

1972 de Tomaso Pantera - It's Something Different

**By Chuck Visconage
as told to Ted Schneider**

Back in the 1960s and '70s my mom and dad loved convertibles as every-day-cars. We had a succession of ragtop Oldsmobiles, Buicks and Cadillacs that were wonderful family cars. Often I could earn a few bucks by washing and waxing those cars.

By the time I was fifteen years old, I had car fever – I thought about cars all the time. I was able to earn money by mowing lawns and doing odd jobs. On Halloween 1972 I decided to buy my first car on my own. A neighbor had a 1963 Oldsmobile Cutlass convertible for sale and I offered him \$300, pretty much all I had. The Olds had some rust spots and was a little rough, but I was able to convince my parents that the car was a good buy. As it turned out, the Olds needed transmission work that cost an additional \$300, or so, which I had to borrow from my dad.

Eventually, I disposed of the Olds and began pushing my parents to let me buy my automotive heartthrob – a 1957 Thunderbird. One of my shop teachers was into antique cars and preached to me that if you took care of an older Thunderbird it could be a good buy. He showed me where to look for collector cars in *Hemmings* and the AACA Hershey Fall Meet. With the '63 Oldsmobile episode fresh in their minds, my parents would not relent and let me get another old car.

Well, fast-forward thirty years and I was still enamored with the 1957 Ford Thunderbird. I didn't need my parents' approval anymore, so I began to collect a string of '57 Tbirds. Over time I've owned four, and a '56 also. The last '57 Tbird I had was a baby blue convertible that the whole family enjoyed. But then I was faced with impending college tuition and sold the Tbird late in 2008.

I was left without any hobby related vehicle, which is tough on someone who has been a car guy as long as I have. I started to look around for a collector car that required a more modest investment. But I also wanted

a car that wasn't like other collector cars; I wanted something different, but fun to own and drive. I searched eBay and *Hemmings* for quite awhile for the right car and finally concluded that the 1972 de Tomaso Pantera was an interesting and fairly rare collector car.

Take a look at the 1971 magazine ad below that promoted the newly introduced Pantera, which was sold in the United States through Lincoln Mercury dealers. It's an unusual combination of exotic Italian sports styling and powered by an American

Ford 351 CI Cleveland V-8. The 1971 production cars were plagued by quality problems that were corrected for the '72 model.

The Pantera is a fascinating car to drive. It's only 44 inches tall and 5 inches off the road. A minivan next to you on the road looks like a five story building. It has neutral handling and anyone over six feet couldn't sit in it.

At the urging of Randy Moss, I entered the '72 Pantera in the 2010 Hershey show was able to earn a First Junior.



The de Tomaso Pantera. Around \$10,000.*



In Italy, men build cars with passion. One of them is Alejandro de Tomaso. And this is his car. Pantera. Conceived without compromise. A car so carefully built (it is virtually handmade) there will only be



2,500 made the first year. Mid-engined like a racing car. An ultra-high-performance sports coupe that stands a little higher than the average man's belt buckle, it seats two (and only two) and it's priced in the neighborhood of \$10,000.



Obviously, Pantera is for the few who demand something extraordinary.

The body is the inspired work of Ghia, the renowned coachbuilder. It is Italian craftsmanship at its finest. Monocoque construction fuses the steel skin and frame into an incredibly strong and rigid structure.

The engine is a 351 CID, 4-barrel V-8 placed just ahead of the rear axle, which gives Pantera some huge advantages over conventional sports cars. Better vision forward. Less power-loss. Better weight distribution. And the tightest, most satisfying handling characteristics you've ever experienced.

With five forward speeds fully synchronized, independent suspension of all four wheels (die-cast magnesium wheels are



optional), rack and pinion steering, power-booster disc brakes—even an ingenious system to prevent you from inadvertently selecting the wrong gear while shifting, the de Tomaso Pantera has to be one of



the most impressive vehicles ever offered here at any price.

*Based on Mfr's suggested retail price. Excludes state and local taxes, destination charges, dealer preparation, if any.

Pantera by de Tomaso
Imported for
Lincoln-Mercury

To locate your nearest Pantera dealer, call free, any hour, any day
800-243-6000.
In Connecticut
800-942-0655.

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Happy New Year

First Members' Meeting of 2011 – Jan. 10th
AACA Annual Meeting – Feb. 10th to 12th – see page 12
Valentine's Day Members' Meeting – Feb. 14th
Atlantic City Flea Market & Auction – Feb. 18th to 20th

Find more Chesapeake Region info. at
www.aaca.org/chesapeake

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Chuck Visconage with his 1972 de Tomaso Pantera at the B&O Railroad Museum. Read about this car on page 13.