



Shelton Quarles for the Bucs indulges his BMW with local luxury services.

EASY STREET

Years ago, the sign of wealth was a Rolex or a fancy initial-covered handbag. These days, however, another symbol is racing to the forefront of must-have accessories and it won't be found on the wrists or shoulders of Tampa Bay inhabitants. Instead, it will be inside their garages.

Some of the chicest cars available travel the palm-lined streets of the Bay area, so it's no surprise that a business niche focused on finding, maintaining, and customizing luxury cars has developed. From tracking down and arranging for the purchase of an exotic car to customizing a special vehicle to exercising garage-bound cars for seasonal residents, there are services available for any desire.

"My clients are all busy profession-

als," explains Fred Krasne, founder of the Tampa car-consulting firm My Perfect Car. "Time is valuable to them and I make their life easier."

Krasne and his wife, Maddy, started the business last summer, and now cater to more than a dozen clients who not only want them to hunt down automobiles — recently, they searched for a Bentley Continental GT — but also want a personalized style of service. After working for some years for Jaguar of Sarasota and Tampa, Krasne says he recognized the need for individual service that goes way beyond loaner cars. For a fee that amounts to a percentage of the car price, Krasne will locate any car, anywhere, and negotiate the price, then provide personalized service that includes

delivery, arranging regular maintenance, and even driving it to the garage, if needed. He calls himself an unbiased expert in the field with no ties to any particular make of car.

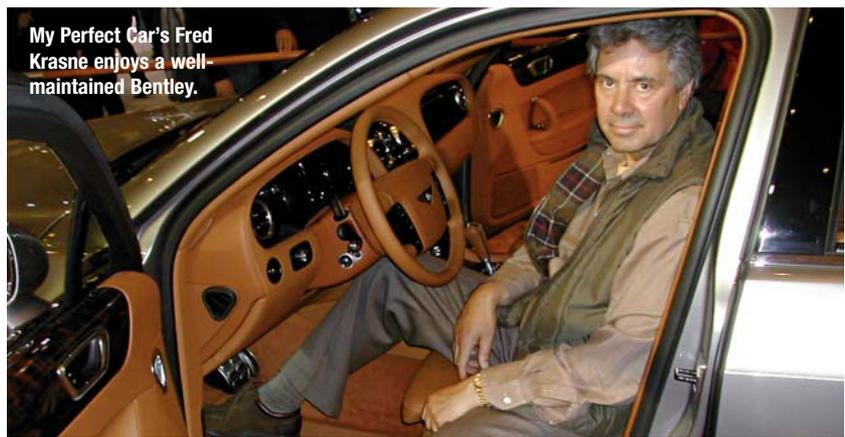
Most of his clients live well in the six-figure bracket, and most buy new cars every 18 to 24 months. For them, Krasne says, purchasing a luxury vehicle is like buying any other high-end showpiece. It's an emotional decision rather than a practical one.

Across the bay in St. Petersburg, Chris Bradley couldn't agree more. His company, Boulevard Customs, has listened to clients make decisions that are anything but practical. "I have clients who spend as much on the customization of their car as on the car itself," says Bradley.

Bradley's clientele ranges from CEOs to soccer moms, as well as some of Tampa's professional athletes. Buccaneers linebacker Shelton Quarles, boxer Jeff Lacey, Devil Rays catcher Toby Hall, and Lighting defenseman Pavel Kubina are among those who have called upon Bradley to add that extra pizzazz to their vehicles.

Some of the world's most luxurious cars, such as the Ferrari Enzo, Aston Martin, Rolls-Royce and Bentley, have rolled into his 10,000-square-foot facility. Bradley's team of 11 has customized video equipment and security systems, added wine coolers (one for red and one for white, of course), put in a thumbprint-reading safe, and — one of their most challenging requests — stretched a car 12 inches for a particularly tall client.

While his company has grown tremendously over the past 10 years, Bradley says he never forgets that his



My Perfect Car's Fred Krasne enjoys a well-maintained Bentley.

is a family-run business and that all his customers should receive the same level of quality service.

Back in Tampa, Kelli Mitchell, of KLM Concierge, also recognizes the importance of serving families and is growing a business doing just that. Be it busy dual-income ones or seasonal ones, the families Mitchell serves are looking for quality management of their luxury homes and cars often left unattended during the day or for an entire season. Mitchell, who herself

drove a Lotus Esprit for two years, says this is right up her alley. "If you want to serve clients with high-end cars, and want them to trust you, you have to understand luxury cars and, more importantly, know how to drive them," she says.

Be it a Lotus, Lamborghini or Lexus, one thing is clear. Here in Tampa Bay, there is no shortage of drivers, and clearly no shortage of businesses willing to keep them cruising down easy street. □

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