

## **Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason has made a viable business out of his car-collecting hobby.**

BY MARK GILLIES

“I set out to make my cars work for a living—a bit like sending one’s kids out to work, because you feel it would be good for them,” says arch-car-enthusiast—and Pink Floyd drummer—Nick Mason about his company, Ten Tenth, which rents cars to the advertising and movie industries. “As it happened, we found an unfilled niche in the market, and since

then, we like to think we’ve become one of the more respected vehicle props hire companies in the media industry.”

That was nearly twenty years ago. Ten Tenth operates from the same north London offices as it did when it started in the mid-1980s, and many of the key personnel from the early days still hang out there: Stella Jackson, John Dabbs, Mike Hallows, and the guv’nor himself. There’s still the same wall of model cars separating Mason’s office from the main floor, still an eclectic collection of drum kits, Ferrari engines, models, crash helmets, posters, and Floyd memorabilia—a Stuka from *The Wall* movie, a mechanical contraption from *Relics*—strewn around the place. Downstairs, there’s a workshop with an Alfa TZ gearbox being rebuilt and a couple of TZ engines on the bench. Around the corner from that building is a garage that contains some of Mason’s automotive collection.

Mason has been into cars for as long as he can recall. His father, Bill, raced vintage Bentleys and made the excellent Shell *History of Motor Racing* films that every enthusiast should buy for his video collection. To young Nick, “the great treat as a kid was to go motor racing.” On one of those teenage forays, to Goodwood in 1964, he took a photo of his favorite car, a Ferrari 250GTO. “Ever since I was a student,” he says, “I have always considered that this Ferrari has to be the most desirable.” About a decade later, he would own one, the car driven to third place at Le Mans in 1962 by “Eldé” and “Beurllys.”

He is now one of the longest-serving GTO owners. He paid around £40,000 for it, “which was the highest price anyone had paid for a GTO to that point,” he recalls. “People thought I was mad. But even when it was ‘cheap,’ it was expensive. I would never have owned this car but for music. It has given me the most marvelous value for money. I have raced it, driven places with it, and it is as close to the perfect car as you can get. It performs brilliantly, looks marvelous, and has a charisma that comes from single-minded design and its history.” It also left him stranded by the side of a French freeway on the twenty-fifth anniversary GTO rally in 1987, when I followed Mason and his wife, Annette, on the rally (and got to drive the GTO while Mason took my Fiat Uno Turbo). Undaunted, Mason had a spare part flown out from England and was motoring again within twenty-four hours.

Before the music, Mason was an architecture student who used to run around in an Austin Seven Chummy tourer, the training wheels for most impecunious students in Britain in the 1950s and ’60s. He recalls the days when he would take an engine with him on the London Under-

ground to exchange for a rebuilt unit. There’s a Chummy in his collection today.

While other rock stars were making their drug dealers rich in the 1970s, Mason was helping car dealers and restorers. “It’s the restorers doing the drugs now with my money,” he quips. The fifty or so cars in the inventory reflect immaculate motoring taste, from a 1901 Panhard et Levassor that ran in the Paris-Nice race to a Ferrari F40. Mason often can be seen at the wheel of a Birdcage Maserati, a 250F Maserati, and a Bugatti Type 35B at a Vintage Sports Car Club race meeting in England, while daughters Holly and Chloe drive Aston Martin Ulster team cars and wife Annette conducts another Type 35.

The GTO, an ex-Gilles Villeneuve 312T3 grand prix car, a 512S sports racer, a competition Daytona, and a 512BB LM are among the stunning Ferraris Mason owns and races (and occasionally lets other people drive). At the other end of the scale, there’s a Ford Model T circus car that explodes, starts by itself, and has an ejector seat and doors that fall off.

Mason doesn’t care much for the way cars now have become investments or mega-bucks collectibles. “I would far rather cars were cheap-

### NICK'S FIVE FAVORITE ROAD TUNES

01. MOONDANCE VAN MORRISON
02. (DUE TO) GUN CONTROL WILLY DEVILLE
03. JACK JOHNSON MILES DAVIS
04. SHE GOT ME MASTERS OF REALITY
05. JACKET TOWN YELLOWJACKETS

er and I could have access to a wider range of them,” he laments. “When my father was racing old cars, people like him were regarded as eccentrics. Now, though, people think you’re a serious investor.”

