1 million? That figure set the market for a 330 GTC, which is exactly what David Mohlman had in mind. "It's the best of the best," he says. Because that's what he and Melissa collect, displaying the select vehicles they purchase at a discreet and immaculately designed building in Costa Mesa next to the airport. It's the headquarters of the company they run together, DJM Investments.

The Mohlmans entered the Ferrari in car shows across the country, including Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in 2016. "We won a preservation award in the unrestored class, which is a huge honor," Melissa recalls.

Collectors and aficionados would approach the couple regularly and ask, "What will you sell your 330 for?"

David would give them the million dollar sales price, and they'd be shocked. "You're crazy, no 330 has sold for close to that much," they'd tell him.

"That's what I'll take for it," he would say. "And I'm not selling it until I get it."

Then came the night he got the price he was looking for.

"David had to convince me to let the car go," Melissa says. "It broke our hearts to sell it. But we did the deal. It went to a good home. Our dear friend is enjoying it."

Telling potential buyers "no" is a common occurrence for the car collecting couple. "We're not car salespeople, per se," he explains. "We buy all our cars if we personally love them and they meet our standards for quality. But to keep doing that, we have to sell a few, too."

He's low on cars right now, he says, having just sold a 1964 Ferrari Lusso and a 1962 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster for \$1.5 million. Each.

Low on cars? It doesn't appear that way when visiting the appointment-only showroom.

On one side of the showroom there's a Ferrari Maranello and a Superamerica. You can't miss the gorgeous green 1977 Porsche 911S. And what's up with the 2001 Ferrari Barchetta that's yellow with cobalt blue interior, one might ask? It was ordered from the factory that way by a Michigan State fan.

"As long as it came that way from the factory, with no after-market changes, there's added value," Melissa says. "No matter how unique or crazy."



The Mohlman's 1965 Jaguar E-Type has only 28,000 miles on it.

Porsche Carrera GT parked in the center of the showroom. Only 44 of them were made in red, and they sold for around \$485,000 new. This one has only 1,800 miles on it. It's now worth as much as \$1 million, Mohlman says, due to the color, low mileage, and the vehicle's excellent condition. "This Carrera GT is the last analog supercar ever made, without stability control" he says. "You've got to drive it; the car doesn't drive you. But it's scary fast."

He did drive the gorgeous 1965 Jaguar E-Type recently, but only for 100 miles or so before returning it to the showroom. "It's a 54-year-old car with 28,000 miles on it," David says. "And its 100 percent original—original paint, original interiors, everything."

One man owned the Jag for 42 years. He worked on the car for its original owner, an Army surgeon, when he was an Army mechanic stationed in Europe. The mechanic bought it second-hand from the doctor, and brought it home to the U.S. where he kept it safe and sound in a heated garage for decades. Each winter, he'd take the wheels and seats off of the car and store them in his living room, Melissa says, which is one of the reasons the Jag still appears as it did a half century ago.

The Mohlmans have spoken to the veteran on the phone a few times, letting him know he has an open invitation if he wants to visit the Jag someday.

David says he used to mainly collect and sell classic cars like the 1965 Jaguar, especially the "two Germans and the Italian," he says, referring to his all-time favorite brands: Porsche, Ferrari and Mercedes-Benz, in that order.

The colorful array of pristine vehicles is lined up perfectly in the aesthetically appealing space, the walls of which are covered with auto racing posters from the 1950s and 1960s, vintage black and white photos of the Penske racing team, and Steve McQueen movie posters. "He's my all-time idol. I've seen Le Mans a dozen times," David says of the racecar-driving actor and his 1971 classic film about the 24-hour race.

Mohlman frequented the French race in person, along with dozens of other auto races around the world. He is an iconic figure in the racing and car collecting worlds. "I went to all these races,



A 2016 Porsche 911R (one of only 911 produced) on the left, and a 2008 Mercedes Benz CLK Black Series at right.





I remember all the drivers," he says while identifying everyone in a 1960s-era photo of a drivers meeting before a Watkins Glen Formula One race.

There is also an impressive collection of racing helmets displayed in the showroom. David was once the president of Miami-based Momo Design USA, the apparel and accessories division of the Italian company that invented the small-diameter steering wheel for Ferrari back in the 1960s. They also made helmets, and sponsored top drivers like Michael Andretti, Danny Sullivan, and Christian Fittipaldi. At the end of each racing season, David would collect the helmets, have the drivers (who were also his friends) sign them, and add them to his collection.

David and Melissa met while they both lived in Miami. He was originally from Indianapolis, while she was from Salt Lake City. Her father was an engineer and a do-it-yourselfer, and they shared a love of cars. David was exposed to racing at young age at the Indy 500, which he's been to 43 times. And while his Midwestern upbringing was middle class, each summer for 18 years he'd spend three months visiting his German industrialist grandfather, staying at fine hotels across Europe, dining in style and going to Formula One and European Rally races.

"That's how I fell in love with European cars," David recalls. I remember when I was a kid we were driving down the Autobahn and a Porsche flew

by us going 150 miles per hour. I thought it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen."

But it wasn't a love of cars that first bonded the couple together. It was fashion. They were set up on a blind date back in 2005, and soon discovered they had similar career paths: opening luxury retail stores for top global brands.

"We had both been in the fashion business," Melissa says. "He was at Hugo Boss and I was opening Nordstrom stores, just in different decades."

"I was retail development director in the U.S. for Hugo Boss," David says. "I'd go and scout and approve a location, do all the buying for the stores, stay there for five days to make sure it was running well, and go onto the next one." He also had his own clothing stores in Miami in the 1970s, all the while checking the classified ads for "Porsches for sale" all over the country.

