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“ELECTRIFYING” SINGER GETS HIS FIRST FERRARI

by Ferrari in Lifestyle (<http://www.enevsferrari.com/category/blog/lifestyle/>)

Profile: Brian Johnson

Ferraris driven: 458 Italia

The word “tour” means something different to singer Brian Johnson than it does to most Ferrari owners. For Johnson, it means playing sold-out concerts to more than five million people in 28 countries over 20 months in support of rock band AC/DC’s multi-platinum album, “Black Ice.” At over \$440 million, the tour was the world’s second-highest grossing ever.

When the tour was over, Johnson, an inveterate car buff and racer, bought his first-ever Ferrari, a 458 Italia (http://www.ferrari.com/English/GT_Sport%20Cars/CurrentRange/458-Italia/Pages/458-Italia.aspx). Speaking in a manner that can only be described as exclamatory and joyful, Johnson said the sound of fast cars and racecars was “just as sexy” as the rock ‘n’ roll music he’s loved since a kid.

Johnson joined AC/DC 30 years ago; the first album he recorded with the group, “Back in Black,” is the world’s second-best seller behind Michael Jackson’s “Thriller,” with nearly 50 million copies sold.

“A lot of people tell me how much they listened to AC/DC,” said Johnson. “Music takes you back to memories. Cars are like that, too.” He has captured his own car memories in a book, “Rockers and Rollers: An Automotive Autobiography.” Released in England, the book will be published in the United States in the spring.

“In my book, I talk about how rock ‘n’ roll coincided with the revved-up car styling and performance of the 1950s,” Johnson said. It was while promoting the book in England as a guest on Chris Evans’ Breakfast Show that Johnson got his Ferrari. Radio personality Evans is known

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for his impressive collection of vintage and modern Ferraris. He recently added a 250 GTO to his collection, as well as the 250 GT California Spider once owned by actor James Coburn.

Johnson shared with Ferrari News the story he told Evans on the radio last summer: "After the tour, I was in New York with my wife Brenda," Johnson said. "As our limo was passing the Ferrari showroom on Park Avenue, I called out to the driver, 'Stop!' I jumped out and went inside. There was a white 458 Italia on the floor, and though I don't prefer white cars, this was the most stunning thing I'd ever seen. I wanted to buy it on the spot but found out there was a wait."

In the radio studio, Johnson said Evans picked up the phone and made a call. A few moments later, Evans asked Johnson, "What color do you want, Brian – red or black?" "Red!" Johnson replied. Evans had found a car that was available and told him that a man was going to drive a red 458 Italia from Switzerland to England.

Johnson and his wife, who live mainly in Sarasota, Florida, were staying at their home in London's Chelsea section. Johnson continued: "The next morning, there was a knock at my door, and a man saying, 'I've got your Ferrari, Mr. Johnson. I just need a check.'"

Johnson couldn't resist taking a short drive in London (where he normally drives a Fiat 500). "I was a little nervous in busy traffic and didn't want anything to happen to it," he said. "Left-hand drive made it harder in London. I took it down the King's Road. You see all the exotics on that road, but this Ferrari stopped people in their tracks. The sound, the shape – this car has a presence!"

Johnson took up auto racing several years ago. He currently drives a 1971 Royale RP4 (a lightweight sports-racer) and a Pilbeam MP84 (an English sports racer) in Historic Sportscar Racing and just added a 1965 Lola T70 to his stable. "I raced the Pilbeam for the first time at Sebring in 2008 and got first in class and third overall in a four-hour race," he said. Brenda also races a vintage sports car.

"I've never had a Ferrari. I always had British cars," Johnson said. When in Sarasota, he often drives his 1928 Bentley 4.5-Liter Vanden Plas Le Mans and now will also add his 458 Italia to the mix. He's a member of the Sarasota Café Racers, which calls itself "a non-club-club" that meets twice a month for lunch and "to celebrate the artistry of automobile heritage, styling, performance and engineering." Johnson's classic Bentley – and now his new Ferrari – fit right in with the group's wide variety of vehicles, which include high-end sports cars, classics, musclecars and racecars.

Johnson is itching to take his 458 Italia on the track, especially after something he witnessed while attending a Porsche Club track tour in England. "All these guys had their special race-ready Porsches. A Swiss man had his brand new 458 Italia and took it out, too. Nothing could catch him – I was blown away."

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