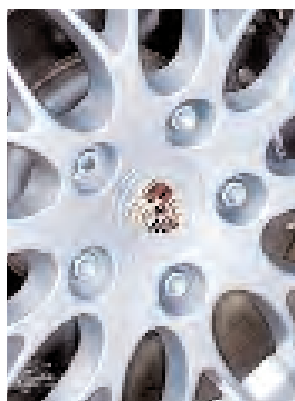


THE RADAR RIDES

BY CHRISTOPHER BARRY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER T. MARTIN



Scott Hoover (top) founded the Atlanta Driving Club with a fleet of four cars, including a yellow Lamborghini Gallardo and a Bentley Continental GT.

SPIN DOCTOR *If you're heading for a mid-life crisis, the city's newest, raciest club may be the cure.*

Parked in front of Bone's in Buckhead, the banana-yellow Lamborghini Gallardo receives the usual admiration that comes with an exotic \$175,000 Italian sports car. The restaurant's midday patrons stop to admire the 500-horsepower mid-engine monster while commuters on Piedmont slow to gawk at a car with a sticker price of a small house. "That car is fun, especially if you want attention—that car is not going to be missed," says Scott Hoover, a 40-year-old Kansas City native who moved here 12 years ago and founded the Atlanta Driving Club last June.

The Lamborghini is one of four cars in the fleet of the Atlanta Driving Club, the new and only exotic car club in the city. Rounding out the list are a Bentley Continental GT, Mercedes Benz SL 55 AMG and Porsche Boxster. "It's a pretty simple concept, really, the idea of having a collection of cars that club members have the ability and the access to drive," Hoover says.

Ultimately the decision to join comes down to determining how often you want to drive cars of this caliber, then doing the math. For instance, if your dream ride is the Bentley Continental GT, you'll pay \$1,299 per day (and put down a \$5,000 deposit) to rent it from Atlanta Dream Cars. That same Bentley, if leased, can cost \$3,000 or more in monthly payments alone—and that's not factoring in the worries that come with depreciation, maintenance costs and mileage limits.

On the other hand, membership in the Atlanta Driving Club requires a one-time \$1,500 initiation fee, plus annual dues determined by the average number of driving days you desire. Factoring in several variables—the car make, season, weekday or weekend, and number of days desired—members use a point calculator on the club's Web site to make their selections. A silver membership costs \$6,000 per year and includes 10 to 25 driving days annually (that's about \$500 per day compared to the \$1,300 you might pay to rent from Atlanta Dream Cars); a gold membership (\$10,000) includes 20

to 50 days; and a platinum membership (\$16,000) includes 40 to 90 days. Customized corporate memberships are also available.

If you're worried that family and friends will insist on taking a turn behind the wheel, there's an easy out: They're not allowed. And since the club realizes you're probably not a Formula One driver, before you borrow a car you'll receive an extensive orientation on its inner workings. When you're done, return the car to the club's warehouse in Vinings with a full tank of gas; it will be impeccably detailed on-site before the next member's turn.

Like all elite clubs, this one is easy to get into now, but will become increasingly difficult as members sign on. Multiple excessive speeding tickets or a DUI conviction could disqualify you entirely, and Hoover is limiting membership to 150 people to maintain an eight-to-one ratio of drivers to cars. At presstime there were six members, all men aged between their mid-30s and mid-50s—which isn't to say women aren't eligible for memberships; they are. One member, a 37-year old president of a consulting firm, described his impetus to join: "I've owned a lot of high-end cars and just end up selling one every six months to buy another—and lose money every time. But it's an appetite I can't satisfy."

For now, the four cars are only the beginning of what this high-octane club will offer. Ultimately, Hoover plans to increase the fleet to between 12 and 15 vehicles. "There've been discussions of maybe a Dodge Viper. Some people have mentioned a new Chevrolet Corvette Z06," he says. "A Porsche 911's in the running, maybe even the Turbo 911 or the GT3."

And for those lead-foots who find highway speed limits frustrating, Hoover has a plan to satisfy that need, too. "In the spring, we're actually going to have some Road Atlanta days where we'll rent the track and let members bring the cars out, open them up a little bit and see what they can do." *Atlanta Driving Club, 404.664.7125 or www.atlantadrivingclub.com.* **A**