

# INTRODUCING A GENUINE ARTIST

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I have the pleasure of meeting a lot of interesting people on my travels. One person who I have known for a while now, and who has blown me away with his skill, is **Tommy Bristo**. I thought you'd be interested in learning more about one of the real craftsmen among us, so I sat down and asked him about his journey.

**Q How did you get into the industry?**  
I started off at the age of 16 and I'm 28 now. I began doing restoration work from the age of 22-23 and have been restoring and fabricating panels ever since. I've found my passion in restoration.

**Q Where did this love for restoring cars come from?** I was working at an ambulance repair centre in Longbridge when an old Fiat 124 was brought in. We were doing little bits of panel work on it and stuff like that, and I kind of had a bit of a natural thing for it. They all commented that I was quite good at making panels.

So I started my own workshop, but you know what it is like when you're 22. I was not clued up on business and it didn't last long.

I then worked at Specialised Automotive Services (SAS) in Clitheroe where you know me from. I then moved from there to set up Tommy Bristo Classic Restorations, and now I've got these [Ferrari] Dinosaurs to do. It's got busy and all this happened over the course of the year since I opened.

**Q Where did you acquire your skills?**  
I've taken little bits from all different people, some of it was self-taught. I went

through the accident repair side where I learned the global jig, you learn fitting panels and you learn all that kind of thing.

I used to work at HB Panelcraft in Preston – a massive accident repair shop – and did bits of everything, including panel and paint, but the metalwork is where I'm at and the panel fabrication is the thing that I'm best at.

**Q Who taught you about panel fabrication?**

Again, I just picked up little bits and did research online, but then also taking things from different people I worked with. I mean, Kevin [Peachey] over at SAS was brilliant. He has taught me loads of stuff, he is an ex-college tutor on restoration. He taught me how to gas weld and braze, as it is much easier to English Wheel than when something has been mig welded, as that makes the metal far too brittle.

**Q There's a lot of art to using an English Wheel so where did you pick that up?** I just had a go. Essentially the first time I'd used an English Wheel – because obviously I couldn't afford one as they cost a fortune – was at SAS, and then I practised a lot. Now if I wanted to make an arch or something like that at my previous workshop, I'd get a sheet of metal, I'd make a spare part from wood and then form an arch over that buck.

**Q How's your business doing now?**

Fantastic. I found one Dino to restore for a customer. He passed me on to somebody else and that made two and then he passed me on to somebody else. And now I am sending panels out that I'm fabricating in the workshop and exporting them across Europe and the world. The interest is huge due to the cost of the parts from Ferrari.

**Q What does the future look like?**

I am going to get into making art from car shells for houses and businesses but design my own bodies in the same vein as the Carrozzeria Italian coachbuilders Pininfarina, Scaglietti, Bertone as a specialist coachbuilder.

I am also getting into 3D-scanning parts so I can create station bucks to make perfect recreation parts for Dinosaurs. People can then go online and pick the part they want, and I will make it for them. They will be exact every time. I have big plans.