



The Famous Five

With apologies to Enid Blyton, this Famous Five is not about a group of children in a world where ginger beer flows and ham rolls are a staple diet.

I've been privileged enough to spend many pleasurable hours aboard various types of transportation, boats, planes, trains, and automobiles. Far from being simply a mode of transport, I see them as a delightful and wondrous part of the adventurous journey. Much like the Famous Five, Julian, Dick, Anne, their tomboy cousin Georgina and Timmy the dog I like nothing better than to spend time exploring and invariably falling into adventure.

Some methods of transport, like the London Tube were endearing and a highly practical part of my life during the time I worked on Fleet Street. Did I like the Tube? No, not really but it certainly served its purpose. Similar statements can

be made about a variety of entirely competent vehicles that I have been sent over the last five years. But, as efficient as these may be, for me, they lack passion. I believe that life is more about the journey and not just the arrival. So I have chosen to pick out five of my favourite means in which to make a journey. No doubt you'll also have your own favourites.

In a stroke of rare synchronicity, it came to pass that my five favourite transport icons converged in one recent spectacular trip to Germany, Austria and Italy on the 2012 BMW South Africa Eurostyle Tour. The intention of the tour was to experience brands that share an unmistakable 'essence' of authenticity, core purpose, mission, values and character.

First on my list was experienced on my South African Airways flight SA 0260 from Johannesburg to Frankfurt. The **AIRBUS A340-600** served up my best business class experiences to date. Long an admirer of the Airbus 300 series, this was a great opportunity to see how SAA managed their service delivery against my admittedly high expectations. The conventional forward



facing, massaging seats, with their three preset seat modes – sitting, cradle and bed – was a great place to savour a wide selection of food, served on proper crockery and with real metal cutlery.

The bar service was impressively stocked with single malts, award-winning Waterstone Cabernet Sauvignon 2008 and Africa Five Sauvignon Blanc 2011 wines. The generously spaced, calm cabin has a high staff to passenger ratio and their service was impeccable. The jet itself is capable of carrying 379 passengers in the three-class cabin layout up to 13 900km non-stop. The Airbus has just short of a million Nm of torque from the combined output of its four Rolls Royce Trent 556 Turbofans. This certainly was more than enough to whisk me off to Germany in glorious luxury where I was able to experience the newest entrant to my top five.

We live in a world where Toyota has achieved cult status with their electric motor and petrol-engined Prius. Apart from it being competent in the delivery of 4.3l/100km on the combined cycle it fails to ignite any passion. However, the basic

idea is a good one. What if there was a car that could combine a stonkingly powerful 3-litre petrol engine, an electric motor with a passion for driving?

Well, BMW thought of that. The ActiveHybrid 5 is their take on a sustainable hybrid car. Despite being a hybrid, ActiveHybrid 5 does not require you to leave all passion for driving behind. No, this car still does 0 to 100km/h in just 5.9 seconds, so it's blisteringly fast. Now that is some real driving with passion. The rest of the car is classic 5 Series elegance. In essence, the 2012 **BMW**

ACTIVEHYBRID 5 is a petrol engine car with an electric motor that serves up 40kW and 210Nm of torque to generate a combined output of 250kW and 450Nm. The eight-speed ZF gearbox also has no trouble uniting the two power sources, making it smoother than Roxy Louw's legs. It's packed with fuel-saving tech, returning 6.9l/100km on the combined cycle.

The car was my constant companion through Germany, Austria and then to Italy's Lake Iseo to experience first hand



yet purposeful all at the same time. The fiberglass hull and detailing are painted in Gucci's glossy off-white, contrasting with Riva's signature highly glossed, varnished mahogany. Waterproof seats with the Guccissima leather, embossed with interlinked G's remind us of the boats' provenance. It's not all show and no go, either. At 76km/h it's quick enough to outrun the most determined paparazzi.

It's on shore, in the cafés and bars around Lake Iseo, that I found my fourth vehicle of choice. They buzz around just about everywhere, looking impossibly cool and using virtually no fuel. Like the Fellini masterpiece, this is La Dolce Vita – the world of Vespa. The bulbous rear, thin mid section and wide front earned it the name 'vespa' which means wasp in Italian.

Loads of Vespas ridden today outdate their riders by years, but they still provide reliable and fun transportation. My **VESPA** of choice is the **GTS 300 SUPER**. It is indeed super. If you have experienced rush hour traffic in the heart of a city, with that steady stream of fellow commuters all jostling for the same small gaps between the endless taxis and cars, you'll start to see the inherent charm of this

the next icon on my list at Riva Shipyards. Riva boats have been crafted here for 170 years, becoming the worlds' most coveted boats. George Clooney, Sean Connery, Brigitte Bardot, Sophia Loren and quite a few royals share my high regard for Riva. My most favourite Riva? **THE AQUARIVA SPEEDBOAT BY GUCCI** – in my opinion the most beautiful speedboat ever made.

The Aquariva by Gucci is a collaborative project between Sergio Beretta's Officina Italiana Design and the house of Gucci. If there's anything worth being seen on in the water, it's this boat. A testament to 1960s retro-chic, it's effortlessly cool and

two-wheeled beauty. The suspension is as absorbent as cotton wool, soaking up cobbles or potholes without drama. Half of the attraction is in the styling, but its single-cylinder Quasar engine is punchy and it does an estimated 3.5l/100km. This is somewhat better than my next favourite. I stumbled upon it at the BMW Group sponsored Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este on the shores of Lake Como, Italy.

Ask anyone born between the 1960s and early 1970s to name the supercar that's made the greatest impression in their youth, chances are they'll reply 'Countach'. The **LAMBORGHINI COUNTACH** set a benchmark by which all future supercars were measured. No iteration of this iconic Italian supercar came close in terms of impact or road presence to the original, which is why this 1970s supercar deserves the final place on my list of top transport icons. It doesn't do fuel economy but rather slurps fuel voraciously at 23.0l/100km thanks to its 4 litre V12 engine. But oh, what fun!

This is why I like to travel. It's so I can come back. So I can see where I came from with a fresh pair of eyes. My own Famous Five make my journey an unforgettable adventure, full of colour and passion.

↓ 10km/h

Road accidents and fatalities in South Africa are among the highest in the world. In response to these frightening statistics the Western Cape Provincial Road Traffic Bill is calling for a blanket 10km/h reduction of all speed limits. Public reaction has been vocal and broad. Few think that the blanket reduction is a good idea with some saying it is outright dangerous. Overall, the feeling is that lower speed limits will frustrate drivers while doing nothing to reduce road deaths. Others consider it to be a grotesque revenue raiser.

I believe that before we consider a speed reduction, urgent attention is required to raise driving standards and roadworthiness of vehicles. Drunken, texting, reckless unlicensed drivers and un-roadworthy mobile biohazards create the need for the laws that are already in place to be firmly enforced.

Wheels & Wings BY RICHARD WEBB