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For Your Bookshelf: Tom Hartley the Dealmaker

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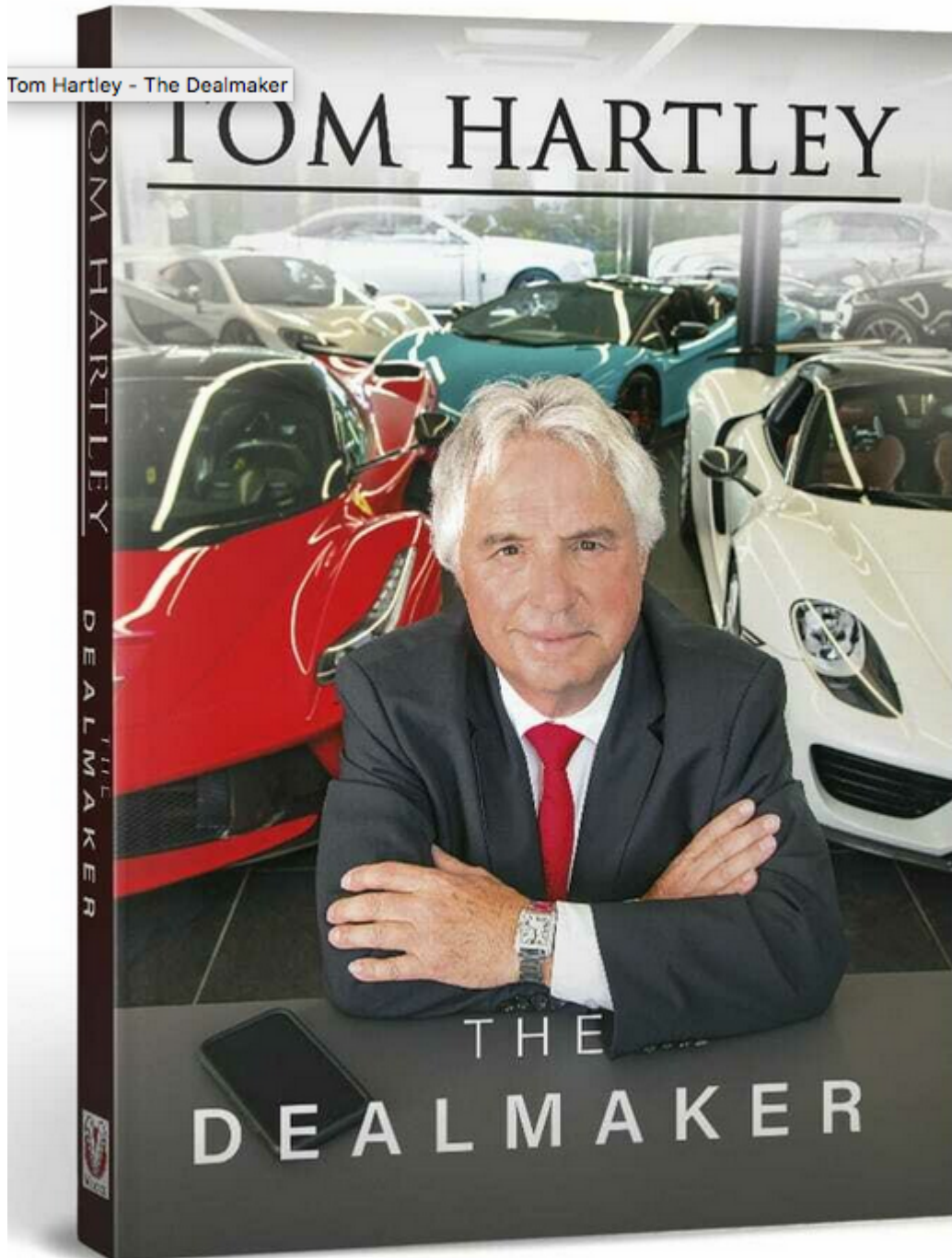
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Reviewed by:

Kieron Fennelly

Title: Tom Hartley the Dealmaker



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Author: Tom Hartley (transcribed by Ken Gibson).

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Today one of the UK's best-known premium car dealers, Tom Hartley was a self-made millionaire by the age of seventeen. With seemingly uncanny ability to read both the market and people, Hartley never faltered. Now after more than forty years he looks back over a career which has brought him a worldwide reputation in the exalted realms of the supercar and almost coincidentally, huge wealth.

In some respects, this a classic self-made man story and inevitably the text is heavy with the first-person pronoun: 'I did this, then I did that.' But as Hartley himself says, 'Don't judge a book by its cover' and his book needs reading in entirety. The strong impression is of a man who lives for what he does, but he operates with such acute single-mindedness that the reader is drawn in. In a business historically full of crooks and charlatans, Hartley's straight dealing has apparently worked in his favour. The account is autobiographical and any third parties injured along the way are left unmentioned, but the reader does have the feeling that there cannot have been many: Hartley is concerned to get the deal right every time. He is as proud of his reputation as of his Romany upbringing - his father and mentor sold carpets from a caravan, and Hartley himself was trading at an age when most children are still playing with toys and far too young to think careers.

A tradition which pitched him half-grown into the adult world endowed him with focus and the resilience to bounce back for example when Type Approval regulations in 1981 effectively bankrupted him; his ability to thwart manufacturers' marketing ploys enabled him to sell the new Jaguar XJ40 before even Jaguar dealers could get them; he was quick to spot that at £425,000, the XJ 220 was wildly overpriced and when he bought up nine-month-old examples and pitched them at £299,950, he again roused the indignation of Browns



Lane, but there was nothing Jaguar could do about it. Hartley says he handled about a third of all the XJ 220s sold.

Already the 'go-to' man for punters with big money to spend, the XJ220 opened Hartley's route into supercars and later, on the advice of younger son and partner, Carl, classic cars. Indeed, his four children have all followed him into the business. And rubbing shoulders with celebrity customers has clearly been one of life's rewards, as the book's photography reveals. But behind the glitter the Hartley business model has much to commend it: He has no debts, he buys only what he can afford, he pays up, often on the spot. It is a *modus operandi* underpinned by intense preparation and attention to detail: Hartley always knows what he wants, always has any negotiation fully scoped in advance, never overextends himself. And, seemingly, he never has a bad word to say about anybody. It is philosophy we could all learn from.

VERDICT

[An excellent read.](#)