

CLASSIC DRIVER

Garage Guy: Jay Leno and his Classic Cars



America knows him as a comedian and the ultimate petrolhead: James Douglas Muir Leno, alias Jay Leno. Whether or not you like his style of humour, you couldn't fail to be impressed by his car collection. Classic Driver visited his garage in Burbank, CA.

AC, Bugatti, Cadillac... In Jay Leno's garage, the automobile ABC is plain to see. ...Duesenberg, Ecojet, Ferrari. Here, in Burbank, California, not far from Beverly Hills and Los Angeles, the US presenter and comedian has brought together a vast collection of precious gems – on two wheels and four. Over the years, Leno has amassed a mobile treasure house, with well over 100 cars and 70 motorbikes: enough to take the average collector's breath away. "I love my Big Dog Garage," he admits with a smile.



No fewer than nine Bentleys and some 25 'everyday' classics, along with more than 30 sportscars and – can it really be seven? – Bugattis and the same number of Duesenbergs are parked in the generous halls on the perfectly clean floor. For Jay Leno, the collection is no laughing matter: he is a very serious collector. Every car is kept in running condition because the TV star takes pride in driving whichever one he feels like, depending on his mood that day. Around 10 mechanics take care of the collection in Burbank. But ask yourself: does Leno's garage fall into the category of a truly important collection? Judge for yourself, after a virtual tour of the contents.



Usually, the garage is closed to the public but its own [website](#) reports various activities and changes of car, while industry pundits are often invited to visit. The newest acquisitions are the Hennessy Venom GT, Audi R8 Spyder and Jaguar C-X75. It doesn't take many steps through the halls of the garage before you ask, "How could one person compile such a collection during a lifetime?"



Jay Leno's career is a close match to the archetypal American Dream. Born in 1950 in New Rochelle, New York State, Leno started working as a stand-up comedian (for a few dollars in pay) in small NY comedy clubs. Soon, television discovered him and he was offered small performances on David Letterman's Late Night Show and Johnny Carson's show. His performances were very well received by the audience so, in 1992, NBC offered him a leading role. And, as his income grew, so did Leno's investment in fine automobiles.



The European marques, in particular, attract Leno's interest – such as Bentley and Bugatti. Molsheim is represented by the most recent Veyron 16.4 Grand Sport, while there's also a Type 57 SC Atlantic from 1937 and a Bugatti 37A racing car from 1926. Strolling on through the garage, we discover a 1933 Delage D8S De Villars Roadster, a 1932 Morgan Three-Wheeler and a 1935 Delahaye 135 S. Meanwhile, the 1939 Lagonda V12 is a real attention-grabber... but there's so much more.



We look at some slightly younger cars: a 1953 Allard J2X Mk II waits to be driven, as does a Mercedes Gullwing and a DeLorean. The classic Jaguars such as XK and E-type have a place, too, as well as a hot-rod XK120. But you can't predict this collector's taste, for there is also the odd daily driver – a 1958 Saab 93B and 1959 Fiat Millecento – that are not what you'd expect to find here.



And of course, in the land of infinite possibilities, the collection couldn't ignore American cars, of which there is a wide variety – from typical cruisers to recent pony cars. Plus automobilia: engines, models, pictures, books and restoration projects, as well as steam cars, sitting alongside modern hybrid and electric cars. In fact, it is this quirky variety which best characterises Jay Leno's collection. It does not attempt to be comprehensive, nor to represent the full history of the automobile. Rather, it is the blueprint of the passion of a petrolhead and, as such, it enriches the whole concept of automotive mobility. "Thank you, Jay!"

Text & photos: [Mathias Paulokat](#)

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