

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Coldplay's Guy Berryman - the secret car collector](#)

Lead

While his work with a bass guitar is known globally, Guy Berryman has a lesser-known obsession. With a burning passion for classic cars, this is not just another case of 'rock star does well, buys cars'. On the eve of Coldplay's 2017 American tour, we learned the extent of this fascination...



With over 80 million worldwide record sales, Coldplay is undoubtedly one of the most successful bands of the new millennium. You'd think that for Guy Berryman, the band's bassist, music would be an all-consuming passion. But miraculously, he finds the time to indulge in his other obsession: classic cars. We paid a visit to Berryman's estate in the Cotswolds, to find out what drives his interest and, of course, which machines fill his garage full of dreams.



So, how did you get into cars?

I was aware of old cars even before I was aware of music. What I'm doing now with my cars, my collection, and my restorations is just based on passion really. I love this idea of taking something old and rusty and bringing it back to life. A lot of the cars I buy need restoration — I've never really bought a restored car, because I don't see the fun in that. The satisfaction I get is from rejuvenating something, which is a slightly masochistic thing to do, because you always buy a car thinking it'll only take a few weeks — I've got cars like that and five years later I'm still working on them...

Looking at your collection now, which spans from a Citroën SM to a Bugatti Veyron, what inspires your choices?

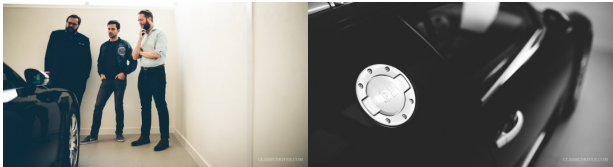
I buy cars that I like. When I bought a lot of these cars, it was before prices went crazy, so there's a certain part of my brain that's been dragged down the investment consideration route, but that's not why I bought them. I'm very careful about what cars stay — it's a fine line between a collector and a hoarder. Some cars I search for, others just kind of come to me in bizarre ways.





Can you give us an example of such a car?

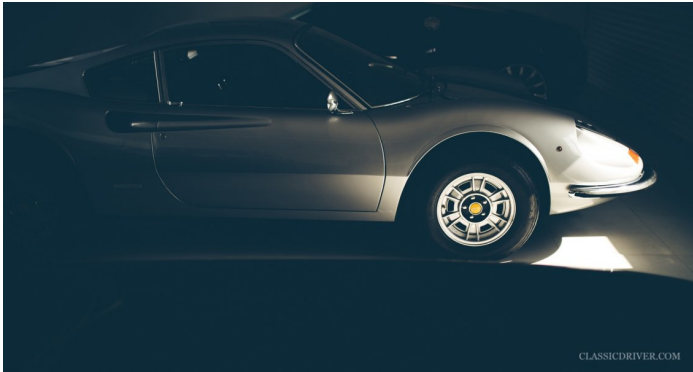
This little Abarth Zagato. A friend of mine in the States got in touch and said he had it. He said a man in Milwaukee has owned it for decades and showed me some pictures of it. In the pictures, it was red, but it also had these side louvres that I immediately asked about but no one was sure why they were there. It intrigued me, so I bought it. I love doing research. I have a huge archive of books, old magazines, and so on, so I started going through and researching this car, and it turns out, this was the Record Monza prototype, originally owned by Elio Zagato himself. I found old Italian ASI documents with his name on it, and the car was campaigned heavily in the '50s by Zagato and other Italian gentleman racers. I found hundreds of pictures of it, and from them, we've worked out the original colour scheme and have restored it back to original specification.



And at the other end of the scale, we have the Veyron here...

I think this car is the biggest superstar of all cars. There's a small petrol station nearby that I'm always filling different cars up at, and on rare occasions, people pop over and say hello and ask about the car. The first time I took the Veyron there, the whole place emptied. The cashiers, people shopping and filling up their cars — *everybody* came over to see the car. It was really embarrassing.

This car was so sensational when it was released that even if you know nothing about cars, you know about the Veyron. The driving experience is unlike any other car — when you put your foot down there is so much air coming down over the car and being drawn into the engine it feels like you're in some kind of spaceship. It's astonishing.

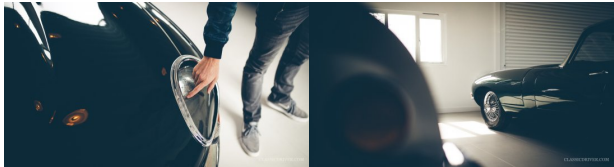


Where does the love for the Dino stem from?

Purely and simply from the shape. It's one of the cars I remember from having a Matchbox toy. To me, this car is still the most beautiful Ferrari of all time. The shape just absolutely captivated me when I was two or three years old and continues to do so to this day.

Was it hard to find the right Dino for you?

Well, that's a bit of a funny story. I bought a silver one, which was quite a good car, but there were a few things I didn't like on it — imperfections here and there. I already had quite a few cars and my partner Keshia wasn't too keen on me getting any more, but I found a better Dino, also in silver.



What's the story with this E-type?

This car is number six off the production line. It was originally owned by Colonel Ronnie Hoare, the legendary UK Ferrari importer, and he actually took it to one of his dealerships so they could see what Ferrari was up against on the track. They disassembled it, put it back together, and then sold it to Mike Hailwood. It's going to be restored eventually, but very sympathetically. The interior alone can tell a few stories, I'm sure...

Have you had any dalliances with other machinery?

I was touring with a support band and their drummer became a friend. We soon realised we both shared a passion for Spitfires and decided to get one. We were obsessed with this idea and eventually found a 'project', basically a cardboard box with a few bits and an identification number. We actually got quite far on with the restoration before it became apparent it was too much for us, so we got a Tiger Moth instead.

We quickly realised we weren't really qualified to work on that either, so I sent it off to a specialist who restored it to original military specification and sold it on. Even though it wasn't plain sailing, I feel good knowing we got one back in the air. After that, I stuck with cars.



How time-consuming is your car hobby?

The research is the trouble. Every time I buy car now, I think to myself, 'Do I really have time to spend two years researching this car?' I've allocated all my spare time to cars, though. I've got an interest in photography, art, design, and so on, but I've said to myself that cars will remain my main interest. Even when I'm touring, I spend lots of time emailing suppliers, looking for parts, and so on, and when I'm on the road, the boys are here in the workshop working away.

You have a real passion for researching and archiving your cars — what lengths do you go to find out their hidden pasts?

I've had private detectives hunt down previous owners for me in the past. Sometimes these searches take years, but often my searches have been fruitful. Take my Alfa Romeo 6C Villa d'Este, which had an unrepeatable past that was totally unknown. I found it in Atlanta, Georgia. When the previous owner bought it in 1964, it was already fitted with a high-performance Corvette engine and side exhaust pipes and painted white. It was covered in pencil markings when he bought it, because, shockingly, it was used for drag racing. Can you imagine this gorgeous creation, made in 1951 in Italy, delivered to Germany, and then ending up for sale in Atlanta in 1964, *after* a life drag racing?





Are there any other cars that you still dream of owning?

At the moment, I've got pretty much everything I've ever wanted. There are 25 cars in the collection that will be staying, for the time being, and I've got my 275, Miura, and Vignale Spyder in restoration that are just dream cars. I look at race cars now and then, but in terms of what I really love, which is elegant 1960s European cars, I'm sorted. I'm really lucky. I love cars and I love music — I've got two massive passions that fill my life.

Photos: Tom Shaxson for Classic Driver © 2017

Gallery

