

# MELVIN AND KELVIN TONG, EXTREME SUPERCARS: HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER

By Jason Kwong

We like to think that you can question a man's judgement in many areas – his timepiece, hairstyle and house to name but three. However, one look at his ride will reaffirm if he has impeccable taste in cars. And unlike most of us, Melvin and Kelvin Tong have tastier options in their garages. They are the directors of Extreme Supercars and as its name suggests, they are in the business of buying, selling and leasing extremely fast production vehicles – Bentleys, Ferraris, Lamborghinis, Porsches, and of course, fuel-guzzling Hummers.

Melvin himself was recently denied the handicap parking space because the car he was driving was too flashy. His right leg was amputated as a result of fibrosarcoma when he was just 17, and we take it that car park attendants didn't appreciate the irony of driving a supercar with only one leg. Nevertheless, his brother Kelvin has been by his side ever since. "I had a lump behind my right knee that was cancerous in high school. So, we went to the same college to study information technology," explains the 29-year old. "I had initial fears and it affected me with the usual uncertainties of the future, but eventually it didn't slow me down."

The twins were good with computers and it didn't take them long to get a head start in life by monetising gaming and computing websites even before they graduated. A web hosting business and a computing shop in Suria KLCC was next before the twins set their sights on big boys' toys that are able to notch the century mark in four seconds or less thanks to turbocharged engines nestled beneath their shapely bonnets. "The math is quite simple," says Kelvin. "The

margins were higher than selling laptops and notebooks."

More than just possessing a knack for parallel importing and securing distribution rights, they are experts at taking advantage of the arbitrage opportunities in different markets. Expect great things, as the duo gives new meaning to "two heads are better than one" and the Chinese phrase of "one-leg kick(ing)" when it comes running a soup-up operation.

## YOU BOTH ARE YOUNG. HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH MORE EXPERIENCED SUPPLIERS AND RESELLERS?

**Kelvin:** We were already buying items off eBay when we were teenagers, and there were small painful learning experiences when we lost a couple hundred Ringgit from auctions that went bad. It taught us the reality of dealing with sellers from around the world. It also spurs us on when deals that went sour because we were determined to recoup our losses. Once we understood how simple it was, we were able to adapt and improvise based on supply and demand. We looked into classics, rare and limited edition cars and focused once again on the objective of higher margins with a smaller volume of inventory.

**Melvin:** There was decent advertising income from our tech and gaming websites and we plonked the profits down on a Mercedes-Benz E-Class and a Honda City. We eventually learned to trade cars with good resale value thanks to our dad who was in the car industry his whole life. That was the "Aha!" moment where we were making money from a fleet of very nice cars that only the extremely rich could afford.



## HOW MANY CARS DO YOU OWN PERSONALLY?

**Melvin:** I would say two to three. The rest of the fleet are parked under the company which are then leased out or sold. It was a childhood dream to have access to that many supercars when most of our peers still own their first car. I'm not an advocate of flooring it to show off. Rather, it's the lifestyle proposition that I appreciate – cruising leisurely on a weekend in a Ferrari without the need to hit a top speed of 300km/h for all to see.

I've seen enough accidents happening to others in my lifetime to err on the side of caution.

**Kelvin:** We had close friends who borrowed cars from us for special occasions such as weddings. Eventually, we had way too many requests and decided to rent them out instead. It started with token sums and eventually we looked into the possibility of automating the process. We wanted the leanest and meanest approach where the cars were out running and

generating revenue, returning only to be swapped for the next client or driver.

## AND UBER CAME KNOCKING ON YOUR DOOR?

**Kelvin:** Quite the opposite. The regional launcher came looking for limo services with cars to spare and when we first approach Uber, it was required that we register as a limousine company. Hence, Extreme Limousines was born and we even have an all-white stretch limo. So, we supply cars to Uber

on demand because they have the following and the expertise when it comes to the backend software of the app.

**Melvin:** Our set up is small with only four employees in total. I handle marketing and public relations while Kelvin handles the operation side of the business. I'm in the limelight a fair bit as a result of the challenges I had to overcome. But for this interview, I'm insistent that Kelvin tag along for the ride...