

MY RIDE

The De Tomaso Pantera: An Italian-American Love Affair

The first time Scott Black saw one of these exotic cars, at age 16, he knew he'd have to own one

By A.J. Baime

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Scott Black, 54, owner of TimePiece Public Relations & Digital Marketing in Carrollton, Texas, on his 1972 De Tomaso Pantera, as told to A.J. Baime.

When I was 16, I had this beat-up car, and one day I got a flat. I made it to a service station and when I went into the garage, there was this Pantera sitting there being serviced. I nearly had a heart attack. I was living in Joplin, Mo., and seeing a car like that in the Ozarks was like seeing a UFO. I vowed that someday I would own a Pantera.

Fast forward to the mid-1980s. You know that kind of dream when you wake up and you can't tell what is real and what is not? I had a dream that I was driving a red Pantera. It was so real I woke up with my hands in steering-wheel position. I was living in Las Vegas, I had very little money, and I was about to get married. But I decided it was time.

I bought my first Pantera in 1989, and I have been an owner ever since—for nearly 30 years. The one pictured here is my second. I bought it in 1996 from a man I knew named Keith Verges. He was an extremely sharp businessman but he gave me an unbelievable deal—\$35K.

What is a Pantera? For a lot of people my age, it was the car that inspired you to be car-crazy. It was also an international car. Ford Motor Co. partnered with an Italian firm called De Tomaso, and launched the Pantera in model-year 1971. The body was designed by an American named Tom Tjaarda. The engine was a 351-cubic inch Ford V-8 (American), the transaxle was by ZF (German), and the tires were Michelin (French).

Ford sold Panteras in the U.S. through Lincoln-Mercury dealers. Unfortunately De Tomaso was not the best at quality control, and the 1970s oil crisis didn't help matters. Ford discontinued the car in the U.S. around the end of 1974.

Today, Pantera owners are a different breed. Unlike some owners of old cars, who treat them



Scott Black, owner of a public-relations company in Carrollton, Texas, bought his first De Tomaso Pantera nearly 30 years ago. The 1972 model here is his second. TREVOR PAULHUS FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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like “garage queens,” Pantera owners are known to *drive* these cars—to drag-race them, road-race them, just have fun with them. It is an Italian exotic that is reasonably priced, and there is a great community around them.

One of the Pantera clubs puts out a guide with the contacts of owners. So no matter where you drive your Pantera, you can find someone to help you out in a jam or to throw you a party.

—Contact A.J. Baime at [Facebook.com/ajbaime](https://www.facebook.com/ajbaime).

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