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INTERVIEW

JOHN OATES
OF HALL & OATES

One half of the best-selling music duo in history, and a lifelong petrolhead – his Cars and Guitars will be on show at Amelia Island

**What are your first car memories?**

I lived in a little country town in Pennsylvania, and one of my friends worked at the local dirt track. I loved it. Saturday night, under the lights, the dust in the air, sneaking under the fence... I saw Mario Andretti race there in the 1950s.

And the story about you finding a box of *Road & Track* magazines?

Yes! They dated back to the early 1950s. It was all about Grand Prix and European racing, sports cars, and all these exotic names like Fangio, Moss, Nuvolari and Ascari, and the road races of Europe. It just captured my imagination.

Were your parents into cars?

We didn't have much, but I always tried to convince my parents to buy something they didn't want. I talked them into buying a Corvair Monza, which I proceeded to modify and completely mess up. And when they wanted to buy a Pontiac Tempest, I convinced them a Pontiac GTO was the same thing...

Did they keep the GTO?

Daryl [Hall] and I ended up buying it from them in 1972 and going on tour – in a 1968 GTO! We toured the East Coast with five guys in it, and a van following with the equipment.

What did you buy when Hall & Oates started to find success?

A Primrose Yellow MGB. I've always been attracted to sports cars – right now I've got a 1959 MGA Twin Cam, one of the nicest in the country.

You're known now for Porsches...

My first Porsche was a new 1977 Turbo. I jumped in at the deep end! I drove past Beverly Hills Porsche, and it was sitting in the window, red with gold BBS wheels. I freaked out! I went in, but I wasn't actually going to buy it – it was twice the price of my parents' home! The salesman said: "It's cool isn't it? Rod Stewart

has a deposit on it." I mentioned it to my manager, and he said: "Let's take a look." He took the salesman into a back room. When he came out, he said: "It's yours if you want it." He bought Sonny Bono's 356 Cabriolet on the same day.

And then you built a collection?

I had a bit of a collection in the 1980s: a Healey 3000, Porsche 356 Speedster, 1955 Chevy and so on. Then I got divorced, Daryl and I stopped touring... I just wanted to recalibrate my life. I got rid of all the cars. I wish I still had the Speedster.

Hence the Rod Emory 356?

I call it the 356 Greatest Hits; I picked the bits that I like best, from the pre-A all the way to the SC. It's amazing. It's 1900lb, it's 205bhp, it's got disc brakes, it drives like an early 911, but it feels and smells like, and gives you the sensations of, a 356.

How did you start racing?

My racing career started in England with Richard Lloyd in the 1970s. I did my first racing school at Brands Hatch, and a 'how to do skids'

'I drove past and it was sitting in the window, red with gold BBS wheels. I freaked out!'

school at Crystal Palace. We became close friends, and we raced together at Daytona in the Porsche 924 GTR that he was racing at the time.

What about the Amelia Island Concours Cars and Guitars?

I just thought what a brilliant idea. I've been compiling guitars from my own collection and some friends in Nashville, and I'm bringing my Outlaw 356 and the MGA.