

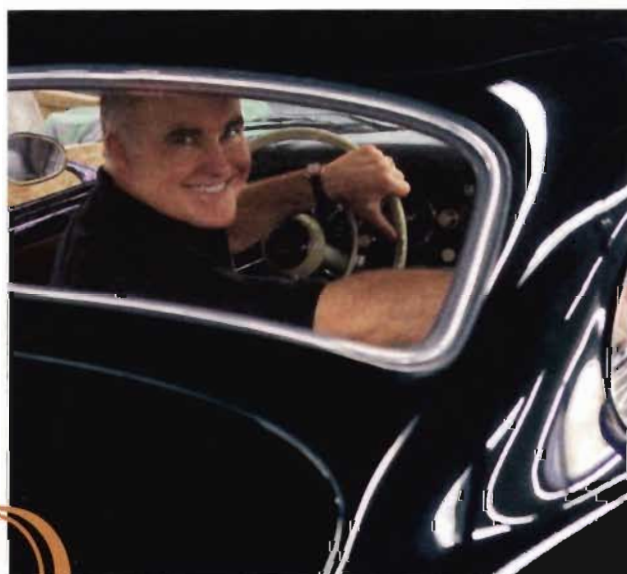


**FAIRLY RARE** Paul Russell (opposite page) restores a Porsche RS 550 Spyder, a successful racing car in the 1950s

## The best of the best

# AUTO-ARTISTS

One would assume that returning a rusty old car to its former glory is straightforward. However, top-level restorers have to combine ingenuity, curious technologies and mechanical intricacies that are largely forgotten nowadays



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Restoring an old car, even a very expensive one, to its former glory is not always easy. When potential customers visit notable restorers like Paul Russell, Paul and Andrew Wood and Klaus Kienle with a car to revamp, they are reminded that the art of reviving a fascinating piece of machinery very often turns out to be more complicated than first assumed, and more expensive.

The knowledge and skills needed to repair certain vintage models has, in some cases, been lost forever. Or if spare parts are missing, they might need to be replicated by hand – a costly process. Nowadays, there is often no way of knowing which techniques were once used, for example, to tan leather for upholstery in the 1920s and 30s, what alloys were used to cast gear blocks; and where to find the type of wood that James Young used in the 1950s for the interior of a Bentley Continental S1 Coupé. A good restoration is much more than merely reassembling the different parts of the car, especially when it comes to the gems ►



**THE TOP VEHICLE** is a Ferrari Dino 246 GTS

that these experts specialise in restoring: Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Ferrari, Maserati, Alfa Romeo and Mercedes-Benz.

Some manufacturers are in on the game. If you take your classic Ferrari to the newest Ferrari subsidiary in Maranello, you can find out more about the original condition of your car and receive a certificate as confirmation. At **Ferrari Classiche** they will even service or restore your car for you. And since the workshop still possesses all the original technical drawings and production papers, you can rest assured that your Ferrari will be restored in the proper manner, although some of the work may be outsourced to external workshops.

It is a yearning for perfection that sets the best companies apart from the rest. **Paul Russell** began his career with Mercedes-Benz before forming Paul Russell and Company, and eventually his reputation reached American shores and tastemakers. 'In the early 1980s fashion guru Ralph Lauren bought three cars that he wanted us to restore for him,' recalls Russell. 'The legendary Bugatti Type 57 SC Atlantique, a Bugatti Type 37 SC Gangloff Cabriolet and a Mercedes SSK from 1930, which had a unique custom-made Roadster body originally commissioned by an Italian aristocrat.' Those three cars went on to win practically every major competition in classic car shows. The Bugatti 1990, for example, won the Best of Show award at Pebble

## THE MASTERS

→ **PAUL RUSSELL**  
*paulrussell.com*

→ **FERRARI CLASSICHE**  
*ferrari.com*

→ **KIENLE AUTOMOBILTECHNIK**  
*kienle.com*

→ **P&A WOOD**  
*pa-wood.co.uk*

**ASTON MARTIN WORKS SERVICE**  
One of the best addresses if you want to have a classic British Aston Martin restored or serviced. *In Newport Pagnell (UK); astonmartin.co.uk*

**CARROZZERIA AUTOSPORT**  
in Bastiglia near Modena specialises in bodywork for classic Italian sports cars from the 1940s to 1970s. *autosport.it*

**CANDINI**  
This small Modena-based company specialises in restoring Maseratis. Manager Giuseppe Candini, former race mechanic for Juan Manuel Fangio, is well qualified in the technology of this marque. *candinimodena.com*

**CARROZZERIA CAMPANA ONORIO**  
Located in the same street as Candini, the company manages and supplies spare parts for Maserati, as well as restoring other makes of car – which it has been doing successfully for around 60 years. *campanacarrozzeria.it*

**MERCEDES-BENZ CLASSIC CENTRE**  
In one of many complicated restoration jobs, the engineers managed to get the King of Jordan's armoured 770 'large Mercedes' up and running again. *mercedes-benz-oldtimerservice.com*

Beach. The Trossi-SSK was awarded the same prize three years later. And in 2007 the SSK was once again proof of Russell's expertise when it received the Best of Show award at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este.

