

Jay Kay's Enzo
Car 2004

You may not know it yet, but there is a hole in your soul the shape of an Enzo. Chances are that you will live a happy and fulfilled life without ever sensing that it is there. But for a seriously-credentialed, serial supercar customer like Jamiroquai frontman, Jay Kay – or even an impostor like me, who has just driven it – the absence grows deliciously, agonisingly apparent.

One day in April, 33-year-old Jay Kay became one of only 25 Britons and 400 people world-wide to nail down full-time fulfilment, Ferrari-style. Enzo ownership is more than money; potential customers had to be *invited* to spend upwards of £400,000 on what is, to some, another look-at-me supercar. Kay, who has previously (and famously) owned an F40 and several other Ferraris, turned down the initial offer 12 months ago. The planets re-aligned last October, when Kay spotted the Enzo at the British Motor Show. It was black – the third colour option, much less popular than red and yellow – and Kay was smitten. By coincidence, at about the same time a gentleman customer had decided that he gained enough spiritual enlightenment from his collection of older Ferraris, which already included an F40 and F50. A space became available. Most importantly, however, Kay got some money. “It’s never been frivolous,” he says of his ‘car-itis’. “I’ve been able to buy the Enzo because I’ve signed a new publishing deal with EMI. My cars have all been collected over a number of years and it’s all done to, have I got a new album coming out, have I got a new deal, am I owed some money from the publishers...

“There was a time I wanted a McLaren, you know? And yet, I’d just moved into my house and I wanted to build a studio. And it was like: no studio, no music. No money. No car ... So I spent the 750 grand on a studio, and I’ve done two number-one albums out of that home studio, and here I am now ... *go-ing to get my En-zo, I’m go-ing to get my En-zo.*”

Getting there is half the fear. (Oops, Freudian slip). Kay, who says he doesn’t understand anyone who’d have a Ferrari home-delivered, has commandeered a 575M to drive from the UK to the factory for an official handover ceremony. He’s never tried Ferrari’s F1 paddle shift before (his own 550 Maranello and 360 Spider are manuals), so he’s happy to get some practice en route.

He also, sincerely, profoundly, fundamentally, loves to drive. That was true even before September 11, 2001, when he was in New York, booked on a 9:00am flight to Los Angeles. “I hav> flown since then, but generally, if I’m going on a holiday somewhere, Southern Spain, I’ll

drive,” he says. “And I’m a flash f***er, so I like to have something nice to drive when I get there.”

Between London and Maranello, there is one change of time zone. If you’re driving with a rock star, also factor in a change in reality zone. Cigarettes are lit, phone calls answered, arms waved to make a point. He laughs and barks into the phone in a hoarse voice, borne of jazz clubs and Camel Milds. He’s a desperately funny bastard, with a quick, cutting wit and incendiary opinions on, well, everything.

Throughout all this, we might have been sitting in a Vauxhall Vectra in a traffic jam. Not on the high side of 150 miles-per in a Ferrari. “I usually only go this fast at night,” he says.

Kay knows what he’s doing. He has the wheel set high and sits back from it, looking comfortable but maybe a little too straight-armed. He sometimes fidgets and talks to himself, sings snatches of songs known only to him. Or made up on the spot: “*I like aquaplaning/in the far-king wet...*”

Distractions aside, he’s confident rather than careless, tipping the 575M almost abruptly into the fast, sweeping bends of the French *autoroute* to set the car down on its suspension. The road is damp and I’m a little nervous but Kay, at the wheel, has more faith and feel in the road’s surface than I have.

“I’ve always had a bit of a feel for driving – well, a lot of a feel. And I love going sideways in anything. I just love it. I could spend my whole day going sideways.”

He once put his Mercedes-Benz G500 into a lake on his estate. “Very rock-and-roll,” he shrugs, before adding that the incident occurred on a muddy slope, in bucketing rain, while showing some builders around. Even so, it makes for a more interesting story than most rock stars can tell these days.

“Rock stars and cars go hand in hand – or they used to,” Kay laments. “Everybody from Paul McCartney to Rod Stewart had stuff. Everybody had a fast car. Trouble is, everybody’s gone so politically correct, all that’s gone out the window.”

He revels in being an exception. “The trouble with me is, when I was a kid I always wanted to be a stuntman,” he grins. “Which is why, in the videos, I always do my own driving ... I like to be a bit of a rock star’s rock star. And yet, I don’t feel I’m flashing it – I’m more than happy to say, go on mate, jump in. I’ve let people have a drive so they’ll understand.”

