

CLASSIC DRIVER

The 'Beatles Bentley': Baby you can drive my car

Lead

So this is another of John Lennon's painted limos, to go with his 'Gypsy Caravan' Phantom V Rolls? No, the story is more interesting than that...

Now known as the 'Beatles Bentley', the 1956 S1 standard steel saloon was once the property of 1960s fashion entrepreneur, Australian-born John Crittle.

Crittle cut his teeth in psychedelic '60s tailoring working at Hung On You in Chelsea. The shop sold the classic outfits of the period: Art Nouveau, elaborate collared and cuffed shirts, tailored, high-collar double-breasted suits, and flowery shirts and ties.

Expanding with the backing of 21-year-old Guinness heir Tara Browne (shortly to be killed in a Lotus Elan, the inspiration for John Lennon to write 'A Day in the Life') and Neil Winterbotham, Crittle opened his own shop, Dandie Fashions, in autumn 1966.

The store soon became famous for supplying clothes to the likes of Jimi Hendrix, The Who, David Bowie and The Rolling Stones.





Enter the Bentley. With business clearly booming, Crittle had bought the then 10-year-old car as a party machine, something in which to cruise the King's Road and chauffeur friends, clients and the famous to and from clubs, the shop and homes in Chelsea.

The colour scheme of the usually sedate Bentley was designed by the art student trio of Douglas Binder, Dudley Edwards and David Vaughn. Known as 'BEV', the threesome were first engaged by Tara Browne to paint the King's Road storefront of Dandie (having also decorated his AC Cobra in a similar fashion), moving on to the Bentley before other works such as the famous Lord John shop in Carnaby Street.

And the Beatles connection? Trading as 'Apple Corps', the famous foursome had started several business ventures, partly for tax reasons and partly in the spirit of the times. There was little profit to be made - but it was either put some money into the hands of like-minded young people or give it to the taxman.



Thanks to links with Browne, supplying the Beatles with clothes and generally being in the scene, Crittle's Dandie Fashions was absorbed into Apple Corps and the Chelsea store renamed 'Apple Tailoring'.

So you will see John Lennon at the opening party of Apple Tailoring, wearing a fun fur and polo-necked jumper. The new venture did not last long, though, as the whole 'Beatles and business' scene soon wound down.

The car was on the balance sheet of the Apple Corporation while it owned the clothes shop, therefore becoming another honourable member of that exclusive club, a genuine 'Beatles car'.

Photos: www.beatlesbentley.com

Gallery

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