The couple were married in 2008, and lived in Carmel before moving to Orange County a few years ago.

"I've been coming to Orange County for 30 years," David says. "I've always loved it here." His two best friends and business partners, Roger Penske, Jr., and Pat Bolter, both live in Newport Beach.





"That's why we have all this Penske stuff," David says of the Penske family racing memorabilia collection displayed throughout the showroom.

David has been a life long fan of Roger Penske, Sr., and of the Penske Racing Organization for the past 40 years after meeting him at an Indy car race in 1979. They have stayed life long friends ever since. "Now he's 82 years old, and still going 100 miles an hour," David says of Mr. Penske, while showing a vintage black and white photo of him at a race track. "He was always the best-dressed at the track, had the cleanest cars, and his crewmen were immaculately dressed." Penske and his executives are still known for their starched white shirts and black slacks, and the Penske collection of cars and memorabilia in Detroit is said to be stunning.

It's a level of attention to detail that clearly inspires the Mohlmans, who keep their own showroom spotless.

While David has been a force in the racing and auto collecting world for decades, Melissa has earned her own respect in the business.

She does all the marketing and branding, handles the website and more. She recalls a trip to Las Vegas for a girls weekend, when David called her to ask if she'd go inspect a \$750,000 Carrera GT they were considering buying.

"I Ubered over and walked into the shop, still dressed for a girls weekend, and had the car up on the lift tearing it apart with the mechanic," she says. She spotted flaws most might have missed, and recommended they pass on the purchase. So they did.

"We're a team," she says. "But I'm the brakes and he's the gas."

The couple even have the same taste in cars. "We're obsessed," she says. "We have a game at every car show we go to: we pick our 'best of show favorite without telling the other until the end of the day. We always choose the same car, and then try and buy it."

"We're collectors, buying and selling cars for our own pleasure," she says. "It's the ultimate passion we turned into a business."

DJM Investments, Inc.
3198 Airport Loop Dr., Unit M
Costa Mesa
305.582.9723
Djminvestments.net

Melissa and David Mohlman next to a 1977 Porsche 911S and in front of 1950s-era photo showing two Ferrari GTs parked on the street in Italy. When a friend visited the showroom, he saw the poster and said "Hey, that's my car!" David confirmed it through examining specific details in the image and based on his deep insider knowledge. Today, the vehicle is worth \$70 million.

ICONIC CARS

in the DJM Collection

By Steve Irsay



2005 Porsche Carrera GT

Every good car collection needs a crown jewel; a pièce de résistance, if you will. It's hard to pick such a singular jewel in the DJM Investments collection. But when gently pressed, DJM owner and founder David Mohlman confesses, "This is most likely my favorite car in my collection." He's referring to a pristine 2005 Porsche Carrera GT. "To me, it is the sexiest supercar ever built," he adds. The Carrera GT was part of a trifecta of mid-2000s iconic supercars that included the Ferrari Enzo and Ford GT. Adding to this model's cachet is the fact that only 42 examples were delivered to the U.S. in the striking Guards Red color. A rare bird indeed!



2001 Ferrari Maranello

No serious car collection is complete without a Ferrari (or several!) and DJM happens to have a really unique one. "I was fortunate to purchase this car because it's reported to be the only white with red interior Maranello ever built," says Mohlman of this insanely eye-catching 2001 coupe. It was also the very last 550 Maranello ever made. Rendered in what Ferrari calls "Bianco Avus" with red leather interior, this V12 has serious star power—and that's before even considering it's lineage. "The original owner was world famous singer and songwriter Pharrell Williams, who loves white cars," says Mohlman. This car was also featured in one of Pharrell's music videos. Talk about a scene stealer.



1977 Porsche 911S

Few things can brighten a car collector's day like a vintage Porsche 911—especially one rendered in this bold shade of Shamrock Ascot Green. "As you can clearly see, I love unique, bright, and extremely rare colors on my automobiles," says Mohlman. "So this car was an easy decision to purchase." It doesn't hurt that this 1977 example is in as-new condition with just 36,000 miles and is completely original. It is also completely guaranteed to turn heads.



2005 Ferrari Superamerica

Continuing the Ferrari hit parade is this mouth-watering 2005 Superamerica in an elegant combination of Grigio Silverstone exterior and natural Cognac leather interior. With its unique retractable glass panel roof, only 559 examples of the Superamerica were ever produced, making it incredibly rare. It also happens to be a driver's dream, packing a potent V12 and, in the case of this example, the desirable GTC Handling Package option. "This is most likely the last front engine 12-cylinder convertible car ever to be produced by Ferrari," notes Mohlman. "I love limited production supercars and this one is absolutely stunning to drive."

2008 Mercedes Benz CLK Black Series

It's rare to experience a future legend in the making. Like catching a group of no-name British kids banging out rock 'n' roll numbers at a Hamburg watering hole in the summer of 1960. Nearly five decades later, Germany was once again the site of an under-the-radar explosion: the Mercedes-Benz CLK Black Series. With only 400 produced, this rare edition was targeted at serious driving enthusiasts who are not afraid to be noticed. "It looks menacingly

mean from all angles with more than enough power to keep you focused on driving," notes Mohlman. Little over a decade after its release, it is widely considered a modern classic. Mohlman fondly recalls driving the car at the legendary Laguna Seca track near Monterey with champion race car driver Tommy Kendall. It was likely a wild ride. "He had the traction control off!" Mohlman notes. "One of the best cars ever made by Mercedes, in my opinion."