On a high-speed whim, we detour to Geneva. Jay Kay has friends there. He has friends wherever he goes; or wherever he goes, he suddenly has friends. A lunch stop inevitably draws a crowd, which exponentially expands due to absolutely everyone’s getting on the phone. Some

nightclub-owning friends appear. Then friends-of-friends. In rock-star reality, a lunch stop could finish sometime around Thursday.

But it won't this time, because Thursday is E-Day. We fetch up at the famous gates of Ferrari's headquarters at around 11:00am and are led past rows of office windows. Some office workers film Kay on their Handicams as he bounces past, brandishing his new UK licence plate V17 JET. Inside the delivery room, where giant photographs of Ferrari models and luscious leather swatches drape the walls, sit a 575M and a 360 Spider, either posing or awaiting delivery.

In front of them, under a fitted red cover, sits a de-winged B17 Stealth bomber. Well, could be. After several nervous minutes meeting the eight or 10 Ferrari people present, rocking back and forth on his feet and thrusting his hands in and out of his pockets, Kay is motioned over to the broad, red wedge on the floor. He walks to and fro, lifting the cover by a few inches here and there, like sliding knickers over shapely thighs.

Champagne corks pop.

Finally, there sits the polished, solid ebony silhouette of the Enzo. The room is silent as Kay takes a few steps back, folding his arms. "Thirteen years of wiggling my bottom, of dodgy knees, nutty fans – it's been worth it!" he says, playing to the audience.

While Kay sits down to sign the marriage certificate – he's decided to name the Enzo "The Wife" – we cluster around the Enzo. The car's jet black flanks are rudely interrupted by the enormous, spidery silver wheels, the whole, chiselled mass ending at what appear to be bright red insect eggs being squeezed out of the bodywork.

Jet black outside, green leather inside – albeit, mere traces of green leather on the seat bolsters, dash pad and door elbow-pads. The rest of the interior is swathed in glossy carbon fibre that looks too pretty to be structural, even on the tub itself, and satin-black leather on the rooflining and down the curved A-pillars.

The dashboard, meanwhile, looks almost exo-skeletal; beyond the small, central breastplate of carbon-fibre, I can see ventilation pipes, the alloy dashboard crossmember, the cast alloy joints of the steering column. The wheel itself is small, square-topped, its top third covered in carbon-fibre and housing LED upshift lights. Small, alloy buttons down either side of the wheel hub are colour-engraved like those on a PlayStation handset. Other colour blips about the cockpit include the yellow-face instruments (a 10,000rpm tacho, and 400km/h speedo) and red, four-point harness pads – both Kay-specified interior options.

Some time later, I am feeling like Vicki Vale as I lower myself into the Enzo's passenger's seat. It's easily done: the roof aperture for the semi-gullwing door is generous, and the seat is actually lower than the sill itself. (Kay thinks it should have had removable doors, for summer). One

leg in first, one hand on the inside shoulder of the seat, the other on the door sill, other leg in, slide down into the body-wrapping bucket.

I know that Kay came down to Maranello months ago to have his own seat fitted, sitting in a mock-up of the car's interior. But who's the passenger's seat for? He grins. "I didn't get too specific about it, but of course, I picked a pretty small one. No fat chicks in this one, mate."

The cockpit's too spacious to be a race car – I have a good three inches of headroom – but I feel absolutely cradled in here. The fishbowl view ahead contrasts with the snug sensation of being cupped from behind by the tall, soundproofed bulkhead and the upward-curving windows, above shoulder height. Behind me, on straps attached to the bulkhead, hang a pair of small, leather-and-carbon suit packs. These, along with space under the nose for a leather make-up case, constitute your luggage space, sir.

Kay thumbs the red alloy start button atop the narrow centre column. Without his touching the throttle, the 6.0 litre V12 – which, with its red cylinder head covers and splayed exhaust extractors, looks like a dissected animal – barks abruptly awake, before dropping back to a quiet, if still urgent idle.

Truth is, it's not at all noisy, or uncomfortable, or intimidating as we dawdle into the Modena traffic, Kay testing his newfound gear-flipping skills on the carbon-fibre paddles that protrude from the Enzo's flimsily-shrouded steering column. We're doing 25mph in fourth gear, just 1200rpm – idle speed – and this 660bhp, alleged animal is purring like a pussycat. No stuttering, no shuddering through the drivetrain, no cantankerous carry-on.