Paul Russell restores about six cars a year and also looks after his customers' cars, preparing them for competitions, taking them to races and tending to them there. Over the years, his customers have brought him many makes of car to restore. He is currently working on reassembling the Ferrari 195S Berlinetta which won the legendary Mille Miglia in 1950 – the second Mille Miglia champion Russell has restored. The first was an Alfa Romeo 8C 2900 MM owned by Ralph Lauren that won the Italian race in 1938. Currently, he also has another difficult project: an Alfa Romeo 8C 2300 with bodywork designed by Carrozzeria Castagna in Milan.

'It's the attention to detail that make all the difference when rebuilding a car,' says Russell. 'When the Trossi-SSK was delivered to us, it had a convertible top that didn't seem original. There were no longer any car body drawings and the coach builder was long gone. So I flew to Italy, and went to vehicle registration offices in search of the appropriate files from 1930. On finding these, I discovered that the ►



**RED MYTH** Only 166 Ferrari 250 GT SWB vehicles were built, making it a masterpiece you will rarely see on the road





**KLAUS KIENLE** worked his apprenticeship at Mercedes-Benz and was head of the special body work department until 1984 when he became self-employed. Today, his company employs over 60 workers

Roadster had initially been registered as a convertible without a soft top. I then knew that the convertible top had been added later and was not original.'

Individual restorers also go the extra mile of buying antique machinery and tools of yesteryear or having them re-engineered. They also attach enormous importance to employing the finest engineers, who then often remain loyal to the firm for decades. **Paul and Andrew Wood**, who founded P&A Wood in 1967, follow in this tradition, specialising in the restoration and sale of Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars of all ages. Both brothers learned their trade at Rolls-Royce and are among the privileged few authorised to restore and service the legendary WWII Rolls-Royce aircraft engines. The brothers became even better known when Rolls-Royce commissioned them to restore the original Silver Ghost – one of the world's most famous cars. After that success, P&A Wood was the obvious choice to restore Olga, a prototype for the Bentley Continental R-Type, to its original splendour.

The Wood brothers, too, know that originality is everything. They were thrilled when a Silver Ghost from 1921 emerged in 1995 and was given to them to restore. It had spent 60 years



### MASTER OF MERCEDES

There are very few places where you can see as many 300 SL Coupés as in Kienle's showroom



**SELDOM SIGHT** Ten Continental R-Type Bentley Coupés with a rare R-Type Continental DHC in the background



Paul and Andrew Wood

PHOTOS OPPOSITE PAGE FROM TOP: ULI JOOSS, HERRMANN RIES; THIS PAGE: COURTESY P&A WOOD

parked in a barn and had clocked up less than 11,300 kilometres. 'We just got the engine running again, which, incidentally, was surprisingly easy because Rolls-Royce used to build cars to last for eternity,' recalls Paul Wood. 'We then just checked that everything else, such as the body and interior, was ok and left as much of the rest as we could untouched.' They are also grateful for what they were able to learn. 'We were fortunate enough to see it in its near original condition and learned more about how cars were built almost a hundred years ago,' Wood says. 'Since these skills are mostly forgotten nowadays, this knowledge is priceless.'

Also priceless is being able to drive the car of your dreams – as and when you like – even if it's just for everyday errands. 'Many classic cars suffer if they remain immobile for long periods,' says Klaus Kienle, who is considered one of the world's leading experts on the 300 SL. He has already restored hundreds of hard-to-find Mercedes, and has turned his attention to other Mercedes-Benz models at the request of his clientele:

'We only do Mercedes, because that is what we're best at,' says Kienle. If you want to have a classic pre-war Mercedes such as a 300 series or a majestic 600 series restored or serviced, or

even purchase one, Kienle's showroom in the southern German town of Heimerdingen is the place to start.

It's not surprising that these companies' order books are full, even though a first-class restoration is never cheap. They never offer a fixed price, since too many unexpected problems crop up during the restoration process. A car will rarely leave Paul Russell's workshop for less than US\$500,000 in restoration costs, and work on some of the vintage cars has ended up costing considerably more. A full restoration of a Mercedes 300 SL, whose tubular frame represents an immense challenge even to a skilled car mechanic, would cost at least €400,000. But many car lovers go to these experts because they are the best of the best. After all, the result is a perfectly restored car that is a testament to the skills of the craftsmen, and that can be enjoyed for many more years, on the road or off. Jürgen Lewandowski ●