His model collection is spectacular. “I suspect the reason I have them is the same as why I like cars and airplanes—except that these are smaller versions. They’re little icons of big things and form a reference and a reminder. I like the fact that most of my 400 or 500 models are Ferraris and thus tell the story of one man and his vision and range of cars.”

Ten Tenth isn’t the first or only business to rent out cars for pho-



**HE'S ECLECTIC** Left foreground: Mason's stable includes an ex-Villeneuve Ferrari 312T3. Right: A drum kit lives alongside a Sinclair C5 and a Victorian bath chair.

tography, but it is unique in that it has access to a bunch of truly great classics from the Mason collection. The business also finds automobiles from an extensive database, because, as Hallowes recalls, "We kept being asked for things other than racers and collectible cars—and even if the car was right, they wanted specific colors and/or upholstery."

Ten Tenths deals mostly with the advertising industry, but it also does some specialist film work and conference and promotional events. "If you're selling ball cocks at a trade fair, it's probably nice to have a Formula 1 car to attract people onto your stand," says Hallowes.

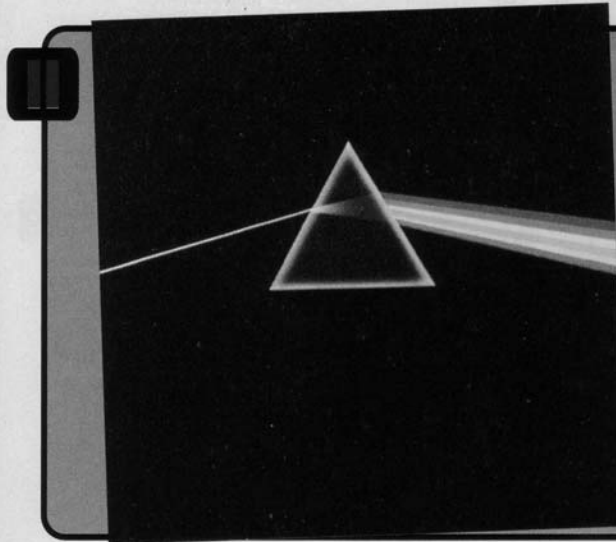
Recently, Ten Tenths supplied five cars for a Brooklands race scene, but Hallowes says, "Movie work tends to tie the cars up for too long, and we are a small company. If you lose contact with the advertising industry for too long, they tend to forget who you are. We earned our reputation for doing things very quickly, such as being asked to get a running Formula 1 car to deliver newspapers in south London the next day. And I said, 'What time do you want it?'"

Over the years, the weirdest jobs have included rigging up a Formula 1

car to drive on three wheels and attempting to teach an actor to ride a vintage BSA motorcycle and sidecar. "In the end," says Hallowes, "I had to ride the bike for a fairly spirited drive. As I'm rather portly and he was thin as a rake, they dressed me up with lots of clothes and did as long a shot as possible."

The company does about 200 to 300 jobs a year, occasionally having six jobs on the same day. Mason says it has been a nice diversion from his day job. "It has been a pretty good business over the years. The way we do it, it runs alongside the racing program and running the car collection. We could create a monster, but our quality of life would take a dive."

The company reflects its founder's ethos. It is low-key and run with quiet good humor, in a very English, self-deprecating way. Mason still wears the Rolex he bought back in 1970 when Pink Floyd finally made it big, and he doesn't turn up at race meetings with big, flashy transporters or an entourage. He is, as he says, "just an ordinary chap, really," whose success with one passion has allowed him to play around at one of his others.



## The Upside of the Moon: 30 Years of Dark Side

Pink Floyd's 1973 LP, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, has proved to have the staying power of the pyramid alluded to on its cover. The album established an all-time endurance record by remaining on the U.S. *Billboard* charts for 741 consecutive weeks—more than fourteen years—and selling more than 34 million copies over the past three decades. Helped along by the rise of album-oriented radio, *Dark Side* became the band's first U.S. number one record, while the album's slick, languorous grooves and state-of-the-art production techniques made it quintessential headphone listening for audiophiles. Roger Waters's lyrics sketched a concept album based around bleak themes such as boredom, loneliness, insanity, and death, which resonated with angsty teens and alienated adults alike. The album remains a staple of rock's canon, spawning a thousand laser-light shows and conspiracy theories (such as the rumor that it's synchronized to *The Wizard of Oz*) and inspiring string quartet and dub versions. Even after thirty years, *Dark Side of the Moon* is unlikely to be eclipsed anytime soon.

—Mike Rubin