

Weird, Wild & Wonderful

5 Arguments for a guy to use on his wife to justify the purchase of a Pantera

By Wallace A. Wyss

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It may surprise some P.I. readers to know that even as editor of this August publication, I don't always get to read every story (some come in over the transom and go into print while I am off toiling for some other publication). Thus, each time I get to read a new issue of P.I., I too, am entranced.

In the last issue, I was appreciative of one Pantera owner's comments on how he (begrudgingly, it sounds like) had to overcome the skepticism of his wife, who saw in the price they paid for the old Pantera a major home improvement being postponed. Having been married, and having had a wife that was less than enthusiastic about some of my automotive projects, I can appreciate those comments. Let me give you guys some ammunition to bolster your arguments.

First argument: Panteras aren't really expensive. If you read David and Linda's column in this same issue, you find that although a totally upgraded one can cost \$30K to \$50K, they haven't depreciated that much if they are done right. Done right means taking the body down to bare metal and replacing rusty panels, etc.

Our ranks are full of people who bought a Pantera for \$20,000 to \$25,000, drove it for 20 years, spent maybe \$10,000 on it, and sold it for what they bought it for. So, for \$1,000 a year, they got to drive a mid-engined designed and built in Italy, Italian exotic. Try and rent an Italian exotic today and they want maybe \$350-\$500 a day plus so many bucks per mile.

Even if you buy a totally upgraded Pantera for \$40,000, if you sell it for \$30,000 after putting 50,000 miles on it, you still have to divide the \$10,000

"loss" into 50,000 miles and you realize you got driving entertainment pretty damn cheap.

Second Argument: Panteras may be old but they are not forgotten. I can't tell you how many other makes have come and gone since the Panteras were last imported, but it must be in the dozens (the Sterling, the Bricklin, the DeLorean, the list goes on). Many of them have fans but their fan groups are often found wandering around auto parts swap meets, searching in vain for that door bolt or taillight. Virtually every part on a Pantera is available, with the ZF gearbox being the single most expensive item. Presumably, someday a replacement for that box will be available at a lower price than the original piece and, the day that happens, Panteras will be even more of a bargain than they are now. When we go to the Concorso Italiano, we are temporarily seduced by the Monteverdis, the Isos, the Italias—all hybrids built for the same market—but we know their parts supply situations are shaky or nonexistent compared to that of Panteras. We pity them.

Third Argument. This one is addressed to the wives. I call it the "Let Him Have His Toy if It Makes Him Happy" argument.

There used to be this radio psychologist in L.A. before Dr. Laura, named Dr. Toni Grant. Onetime she said something to the effect: "Car guys make good husbands because you always know where they are-out in the garage under the car." I agree. Most of the married Pantera guys I know look at their Pantera as the "wild card" in their life. They get pressured at the job, they go out Sunday morning and run through the gears at full throttle



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for 15 minutes and come back happy. They are looked upon by their friends as owners of that super exotic car, the "whatsitcalled." Just the sound of the four exhaust pipes throbbing makes their whole day and sets them tingling with anticipation. I can't think of any commodity that anyone can purchase that makes one so happy at so little (relative) cost. And, when you consider the net worth of many Pantera owners, particularly in a place with high home prices like Southern California, let's say the average net worth of a Pantera owner is one million dollars (though I'm told that a million ain't what it used to be). Should the wife begrudge the husband the expenditure of \$25,000 (for your base unimproved Pantera) considering it is such a small percentage of their net worth? I say "let him have it." And, don't forget, for the wife that says, "no", "she wants to save the money so she can buy her tenth pair of Ferragamo shoes or a time share condo at a golf club in Palm Springs, there's a woman someplace that might say to the same guy: "sure, big guy, you can have your toy if it will make ya happy."

Bonus argument: "You Only Live Once" argument. In one recent PI article, the owner revealed that he had been talking of buying a Pantera for years but didn't make the plunge until a close relative of his wife died, and his wife said: "You had better buy that Pantera." In other words, she saw the writing on the

wall; i.e., we all pass. What good does it do to be sitting on a lot of assets, getting older year by year and missing out on a lot of events (like driving your Pantera to the Concorso Italiano) when someday your particular length of rope will run out and that will be all she wrote. Wouldn't it be better to be 85 a few decades from now and remember all that fun you had rip-roarin' around in that Pantera back when you were a mere youngster of 50?

Fourth Argument: I call this the Euro-Appreciation Angle, but of course, it won't work for you guys in Europe, so I will give you a spin technique to work to your benefit. This argument rests on the fact that the Pantera is made in Italy. Didja' ever notice that most of us have Japanese cars but we don't go around wanting Japanese scarves or Japanese leather jackets or anything Japanese except high definition tv sets and sushi? But, if you buy an Italian car, you get not only style but a toehold on one of the most stylish places on earth. Now then, you will have a reason to go to Italy, to buy that taillamp lens or that hood badge (though you can order them from our advertisers, but don't tell your wife). You can sit in the town square in Padua and enjoy some Lambrusco and order some fettucini and congratulate yourself on those great shoes you bought at about half the price in New York. You become a part of a vast group of fans of all things Italian.

If you work at it, little Italianisms will infiltrate your daily life. You will throw your

raincoat over your shoulders without putting your arms through the sleeves. You will like cappuccino and those little sticks you put into it that turn out to be very hard biscuits. Even if you sell your Pantera, you will appreciate the time you spent in Italy or Europe. Now, contrast this with buying a modern sports car like an Acura NSX; a car that is technically perfect. A great drive, I'm told, but there's no soul there. You might as well try to be simpatico with an electric toaster.

The Argument for European Men goes like this: Panteras look exotic, my dear, but they in fact have a great lump of an American engine under their rear bonnet. True, it will drink gas like

should I buy a Ferrari Boxer or a Lamborghini Miura?" I told him, "You will probably only have 15 minutes a week to drive it, so I'd say the Miura because that 15 minutes will be more exciting than in the Boxer." I was right, he only drives his Miura a few miles a year but he enjoys just looking at it (he parks it in the studio next to some of the dream cars making them look lumpen by comparison). I call this The 15-minutes of Pleasure Theory. We have a lot of pressures in our daily lives; with most families having two adults working. But if you can arrange your schedule in the summer so that you can get up early Sunday morning, say at 7 a.m., go out to the garage, start up the Pantera with a barking roar of four exhausts,



fine wine, but if it breaks it will cost us a pittance compared to those infernally complicated engines they make at Ferrari. It will make me feel macho, and a macho man is a greater lover, is that not so? I could think of more arguments, but here's the best one of all, and the simplest one. A friend of mine, a car designer, once asked me "Wally,

toodle on out to the coffee shop and sit on the veranda sipping your frappe cappuccino while watching the sun rise over the mountain/desert/city/ocean, you've just had one of life's great experiences..
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