

The Gear

A round-up of must-have gears and gadgets

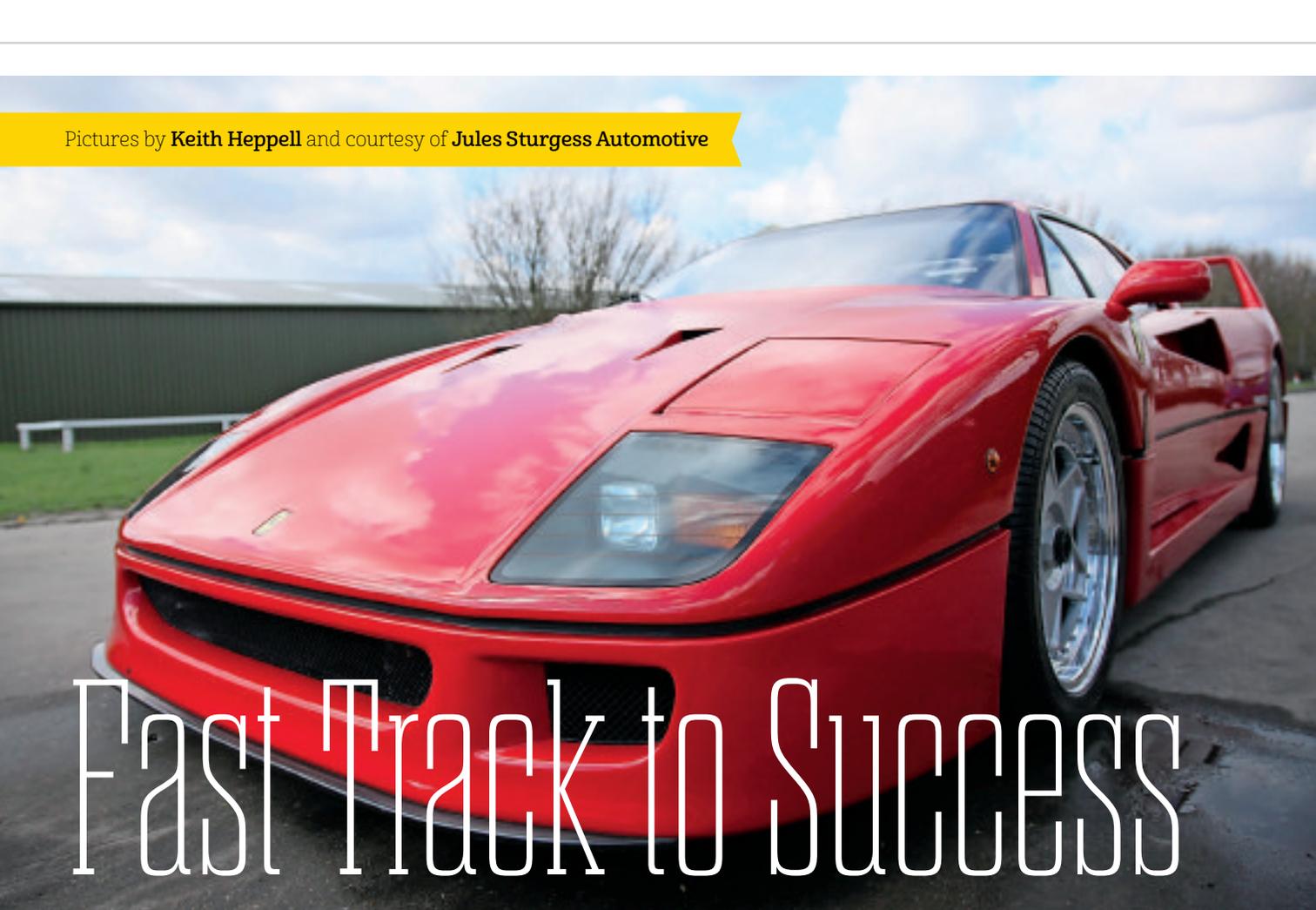
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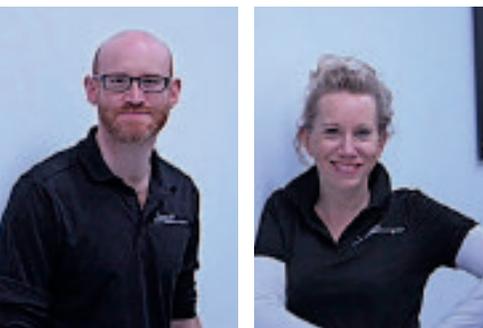
PROTECT
& PERFECT

Jules Sturgess unveils
his latest project
- see inside



Fast Track to Success

Protecting an expensive car from everyday damage – such as chips from flying stones and abrasions from sponge grit – is a challenge. Growing Cambridgeshire company Jules Sturgess Automotive has the answer, as Adrian Curtis discovers



Jules Sturgess Automotive, run by Jules and his partner Ruth Blomiley, has been protecting high-end vehicles since 2014 – using a revolutionary film-cover process, developed for helicopter rotor blades in the military. As Jules explains, it is perfect for paint protection on cars...

HOW DOES PAINT PROTECTION FILM WORK?