Mind you, it's not stupid: for curiosity's sake, Kay tries flicking up to sixth and the gearbox-brainbox simply ignores him.

All is calm for at least 60 seconds, when we turn onto a dual-lane road with no traffic ahead. Seventy seconds is a different story: the speedo needle is swinging past 180km/h, red lights are romping across the wheel rim, Kay's right hand is batting for another cog and the engine has climbed through the letterbox rear window and seems to be humping my head.

What had been an almost imperceptible purr had, at the prod of the throttle, instantly stretched its lungs through a guttural roar at 4000-5000rpm, flattening into a resonant, trumpeting fart through 6500rpm and continued sprinting on to what sounded like the start of a full-grid Superbike race.

Ferrari's claimed acceleration of 0 to 62mph in 3.65 seconds, and 124mph in 9.5 seconds is close enough to Superbike stuff, but the 3009lb Enzo does it all very differently; no pitch, just pure push. We drove along to autostrada towards Rimini, Kay occasionally slowing down, getting me

to dial a number on his mobile, winding down the (manual) window, and leaving the message: “Guess who?” before giving it the full welly through three cogs. Then he’d hang up.

Er, cautious about running it in, then, Jay? “Nah, it’s all been done, all been done on the bench. I don’t think they really and truly expect people to run-in something like this.”

By the time we’d reached Rimini, Kay had already mastered the Enzo’s data display. The speed telltale read 177mph. Jeez – I knew we’d started to go fast several times, but we were always *accelerating* when Jay had backed off... He’d said in the 575M a couple of days ago, “I reckon I’ll get 205mph in the Enzo. Two-oh-five, and then I’ll lose my bottle.”

Kay gets almost as much excitement from talking about the car as he gets from driving it. Describing the feel of the steering – “I’ve never driven anything, save for the (Ford Focus WRC) rally car, as communicative as that. I thought the F40 was good, but *that!*” – he breaks off mid-sentence to strut and step and boogie three times around the car. He wants me to know what it means, how it feels.

We are on a hillside near San Leo. The road is wet, narrow and lumpy in parts. The car shows 686km on its odometer and is worth, tax-paid, almost three quarters of a million pounds. Its owner is a rock star. And he wants me to drive it. So I will understand.

The first surprise is the engine’s smoothness and progressiveness. What had felt to be thrashy and mechanical from the passenger’s seat, pours like rich chocolate custard from a throttle pedal. The pedal aids the road/racer impression by combining rifle-bolt precision with an average-length throw and comfortably firm weighting.

It’s clear that there are big cubes on board; the only thing more impressive than the engine’s bottom end is its top end, all of which arrives too soon, prompting a clumsily-pawed paddle and, immediately after, a lump in the engine’s throat as the traction control prevents it from lighting up the rear wheels in the next gear.

All I could think of is a slot car. Nothing else I’ve driven delivers flat, squeeze-and-squirt acceleration like this.

The shift action itself, at least as I drove it in Road mode (not the ultra-fast Race), feels little different from that of the 575M. Certainly more road car than sequential race shift. The ride, though vastly more immediate and communicative, is not at all uncomfortable; it merely bobs a little in the nose, subconsciously keeping you in perspective against the V12 engine just a few inches behind you.

The steering is alive, electric, tugging only gently as it tramlines along this road’s quirky contours. I hazard only a few good, firm squeezes on the brakes, which feel hard, mechanical, reassuring. The point with these

carbon-ceramic brakes is that they feel the same in the wet as in the dry, when they're 100,000 miles old as when they're new.

In every department, where I'd been expecting raw, loud, hard-edged racer, the Enzo delivers Le Mans with a thin layer of tailored, Italian leather sophistication.

Mercifully so, too. As I ooze Enzo out of an open, second-gear bend at maybe 50mph, the tail begins to skate on the road's smooth, wet surface. It's enough to need a gentle lift and a roll of the wrists to correct – it didn't even invoke the ASR – and in this moment of sublime feedback and response, I wish I could forget that this car is worth a squillion quid and that I could just drive it like a £20,000 trackday car.

But I can't forget that, and neither will Jay Kay or many of the other 399 people who will own an Enzo. And thus, fulfilment will continue, tantalisingly, to elude them.