



P1 Performance Car Club

Something for the Weekend?

THREE CARS FOR THOSE WHO ONLY
WANT THE BEST BITS OF SUPERCAR
OWNERSHIP

Words by xxxxxxxxxxxxxx / Photography by Michael WArd

The UK population has recently passed the 60 million mark; doubling the 30 million when cars were invented in the late 1800s. Numbers are not a problem for the exclusive P1 Performance Car Club. The membership of the P1 Club is limited to just 250 members. So what does it take to be one of the elite - 1 in 240,000? And what does this exclusive membership bring you? In short you are buying the opportunity to enjoy the world's best cars without the headaches of ownership. You can also attend several prestigious international events. Fancy bobbing about on a yacht with Damon Hill at the Monaco Grand Prix? Then see the diary. ⇨

P1 Performance Car Club



P1 was founded by 1996 Formula One World Champion Damon Hill. Damon is taking delivery of a new Ford GT to add to fleet – not an easy task as only 28 are destined to the UK. At the Auto Italia test track I was waiting for three of P1's cars to arrive: an Aston Martin Vanquish, a Lamborghini Murciélago and a Ferrari 575M. These cars are typical of the fabulous P1 fleet. There are two levels of membership, entitled: Monaco and Silverstone. See the table for costs.

You are allotted points and a mileage limit. There are five car groups. Even the bargain-basement Group 1 section has some really great cars, while Group 5 contains the best of the best. The more prestigious your car and the more miles you cover, the quicker you use up your points. On average a P1 member experiences about 50-70 driving days per annum. That's about once a week if you are struggling with the maths. The points system also takes into account whether you are using the cars in the summer (high season) or at weekend (more points) – see the table.

Members receive a monthly statement with any unused points rolled over into the next year. The cars are maintained in first-class order and are usually replaced after 25-30,000 miles. Think about it this way – you are paying about £15k to drive four million pounds worth of cars. I happen to already know a P1 member who spends



MEMBERSHIP COSTS

	Joining fee	Annual fee	Points allowance	Mileage allowance
Monaco	£2,500	£13,750	1,000	6,000
Silverstone	£2,500	£11,750	750	5,000

time out of the country. He finds membership perfect for his life style. P1 is not intended to be a substitute to ownership. It is for people with busy lives who want the very best at a time when it suits them. For trackdays, P1 Track Academy offers Porsche Cup cars and Ferrari 360 Challenge cars complete with instructors at circuits like Silverstone GP, Brands GP, Donington, Spa Francorchamps and Pau Arnos. Apart from the use of high performance and prestigious cars, P1 also offers many high-quality Experience Days and events fronted by Damon Hill. The list is impressive and speaks for itself. Like the old Brookland's motto, it will be the right crowd and no crowding.

As the Aston Martin Vanquish, the Lamborghini Murciélago and the Ferrari 575M cruised nose-to-tail down the hill into the test track, the road looked like a conveyor belt from heaven. Then P1's Nick Gartrell asked the question that no one can answer. "Which car would you like to drive first?" It has been a couple of years since I drove a V12 Aston, so the green car was first. ↪



Lamborghini Murcielago

The Lamborghini feels the most solid of our trio. This is a 2004 six-speed manual with under 9000 miles on the clock. It is also the quickest and by far the most stable. With permanent four-wheel drive its amazing traction will simply rocket you into the distance even if turning out of a T-junction. It is so stable that you have to be utterly brutal before electronics intervene with traction control. On the downside, you do need HGV skills to reverse the Murcielago, although on-the-move, the big mirrors offer ample rear vision. Like the Ferrari, power builds progressively with revs. By 4-5000rpm urge is very strong. Like Maserati, Lamborghini had a mid-term identity crisis. The early Lamborghinis were fabulous. The 350 and 400GT, the Miura and even the Islero were as classy as anything from Maranello. Maserati's mid-life crisis was during the De Tomaso years. Lamborghini's difficult times were spent bull-obstinate rehashing the Countach and Diablo models for far too long. Thankfully, Sant' Agata is back at the top table. ➔



Aston Martin Vanquish

This is a 2003 Vanquish fully loaded with all the options and a paddle-shift gearbox. Ignition on, press the big red starter button on the dash and V12 growls like no other. Surrounded by opulence and powered by a 460bhp V12, the Aston Martin commands huge presence. The Aston was the only car of the trio that came with paddle-shift; six-speed of course. If you have never experienced paddle-shift, don't worry, the software will save you. It's very easy but to get the best from paddle shift you do need to change your habits. Aston Martin is a superb label. It says class and British engineering. The interior door handles are hewn from huge ingots of metal. Brunellian in their structure, the Aston Martin name is as prominent as if on the side of a steam locomotive. The instruments also look so English. The beautiful interior with two-tone tan leather says luxury but I'm not sure about the centre of the dash as it has surrendered to fashion with a trendy painted finish. The rear seats offer occasional use escalating the car's appeal. With an industrial mass to haul, the Aston is the slowest of the three, although I'm not sure if it is apt to refer to such rapidity as slow. The handling is an unusual mix as the light controls mask its near two-tonnes of luxury.





Ferrari 575M Maranello

Giorgio Armani, like others before him, said that the car you drive says a lot about you. Mercedes-Benz and Giorgio Armani announced the start of a new joint venture. The first being the creation of the Mercedes-Benz CLK Giorgio Armani Design Car. This whole P1 story is about image. Okay, so you get your hands on some fabulous machines but, call it what you will, appearance, style and sophistication figure strongly. At the pinnacle of the performance car tree is Ferrari. In our case it is a 2003 575M six-speed manual. Of the three cars this is the easiest to drive. If you can drive a Fiat Panda, you can drive this manual Ferrari. Visibility is the best of our bunch and it is also the quietest. The controls are light and modern, and the build is quality superb. Power delivery is progressive. A heavy right foot at low rpm is not going to punish an inexperienced driver. By 4-5000rpm serious power is available. Still no problem as the ASR traction control cuts in early to save the over-ambitious. The comfort/handling compromise is good and at just 2.2 turns, it has the quickest steering. After driving the Lambo and the Aston, the Ferrari feels like getting into your own car. 