PPF is a thermoplastic urethane film applied to painted surfaces of a new or used car in order to protect the

paint from stone chips, bug splatters and minor abrasions. Similar film is also used on airplanes, mobile phones, electronics, screens, motorcycles and in many other areas.

Approved by virtually all car manufacturers, today's automotive PPF is highly conformable and optically clear. Modern films are much thinner and pass UV light. This is important because if it didn't, the paint would fade at a different rate. So, if you had some panels covered and others not, then different panels would age at a different rate.

WHAT'S THE BACKGROUND OF THE PRODUCT?

Paint protection films were first developed and used by the military. During the Vietnam War, helicopter rotor blades and other sensitive parts of military transports were often damaged by flying shrapnel and debris. In order to help protect these

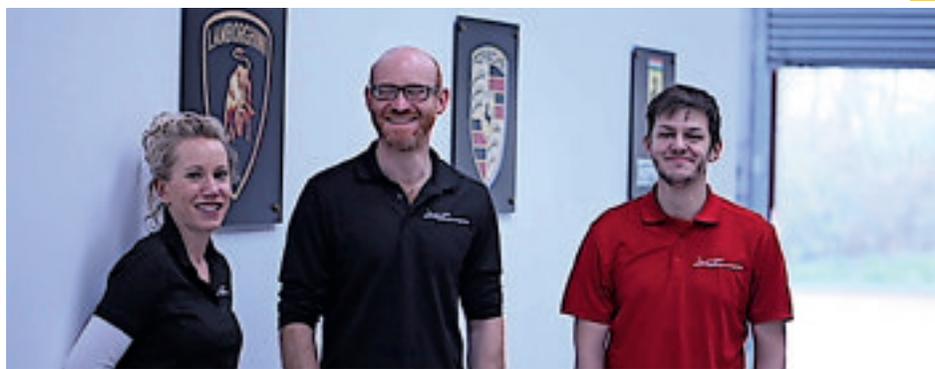
moving parts the US military came up with a solution that was both inconspicuous and low-weight.

The advantage of replaceable film over the replacement and repair of damaged rotor blades was immediately clear.

DO YOU CHARGE MORE FOR CARS OF A GREATER FINANCIAL VALUE?

Price depends on complexity of car, size of panels and availability of templates, not the value of the car. Typically a front end (bonnet, bumper, wings and wing mirrors) is £1,500 and a full wrap is anywhere from £4,000 upwards.

We schedule a long time for cars and I would rather take my time to deliver the ultimate finish. I work like a craftsman rather than simply slapping it on and churning through high volume. The way we see it, every car, no matter what its market value, and every customer, is equally important.



HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DOING IT?

Five years. It takes experience and practice. We have a new installer, James, who will complete a two-year in-house training course before working alone. He must deliver exactly the same meticulous finish as I do and he's already a real asset.

HOW IS THE COMPANY GROWING?

My partner Ruth gave up her teaching career to manage the business full time. As the company was growing it was impossible to do it all on my own. We joke about it being tough working together but it's surprisingly easy. We have very different roles in the business, so we often don't see each other during the day very much, except at lunchtime!

We have increased our turnover which is why we needed to get another installer in. In addition, we need to expand our premises. We have acquired a site which will become a luxury venue including a shop and design base for our new service, manufacturing carbon parts. We will keep our current PPF base at the Autostore near Foxton, which we're affiliated with.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT PROJECT? WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE CAR AND MANUFACTURER?

I can't believe I'm saying this: we have an F40 in. My childhood bedroom poster was of the F40. It is as stunning as ever and, despite being a challenging installation, is a privilege to work on. Putting the work in now means I'll have the templates ready for any subsequent F40s that I do. Having an iconic car that really blows your mind is one of those times you pinch yourself and think 'Damn I'm lucky!'

We do get some awesome cars in. Before the F40, we had a McLaren 720s, and before that a 355 and a Carrera GT. We have another Carrera GT in a few weeks and a 328 next.

I am a massive Lotus fan despite anyone's jokes about them being lots of

trouble. . . I restored my Elise and I am slowly getting my Elan Plus 2 done. We did a road trip to the south of France doing all the passes which was amazing. Ruth is nagging to do a Scotland road trip in the Elan so I better get on with it!

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE COME TO JSA OVER COMPETITORS?

The devil is in the details and we go overboard to give the best installation we can – that's why we are the chosen installer for some elite dealerships.

Our booth is custom-built to provide the essential installation setting. This includes HEPA air filtration, extensive lighting, heat control and is sealed to prevent dust or similar contamination.

We wrap as much as we can so you can't see the edges and where lines have to be joined; we ensure the fit is so close that it is near-impossible to see them.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO PEOPLE CONSIDERING PPF?

Fitting is as important, if not more important, than film. Unbelievably you can buy film as soon as you have finished the four-day training with Xpel and be an 'installer'. We take a different approach. I even went to the Netherlands to advance my training last year, making me more qualified than many installers.

My top tip: ask to see previous work. Look at their premises as well. Does it have good ventilation? Is it a dust-free environment? How good is the lighting? Our company approach is to see every customer as important as the next and remember that their experience is as significant as the standard of job at the end.

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