

Sunday Drivers

"LIKE A QUAIL'S EGG dipped in celery salt and served in Julia Roberts' belly button."

That is how Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson describes the Ferrari 355. Without question, the Ferrari – an icon of elegance and performance – is the ultimate possession.

Many dream it – members of the New Zealand Ferrari Owner's Club live it.

"The essence of the club is to bring together people who are not just enthusiastic about motorsport in general, but who have a passion for the brand of Ferrari," says Dave Thompson, current club president and member for nine years.

"We've got 200 members, young and old in age, and with young and old Ferraris, too. We share a passion for the marque – both the technical things and the design of the cars – and we're not snobs, we're enthusiasts.

"It's a social network," he says. "One Sunday a month, members get together in one of three regions (Auckland, Wellington and the South Island) and go for a casual scenic drive, have a long lunch at a café on the way, and enjoy each other's company."

Inevitably, driving expensive cars attracts attention. "I've never

had any aggressive behaviour directed at me," says Dave, who contrasts the reaction to Ferraris and other high-end cars, such as Porsches. "I've heard stories of the middle finger going up at drivers of those vehicles and purposeful damage to their cars.

"We attract a different kind of attention, perhaps because of the way we behave on the roads. We're not tossers or hoons; we're responsible owners who have a genuine interest in these cars and their history."

For Sue Howard, who owns the 308 GTS pictured below, sharing her 'mobile work of art' is the best part of owning it. "When we're out on a drive, people put their thumbs up or they cheer – that's the joy of it. That's what I love."

"There aren't many things in life that you buy that give you so much pleasure," says Jonathan Paape, who owns one of those famous 355s, which Jeremy Clarkson has called one of the best sports cars of the past 50 years. "Normally life's pleasures are achievements – such as running a marathon – but owning my Ferrari and being part of the club gives me so much enjoyment. It's definitely one of my life's true joys."

BY LEE SUCKLING

**"FAVOURITES?
IT'S LIKE PICKING
BETWEEN CHILDREN"**

Favourites? It's like picking between children. The Ducati's up there. And when he talks about his rare electric-start Tigress, Brown actually rubs his hands together. But it's the Velocette Viceroy that makes him weep. It's stylish, of course, and powerful, a motorbike in scooter's clothing.

"But it also has these really interesting harmonics. Down low it has an interesting little burble, but when you wind the throttle it starts to sound like more of a howl."

The harmonics of a scooter engine. It's another language he is speaking now, the tongue of the fanatic.

BY MATT PHILP

PHOTOGRAPHY: SIMON YOUNG

