Royal Pardon

03/04/2020 From hobby snapper to official photographer for the TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team, Richard Pardon has come a long way in a few short years.

There are not many photographers willing to be coaxed out from behind the camera. Richard Pardon is a case in point. While his Instagram feed has amassed a following of more than 33,000, there are no selfies. “Can’t you just use pictures of the cars?” he asks, shifting in his seat. But for once in his career, highly polished metal isn’t the focus.

With much of the world in lockdown, and all but essential travel banned, the photoshoot he’s been booked for is cancelled and instead he’s at one end of a video call being quizzed about his climb from hobby snapper to the official photographer for the TAG Heuer Porsche Formula E Team. For a man who’s spent the last decade looking down a lens, he seems a bit surprised to be asked for a photo of himself.

At the age of 32, this talented Brit has photographed cars for some of the biggest names in automotive, travelling as far afield as Mongolia and Chile, and seeing his work on the covers of so many car magazines he’s now lost count. “Er, I guess it’s in the hundreds,” he says, slightly shyly. The ban on

travel is one of the only reasons he has time for this interview. In 2018, he tracked the number of international flights he took for work and it totalled 102. The often gruelling schedule has certainly had its perks – he's now on his third Porsche (a Cayman GT4) – but only a few years ago he had a "fairly dull" job in recruitment and was spending every spare penny on track days.

"I've always loved cars and motorsport. I started out karting, competing in Formula TKM and Formula Rotax, and I won the 2001 championship in the former. It was how I loved spending my time as a teen. Then my grandad got me into cameras and I started taking pictures whenever I went to the track," he says.

Posting his images in online forums they soon found themselves an appreciative audience, and when Fast Car and the now defunct Max Power magazines got in touch asking if they could buy some of his work, it began making its way into print. "It was around that time that I was made redundant from my day job and my then girlfriend – who was a professional photographer – encouraged me to start taking my hobby more seriously. I ploughed my redundancy money into setting myself up and I began building up a portfolio as a portrait photographer."

Luck seems to have played a part alongside talent, as his career developed from there. "I was taking some photos of a guy I knew of who built cars (the now TV presenter Ant Anstead), and he introduced me to a guy with a huge car collection, who paid me to photograph it for him. I didn't really know what I was doing – shooting in what was effectively a studio was completely new to me and I was winging it – but I went with what felt right and it just sort of worked. When he asked me to drive one of his cars (a Jensen Interceptor) to a CAR magazine shoot one day, I agreed, and while I was there I got my camera out to pass the time. "When the journalist from CAR came over to look at what I'd taken, he offered me some work, and the next thing I knew I was on the books."

Jobs followed for titles like Top Gear, EVO and Road and Track, and then the work started coming in directly from the car manufacturers. Since then, Pardon has photographed some of Porsche's biggest news, cars and events; capturing the world premiere images of the Cayenne Coupé and Taycan, and covering the first drives of stars such as the 911 GT2 RS and the 718 Spyder. He was part of a team that travelled 5,406 km (3,359 miles) in 66 hours, from the Arctic Circle to the southern tip of Spain, to demonstrate the endurance of Le Mans to the world's media; and was on hand to capture the moment Porsche set a new Guinness World Record, towing a 285-tonne Airbus A380 with a standard Cayenne.

He's shot out of helicopters with no doors on, from the roof of a tracking car, and took one of his favourite shots – of a GT4 drifting across the track – from the (front) boot of a 911.

At the end of 2019, Pardon was offered what he describes as "the ultimate gig" – covering Porsche's entry into the world of Formula E.

"Shooting in the studio for Porsche – capturing what will be some of the first images the world will ever see of a new model – is a massive privilege," he says. "There's obviously a lot of pressure that comes with such a task, but it's an honour: it's like being let into an important secret and I'm always incredibly

flattered when I'm given the freedom to shoot a car how I think it should be shot.

"The Formula E gig, though, is an absolute dream. It not only combines my two passions – photography and motorsport – but allows me to play a tiny part as Porsche history is made. Being part of the testing, being there to capture the car as it covered its first kilometre, travelling the world and getting to know the drivers, and the engineers, and everyone behind the scenes – it's amazing. And it's a part of Porsche history: in five years' time the images I'm taking now could be in the Porsche Museum. How fantastic would that be? It's a job – and an amazing one – but when you love it this much it's not work."

It's clear from Pardon's grin that he's forgotten that his next task is taking a photo of himself. "Having a genuine interest in your subject definitely helps when it comes to taking good photos. I find it fascinating how shape and shadow can be used to emphasise a car's design and light alone can completely transform how a car looks, which can be really exciting.

"For me, it helps that I just love everything to do with cars and understanding how one should corner, sit on the road and have presence – it all really helps me with my images. But I'm afraid even the best photographer in the world isn't going to make me look good."

Photographs by Richard Pardon

Consumption data

911 GT2 RS
Fuel consumption / Emissions

WLTP*

718 Cayman
Fuel consumption / Emissions

WLTP*
Fuel consumption* combined (WLTP) 9.7 – 8.9 l/100 km
CO emissions* combined (WLTP) 220 – 201 g/km
CO2 class G Class

Macan
Fuel consumption / Emissions

WLTP*
Fuel consumption* combined (WLTP) 10.7 – 10.1 l/100 km
CO emissions* combined (WLTP) 243 – 228 g/km
CO2 class G Class

911 Carrera 4S
Fuel consumption / Emissions

WLTP*
Fuel consumption* combined (WLTP) 11.1 – 10.2 l/100 km
CO emissions* combined (WLTP) 253 – 231 g/km
CO2 class G Class

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, COEmissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

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