

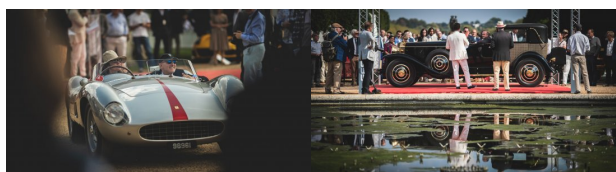
CLASSIC DRIVER

Crowning automotive glory at the Concours of Elegance 2018

Lead

Under bright blue late summer sky, this year's Royal Concours of Elegance kicked off at Hampton Court Palace yesterday, a venue perfectly suited to the glamour and grandeur of the world's finest collector cars. These were our highlights...

Shortly before the 'Grand Arrival' of 60 of the world's rarest and most desirable cars, His Royal Highness Prince Michael of Kent arrived at Hampton Court Palace behind the wheel of his Bentley Blower, closely tailed by his security detail. It's this connection to the Royal family that makes the Concours of Elegance feel so special, not to mention the palace itself, whose picturesque gardens are every bit as pruned and pampered as the exquisite collector cars competing in the concours.



The concours itself was as exquisite as usual, comprising 60 cars ranging from the dawn of the automobile to exclusive 'future classics' such as the unique Rolls-Royce Sweptail.

Elegant road-going pre- and post-War beauties were joined by battle-scarred competition cars including a Gulf-liveried Porsche 917K and the 1990s Mercedes CLK LM. And we particularly loved the Ferrari 166MM/212 Export 'Uovo', whose unique Franco Reggiani-designed coachwork challenges your perception of what the earliest Ferraris should look like.



On the subject of Ferrari, there were some stunning Prancing Horses in attendance, including a white 365 California Spyder, one of just 14 built, the final 500 TRC ever produced, with class wins at both Sebring and Le Mans under its belt, and a prototype 288 GTO, brought and displayed at Hampton Court by Classic Driver dealer [Tom Hartley Jr.](#)





And Tom wasn't the only Classic Driver dealer present. [Nicholas Mee & Company](#) brought three beautiful Aston Martins including a menacing black V8 Zagato from the 1980s. [Fiskens](#) demonstrated the breadth of its business with a Maserati 250F lined up alongside a significant Porsche Carrera RSR and a beautiful pre-War Bugatti. And [Duncan Hamilton ROFGO](#) displayed two Group C cars – the [Rothmans-liveried Porsche 962C that Jochen Mass was recently reunited with](#) and a brutish Sauber Mercedes C11.



McLaren chose the event to announce its new certification programme for the F1, displaying a meticulously rebuilt Gulf-Davidoff Longtail. And in what was a world first, nine different variations of the Aston Martin DB4 were assembled, including the Giugiaro-designed Bertone Jet and the voluptuous GT Zagato.

One of the talking points of this year's event was the attendance of Bruce McCaw's Mercedes-Benz S-Type Barker Tourer 'Boat Tail', which claimed 'Best of Show' at Pebble Beach in 2017 – the opulent blue Grand Tourer arguably looked even finer situated in the palace gardens than on the 'fairway to heaven' in California.



One of our favourites from the main concours was 'Nellie', the 1912 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost owned by Katie Forrest that won the 'Club Trophy' at last year's Concours of Elegance and thus was granted an entry into the main event this time around.

Originally delivered to India, where it was subsequently bought by the Maharaja of Nabha, the car will star in the next episode of Talk to the Driver, [our new series of short films for A. Lange & Söhne](#). The Glashütte watchmaker sponsored the Concours of Elegance for the first time this year and its presence was especially well felt. CEO Wilhelm Schmid even entered his own Frazer Nash Le Mans Coupé into the Concours and took great pleasure in driving the car around the central fountain for the jury.





At the Bridge of Weir Leather Company’s stand, the [Aston Martin DB11 Classic Driver Edition](#) was proudly displayed among a delectable selection of ‘British Legends’ and garnered much attention – people commented that the Eifel Green interior looked particularly fabulous in person.



So what of our personal favourites? It would have to be the quirky Fiat 1200 Vignale ‘Wonderful’ or the ex-Stirling Moss Maserati 300 S, displayed by Egon Zweimüller – proportionally, we’re not sure there’s ever been a more ‘right’ looking car. If you’re close to London and have no plans this weekend, we thoroughly recommend a visit to the Concours of Elegance. The atmosphere is relaxed, the cars are as good as you’ll find at any international concours, and the setting is truly magical.

Photos: Will Broadhead for Classic Driver © 2018

Gallery

