

CLASSIC DRIVER

[De Tomaso Mangusta: Falling in Love](#)



There are few worse happenings to befall a classic car nut than to unexpectedly stumble across the vehicle of your dreams; and end up simply having to own one. That's what happened to internationally renowned portrait photographer Jonathan Root (readers of the *Financial Times* glossy 'How To Spend It' magazine will be familiar with his work), when his Jowett Jupiter broke down in the Goodwood Revival car park back in 2008.

While awaiting the arrival of the AA, Root clapped eyes on his first De Tomaso Mangusta – and fell instantly, uncontrollably, irresistibly in love.

He spent the next six months trawling De Tomaso websites and phoning dealers and specialists in the U.S. and Europe, before discovering a rare one-owner, unrestored, low-mileage example on offer in its home country of Italy.

Virtually boiling over with excitement, Root invoked the services of Devon-based De Tomaso specialist Johnny Woods, who agreed to fly to Rome with him with a view to driving the apple green car back to London if it proved to be worth buying.

“We were picked up by the late owner’s son who drove us to the mediaeval town of Spoleto, where the car was in storage at the garage which had maintained it from new,” recalls a still-enthusiastic Root.

“Johnny took one look and said the car just had to be bought – it was so original, and had just 30,000 miles on the clock.”

The owner had been an Alitalia pilot who was killed in a mountain cycle race. He had taken delivery from Alejandro De Tomaso himself, back in 1970, and had kept the Mangusta in preference to several other high-performance cars that he had also owned, including an E-type, a Maserati and a Cisitalia. Since his death, it had been retained by his family who fortuitously decided to sell just when Root embarked upon his search. The owner’s widow even included some of her late husband’s Italian shoes and silk suits in the deal!



Italian bureaucracy meant that it was 10 days before Root and Woods set off on the 1300-mile journey, the

first trip the car had made in 40 years.

“Handling wasn’t great because of the original 1970 tyres, but other than suffering a broken fan belt it performed faultlessly and proved itself to be a quiet, long-distance cruiser,” says Root, who is now the proud owner of one of just three Mangustas thought to be on the road in the U.K.

Although its successor, the Pantera, is regarded as the better driver’s car, there is no denying that the Mangusta is a truly stunning example of Italian styling – and, with only around 400 examples built, it is considerably rarer than the Pantera and also more valuable. Prices can only be set to rise – especially for genuine gems such as the one Root tracked down.

De Tomaso Mangusta
Produced: 1967 - 1971
Quantity: c.400
Engine: 289ci or 302ci Ford V8 (230 – 302bhp)
Gearbox: ZF five-speed
Top speed: 155mph
0-60mph: 4.8 seconds
Fuel economy: 16mpg
Value: c.£50,000 depending on originality/condition

Text: [Simon de Burton](#)

Photos: Jonathan Root - see www.jonathanroot.co.uk

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