

CLASSIC DRIVER

Classic Car Service: Belgium's first address for frame-off restoration

Lead

Restoration companies that carry out every step of the process are rare, but Classic Car Service in Antwerp, run by Noël De Block and his wife Daniella, has been a leading establishment in frame-off restoration since 1986...

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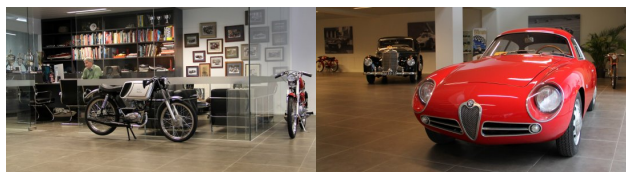
Located just 35 minutes from Brussels airport in the Wijnegem district of Belgium, Classic Car Service is housed in a contemporary industrial building. From the main road, selected classics are fully visible, each in a vast individual window, but behind this exhibition lies much more than a showroom. With the support of his wife, self-made man Noël De Block built a restoration company which now competes with cottage industry manufacturers, specialising in preserving automotive history.

Learning the ropes



“As a trained mechanic, I set out independently,” Noël recalls. “My budget amounted to around €1000 and I was often told that I'd be better off forgetting it. But the shop ran, business boomed, I made a few good deals and found I could expand within a short period of time.”

All under one roof



Today, almost 30 years later, [Classic Car Service](#) is considered Belgium's first stop for frame-off restorations. And it's not just private collectors who entrust Noël with restoring their classics, but traders, too. After a glance in the workshop halls, it's easy to see why. In one area, a repaired six-cylinder engine is being carefully transplanted into the Jaguar E-type where it belongs. Elsewhere, we stumble upon a Ferrari 512 BB with a beautiful, freshly treated beige leather interior. For elaborate leatherwork Noël employs a saddler, who tailors in a separate area on a highly durable machine.





On one of the many lifts sits a newly restored Ferrari 250 GTE. Its engine and gearbox have been mounted and the electrics are being installed. Ahead in the body department is a Dino, lying on a trolley and fully prepared for painting. Noël's not devoted to a particular brand, though, even if the high number of Ferraris suggests otherwise. "We restore all kinds of classics, from Alfas to Rolls-Royces," he says, "I love the challenge that each individual car brings with it."

Time for good conversation



Finally, Noël shows us his large-capacity storage area for customer cars. Our eyes promptly fall on a sorry-looking Porsche 924S. However, its appearance is deceptive: the owner has 'mummified' the car with body wax and is waiting for a positive trend in the market for front-engined Porsches before he sells the conserved classic. While Noël deals with the restoration work, his wife Daniella and daughter Jessy help to keep the atmosphere relaxed and ensure customer communication is maximised.

Photos: Jan Richter

Gallery

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