

PROFILE
PAUL DE VOIJS



CLASSIC STYLE

Old world values, a love of the good life, make up the persona of the truly grounded and uber-cool Paul de Voijs



Paul de Voijjs, Managing Director, Volvo Auto India is a man of classic tastes. "I have a few indulgences... namely cigars, music, travel every now and then, and driving my motorbike, a Bullet 500 in India and a Harley Davidson back home in Belgium," he shares with a whimsical smile.

Voijjs has obviously not included cars under indulgences although cars have been the leit motif of his life. He shakes his head in agreement, "I washed cars at the age of nine, filled fuel and have been selling them for 25 years now," he admits. Voijjs, who is in his 25th year with the Volvo brand, is currently on his sixth assignment in India.

His take on life is reflected in his cool attitude that was not disturbed to arrive on his India assignment knowing there was no office, table or chair for him. "Certainly, I was not at all prepared for India. It's a country of extremes and mind-boggling potential. Sometimes, I am amazed to see a customer with 60 cars in his garage! With this kind of money in the country, Volvo has a lot of growth on the cards," he assesses.

But it's not business that is the subject of our conversation. Winding back, Voijjs says he has seen a good part of America on a Harley Davidson, which he confesses he rented with no previous riding experience. "I rode for five days on a rented 1449cc Fat Boy. It was a heavy, 349-kg machine. I still remember there were thousands of Harley riders on the road and the atmosphere was electric!" he recollects. Not surprisingly, he is the proud owner of a Fat Boy, which is parked at home in Belgium. "My Harley Davidson has been fitted with a Screaming Eagle and that makes for raw power and noise. It makes more sound at full throttle – especially if you close the gas – and if you are driving in a tunnel... you get a great sound," he chuckles.

For Indian roads, Voijjs drives a high-torque Royal Enfield motorcycle. "Enfield is the Indian version of the Harley Davidson. It is so great to look at and you know that this is how it will sound. The model has been around for long. I love the deep sound of its engine. I may buy a second Bullet Classic 500 and take it back home – in red or green colour," he remarks, adding, "Riding a bike is for enjoying it. If I want to speed, I use the autobahn. But for me, the high point is not speed, it is pure leisure... it is to relax and enjoy."

A man who stands by 'values of another time', Voijjs discloses that he lives by ideals that appreciate gentleman qualities... that extend to cigars, music and travel. "I like old style, classic shapes, traditional values," discloses Voijjs, adding, "Too many cars are being produced by computers, these days. Older models were made by a love for design, rather than a love for the fuel tank."

For Voijjs, the same principle applies to music systems, another activity he loves to indulge in. He owns a Chinese music system, which has been selected on account of its characteristic bulb based systems – an intrinsic part of the 'old-fashioned' analog technology. The fact that analog technology is making a comeback in the music world is thanks to music lovers like Voijjs who describe the sound as "fantastic". He goes on to qualify, "You won't get the same rich sound quality with digital as you do with analog." Voijjs has also recently bought a new British record player. He reveals, "The sound of a vinyl

record is incomparable. The ipod does not give me quality, it gives me convenience. If you want good sound, the speakers have to be big. Small speakers will produce small, compressed notes. The ipod being so small produces sound that is even more compressed."

Voijjs likes to spend his free time listening to music and his favourites are classical music and modern rock. "I enjoy a wide range. In classic operas, I like Verdi. Sometimes, I am moved to tears by classical music. There is one passage in Aida when there is a change in the rhythm... and it always triggers my emotions. In the rock genre, Pink Floyd is among my all time favourites. I'm not a fan of rap – it's more sound than music. Listening to records for a time in my cigar room is a pleasure. It's the only room I smoke in – a 4 by 4 room – where I stack my music, photographs and cigars. I call my room Havana."

Dutch by birth, Voijjs is fluent in six languages. He recently travelled to Havana and took a Spanish language course. "My daughter and I went together after we googled, searched, and opted for Cuba. Havana offers a fantastic environment. We would study grammar every day for 3 hours in the morning with a Cuban lady and follow it up with guided tours for 3 hours. We were in Cuba for 2 weeks. It was for me quality time. Next year we look forward to visiting Guatemala. Antigua is a gorgeous place. It is beautiful with an old Spanish ambience, with haciendas and beautiful courtyards and of course... I will be taking private Spanish lessons."

Voijjs also likes playing sports like tennis and skiing and likes to jog to keep fit. "Dinner with friends for me is a luxury and an enjoyment. Getting together with friends over wine... talking and laughing late into the night. It's so relaxing with friends at home," he remarks.

Finally, the million-dollar question for a man who has spent much of his life with cars. Which are his favourite cars? He answers promptly, "The Rolls Royce Series II Silver Shadow and the Jaguar E type 2+2... the most beautiful cars of all time." Considering his classic tastes the answer was on the cards.

KAMAL GILL

