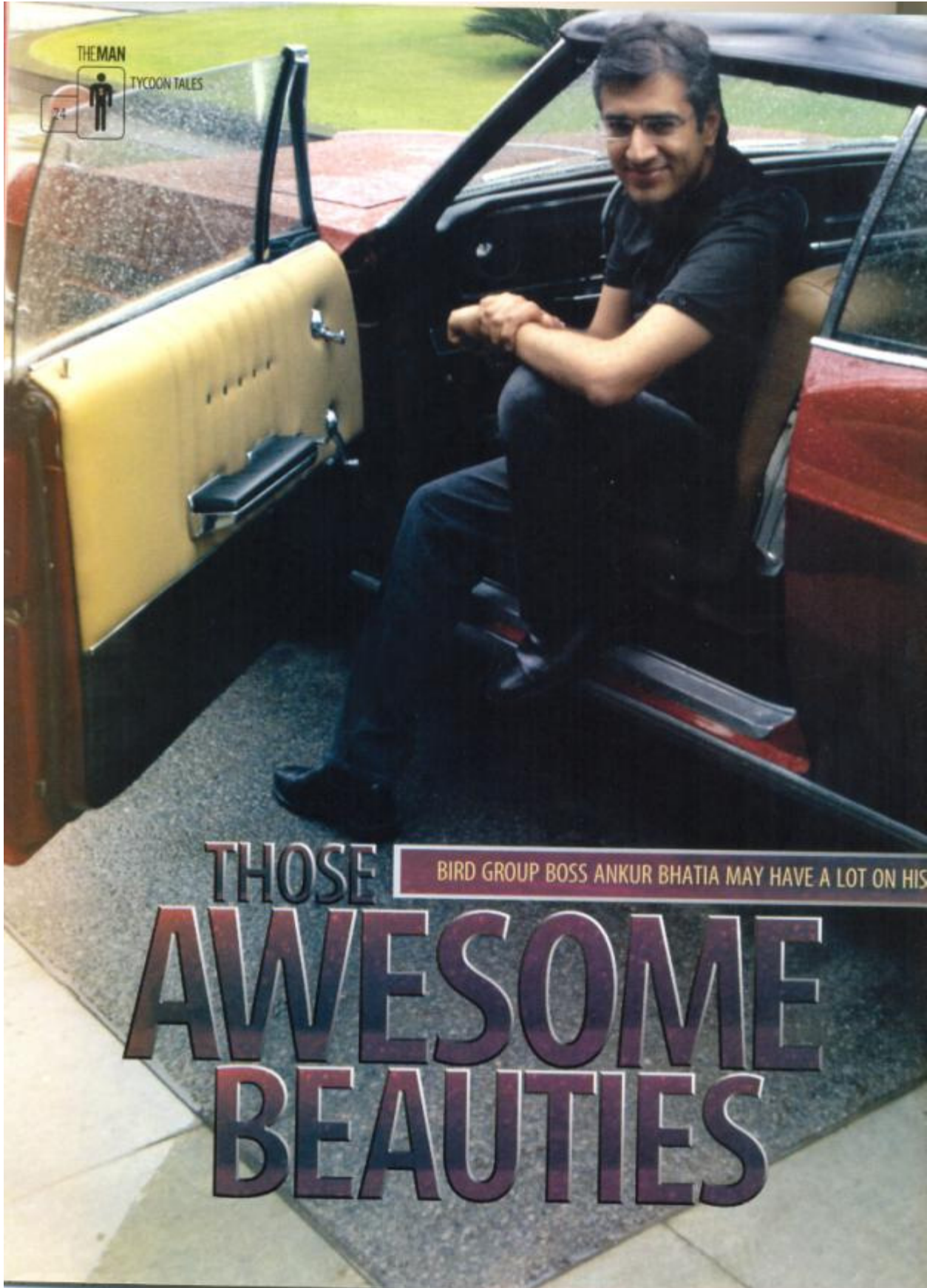


THE MAN



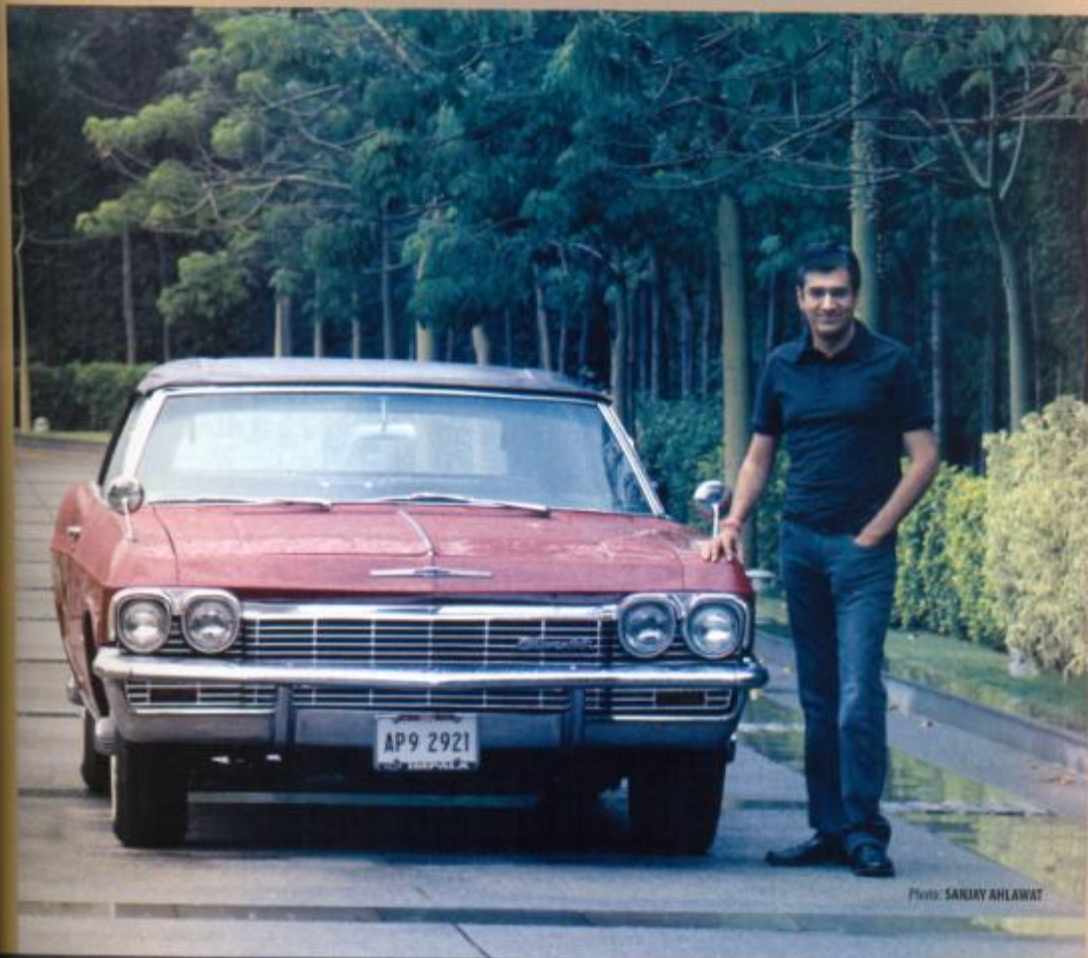
TYCOON TALES



THOSE

BIRD GROUP BOSS ANKUR BHATIA MAY HAVE A LOT ON HIS

AWESOME BEAUTIES



IN HIS MIND BUT HIS HEART IS FOREVER ON THE PROWL FOR THE NEXT VINTAGE BEAUTY TO RESTORE, FINDS **PRERNA UPPAL**

FLYING HIGH COMES EASY to the 36-year-old executive director of the Bird Group, Ankur Bhatia. So, while he juggles his multi-crore businesses, be it Amadeus India, Reservation Data Maintenance (India) Pvt. Ltd. (RDM) or setting up a chain of five-star hotel properties under Bird Hospitality Services, to name a few, he unwinds by chasing vintage cars.

The proud owner of a few Austins, an Impala, a Beetle and a Mercedes Platoon, Bhatia's affair with these golden oldies started early on. "It all started with my

grandfather's 1936 Austin, which we were never allowed to touch", he recalls.

The one car that really stole his heart was the Impala. When he got one some six odd years ago, it was a piece of junk, albeit, with an engine raring to go. The next few years were spent getting the convertible back on the road. He did what he does for all his vintage cars - source the original parts from the parent company. Then get down to the basics - engine detailing, colouring the car, fixing the mechanics... This he does on a daily basis while the car is being restored.

One set of wheels that Ankur actually went looking for was the World War II jeep that he recently added to his collection. He found it parked in a garage in Rajasthan, and was determined to have it. It took a lot of persuasion and he had to part with a hefty sum of money before he could call it his own.

So, does he have a favourite? Not really, he says, for him all his cars have their own charm and allure. He is happiest when he sees the vintage beauties restored to their former glory.