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# Rancho Mirage's Desert European Motorcars purchased

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Todd Blue, the new owner of Desert European Motorcars in Rancho Mirage, is photographed on Tuesday. / Jay Calderon/The Desert Sun

Written by **Blake Herzog**  
The Desert Sun

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**RANCHO MIRAGE** — The Coachella Valley's leading purveyor of luxury automobiles has been bought out by a Houston-based company led by a lifelong car enthusiast who intends to bring a new focus to the nine brands behind the brand.

Desert European Motorcars has been purchased by Todd Blue and his indiGO Auto Group, which owns Porsche, Lamborghini and classic car dealerships in Houston.

The desert deal was finalized late Monday, Blue's first venture outside of Texas.

"While we have a definite excitement and appreciation for the reputation that Desert European has built over the years, our focus will be on Porsche and Bentley and Audi and Maserati and the other brands that we sell," he said Tuesday in the new venture.

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New owner Todd Blue, left, and Kelly Wolf, executive vice president, have taken over Desert European Motorcars in Rancho Mirage. / Jay Calderon/The Desert Sun

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else wants to bring in.

Desert European's lineup was built up help from an incentive deal with Rancho Mirage's former redevelopment agency, which has been modified and extended through 2021. The package required Desert European to sell Rolls Royce, Bentley, Porsche, Audi and Jaguar. Land Rover, Aston Martin, Maserati, Lotus and Stryker were added later, and all except Stryker are still sold there.

Rancho Mirage Mayor Richard Kite said Tuesday the dealership is one of the city's top sales tax generators and the city will continue to work with Blue's group, which took over the incentive package with a City Council vote July 18.

"I think, after meeting with Mr. Blue, that he'll be a perfect fit for the city," he said.

Blue and indiGO executive vice president Kelly Wolf will shuttle frequently between Houston and Rancho Mirage, and plan to bring at least one tradition, the indiGO Drive 4 Kids fundraising event, out from its current base.

They've already refreshed the Maserati showroom, and are anticipating the fall debut of the Ghibli, that company's new entry into the more-affordable "in market" realm, Competing with BMW and other not-quite-so-high-end companies, it'll start at \$65,000 instead of well over \$100,000.

Blue plans to redo the other showrooms as well, and has purchased additional land in Rancho Mirage for possible expansion. Lamborghini is a possibility, Wolf said, but is not being pursued yet.

Blue said he has learned a lot from the former Desert European

Blue said Desert European's roster of high-end brands is "very hard to find" in the country, and over a two-month period his group went through intensive scrutiny from the high-end continental car makers, to get authorization to sell the iconic brands.

"We had three lawyers working on this deal yesterday, and none of them had ever seen nine," Blue said.

That inventory was built up by Desert European's five shareholders, who began building its empire at 71-387 Highway 111 in 1999. One of them, Gary Whitaker, will remain as Desert European's general manager. The other four were Jerry Johnson, Gene Whisenhunt, David Murphy and Frank Hickingbotham.

Whitaker was not available for comment Tuesday. Desert European Motors has 122 employees, including a service department for all nine brands and any other vehicle anyone

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owners since first meeting them late last year, and he intends to make his own mark on the valley.

"We're here for the long haul," he said.

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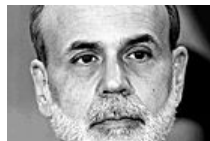
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