Driving his own matrix

18/01/2016 Hollywood actor Keanu Reeves loves speed. He also has a special sense of style. The star of the Matrix series has established his own perspective on two and four wheels, inspired by Porsche.

Keanu Reeves loves to drive fast, a passion he can afford to indulge with any high-powered sports car. As a matter of fact, if he wished to, he could own an entire fleet of supercars. After all, Keanu Reeves is the star of the three highly successful Matrix films, which have grossed over $1.7 billion worldwide.

But his heart belongs to Porsche. Or to put it more precisely, to the 911. He currently drives a black Carrera 4S with a sunroof and manual transmission. These features are important to him. Just like a certain “driving aesthetic,” as he calls it. “I don’t just love hitting turns and apexes,” he told me. “I enjoy the fact that the car allows me to be fast and efficient. I have developed a bond with it.” And because it’s an intimate bond, he has only one. It’s clear that Reeves is a strictly monogamous car guy—rather an anomaly in a business where superstars who own only one car are as rare as those who employ the same agent over their careers or marry just once and for keeps.

Turned on by the shapes of race cars

How did he get to be a one-and-only-one-for-him Porsche owner? Born in Beirut in 1964, Reeves grew up on three different continents with stations in Sydney, Manhattan, and Canada. He was given Matchbox car toys, his favorites being the John Player I car in black with gold trim, a gray Porsche 911 Turbo, and a red Ferrari 512 Berlinetta. There were some real cars in his family, too. He remembers a Citroën S; and his grandmother, who drove a Mercedes 450 SL convertible in the '70s, had a boyfriend who drove a Porsche 911 Targa.

When asked as a child what he wanted to be when he grew up, nuclear physicist made the list, along with race car driver, inspired by watching motor sports on TV. Reeves was turned on by the shapes of race cars and their sound. The fantasy of being a race car driver was not merely the stuff of a teenager's imagination. Reeve's sister dated a race car driver, and he enjoyed some high-speed cruises through southern France as a passenger. Oh yeah, last on the list was actor.

A 911 was the car for him

He bought his first car when he was 17. It was a British racing green Volvo 122, which he called "Dumpy" because it was exactly what the name implied: there were bricks jammed into the interior to hold up the seats. But at least it got him from Toronto to Los Angeles in 1985. The Volvo's time was up just as Reeves was discovering motorcycles. He loved their sound as well as their speed, and the simple pleasure of riding them. His favorite was a 1973 Norton Commando, which he bought in 1987 and still owns.

At around this time his acting career began to take off: from independent films to movies aimed at teenagers to the acclaimed My Own Private Idaho with River Phoenix. After that, the blockbusters Point Break and Speed earned him significant and long-lasting notoriety. The velocity in Speed was a mere 50 mph that had to be maintained by Sandra Bullock, driving a booby-trapped Santa Monica transit bus while Reeves—playing an LAPD bomb squad expert who got himself onto the bus—figured out a way to get the passengers off safely.

Reeves had indulged his love of motorcycles by buying a bike every time he filmed on location, then selling it on site when he finished the gig. However, over the years, several motorbike crashes reminded him of their limits—as well as his own. After Point Break and Speed, he was ready for something with four wheels. Having ridden in Porsches, he decided that a 911 was the car for him.

He settled on a black 911 Carrera 4S (Type 993). With a sunroof and manual transmission, of course. He loved the sound of the Sport Exhaust, but most of all, he says, he loved the feel of the car. "I used any excuse to head up PCH (Pacific Coast Highway) onto the great canyon roads." He signed up for the Porsche Driving Experience, took other advanced driver's training courses, and won the 2009 Celebrity Race at the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach. Then, while he was filming a movie away from home, his

911 was stolen.

“The Sled,” as Reeves had named the car because it was sleek and fast, was one of the last of the air-cooled engines, and therefore, he theorizes, a target. After a period of mourning, he was ready to buy another car. But the new one was not going to be just “any” 911. Reeves approached Porsche’s Customer Consultation Center in Beverly Hills to discuss how his new 911 could be personalized for him. Black anodized interior trim panels? Hm. After consultations with Germany, yes. How about a 12-o’clock center marker on the steering wheel? More consultations. Another yes.

The Porsche 911 was his inspiration

These negotiations took place at the same exact time Reeves was trying to customize one of his motorcycles, a Harley-Davidson. Perhaps a custom seat would work? The folks at a high-end seat shop steered him to Gard Hollinger, a renowned bike customizer in the L.A. area. But Hollinger said that redoing the Harley was not his style. His honesty appealed to Reeves.

After all, how many people in southern California ever say no to a movie star who is ready to write a check? Reeves and Hollinger began talking about creating a new motorcycle. Here too Reeves remained true. The Porsche 911 was his inspiration: a modern interpretation of a technological legacy, a vehicle suited for daily use as well as for outright speed.

“Should be as user-friendly as possible.”

They founded the Arch Motorcycle Company to design and build the motorcycle of Reeves’s dreams. Reeves took delivery of his new 911 and had to go on location to film the action movie John Wick. In the meantime, Hollinger’s work on the new bike culminated in the KRGT-1, a beautiful machine with custom-designed performance in its suspension, riding, ergonomics, and handling that may warrant a new description: Performance or Sport Cruiser. The KRGT-1 is exceptional, but not intended as a one-off: Reeves and Hollinger are prepared to build as many as one hundred such bikes a year.

The actor compares his beloved motorcycle creation to his sports car. For one thing, the KRGT-1, like the Porsche, “should be as user-friendly as possible.” Reeves talks about modeling the bike after the Porsche character, which he says has a timeless quality—like sports cars from Zuffenhausen, which, in his words, “always look beautiful and perform just as brilliantly.” This character is the strongest benchmark for road vehicles he can think of.

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