

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## [Peeking into the collector car market's past and future at Rétromobile in Paris](#)

### Lead

Where is the collector car market heading in the new year? Which makes and models will be most desirable? Classic Driver went to Paris for the season-opening at Rétromobile to find out.



### The show must go on

After starting the season with [a lot of snow, sun and sideways action at FAT Ice Race in Zell am See last weekend](#), the experience of being teleported to Paris for the annual Rétromobile show felt like a trip back in time. Where were the contemporary car world's hip, moustached content creators in their sheepskin jackets broadcasting live for their gazillions of followers? The it-girls in their limited-edition Salomon boots and ironic Rolex hats? The insanely cool off-road Porsche restomods on studded tyres? Instead, the good old convention halls near Porte de Versailles looked very similar to when the Rétromobile was first held in 1976. And the crowds were dressed in the eternal car collector uniform of cashmere jackets, business shirts, chinos, Chelseas boots and greying temples like Covid, Tiktok and the track-pant revolution had only been a long, bad dream.





Enter Hall 1 on a grey Tuesday in February, and it almost feels like the yellow lightbulbs, the grey carpets and the ham-and-cheese baguettes have somehow managed to withstand the stream of time. And just like every year, the most iconic car brands and most exclusive dealers set up their stand next to local collectable and automobilia merchants, trading scale models and Michel Vaillant comics like it's still 1984. The death of the classical auto show has been proclaimed again and again. But this week, the formula somehow felt more alive than ever, with unseen crowds of people flooding the stands already on preview night, ruining even the slightest attempts to create meaningful content with their expedition-size backpacks. In 2026, the Rétromobile show will move into more modern halls while the old venue gets a much-needed dose of TLC – but this week, visitors caught one last glimpse of the old, non-Instagrammable and slightly dusty classic car world that might soon be gone for good. And, ignoring the wandering thoughts of an ageing journalist, some of the most desirable cars currently offered for sale.







### Standing out from the crowd

Naturally, it's absolutely impossible to name all the stands and cars that caught our eye on the first day of the show. After all, one would need to spend a week at Rétromobile just to study the shapes and dive into the history of every automotive jewel on display. But still, there were cars that stood out to us. And just like the VIP guests would first check out the Gagosian, Zwirner or Hauser & Wirth booths at Art Basel, we are usually drawn towards the carefully curated stands of the global collector car market's major players on opening night to inspect their line-up.



This year, Lukas Hüni, uncrowned king of the top-end classic car trade from Zurich, had traditionally dropped the mic once again with a display of only the most desirable, rare and unusual automobiles on this planet, including a Jaguar D-type Short Nose, a dark red Alfa Romeo 6C, a Ferrari 250 SWB and three adorable rally Lancias – a beautiful blue-and-white Aurelia B20 GT Liège-Rome-Liège, a spectacular Flaminia Sport Zagato ‘Sperimentale’ and an Alitalia Stratos.





### Enter the Vault

Meanwhile, [Simon Kidston](#) and his team from Geneva had gotten creative again and turned their stand into a high-security vault surrounded by red laser beams and filled with the most hailed and divine unicorn cars from the Kidston book of prayers. The centrepiece, a Marlboro-white McLaren F1, was flanked by its new-millennium supercar successors – a Bugatti Veyron and a McLaren P1, while we only had eyes for the Ferrari 275 NART Spyder, potentially the most desirable of all prancing horses at the show.







Over at [Fiskens](#), 14 road and track legends were on display in front of the company's trademark tartan wallpaper, among them a 1935 Alfa Romeo 8C with its exquisitely recreated Touring Le Mans-style body, the 1960 Jaguar E2A Le Mans Prototype, one of just two Ford GT40s driven by Carroll Shelby as well as more modern machinery like a 1998 Silverstone 500 km-winning Mercedes CLK GTR and the first of the 10 Ferrari 550 Maranello Prodrives.



Following a 'Solo Ferrari' theme, [Max Girardo and his team](#) compiled a hall-of-fame-style museum exhibition of ten remarkable Maranello legends. Grouped around a 'desperately blue-tiful' Ferrari 250 GTB SWB Competizione, collectors and journalists collectively drooled upon a 340 Mexico Vignale built for the Carrera Panamericana, a F1 piloted to victory by Gerhard Berger in Japan and Australia in 1987 and a blue Ferrari 512 TR Spider custom-built by Pininfarina.





### Smells like racing spirit

Meanwhile, [Joe Macari](#) had managed to line up some of the most outlandish automobiles known to man – seeing a Maserati MC12, Fina McLaren F1 GTR, (soon to be Le Mans racing) Aston Martin Valkyrie, Tuthill-developed one-off Singer ACS and Alfa Romeo Tipo 33/2 Daytona (raced at Targa Florio, Le Mans and the Nürburgring) all lined up on just one stand is a remarkable feast.



But it wasn't the only stand smelling of racing spirit: [Ascott Collection](#) had assembled six Group C, LMP1 and GT2 racers, including one of the iconic Silk Cut Jaguar XJR12 LM racers and a menacing, dark-blue Kouroos Sauber C8. Naturally, our friends from [Messina Classics](#) had also joined the racing pack, displaying a Porsche 917, an Alfa Romeo SZ Trofeo and a Lancia Delta S4 once owned by Gianni Agnelli, next to some barely street-legal dream machines like a McLaren Senna in Marlboro specs and a Ferrari 599 Nibbio Zagato.





It's no secret that we at Classic Driver are fans of 1980s and 1990s sports cars in unusual configurations – so we found ourselves returning again and again to [Art & Reys](#), finding it almost impossible to pick the early-day supercar we would have liked to drive home best between the burgundy red Bugatti EB110 or the pale-blue metallic Ferrari F40. We were so intrigued that we almost overlooked the Porsche 908 Langheck casually parked at the other end of the stand. Speaking of supercars: if you are in Paris this week, make sure you don't miss the all-red stand of [Ruote da Sogno](#), confronting buyers with the impossible choice between the Lamborghini Countach, Diablo and Aventador. If you want our unsolicited advice, we suggest you buy them all!



Which are the trending collector cars of the moment – and what will be considered a good investment in some year's time? While prices for Ferrari and Porsche are stalling, there are some cars from Maranello and Zuffenhausen that still pick up pace in the market price curves, especially the track-born but street-legal performance specials from the early years of the new millennium. At [Rock 'N Roll Classics](#) – [whom we recently featured in the magazine](#) – there were three cars matching this description: a red Ferrari 360 Stradale, a beautiful blue-over-grey F430 Scuderia and a silver Porsche 996 GT2 Clubsport, the latter two being sold almost immediately on the first day. Another brand on the rise is RUF – and we're more than excited to see if the time-capsule Yellowbird from Gooding's stand will sell for the estimated six million dollars at the Amelia Island sale in March.





### Bespoke design alla Milanese

Rétromobile is not just a platform for dealers, it's also a great opportunity for brands to connect with the global car scene. At the hypercar-loaded stand of La Squadra from Poland, the [AGTZ Twin-Tail](#) made its first appearance in 2025 together with design legend Andrea Zagato. Meanwhile, our pals from Carrozzeria Touring in Milan stunned the crowds again with their Veloce12 - [this time painted in Azzuro Cielo](#) - and [a classic car combo that perfectly illustrated the company's restoration competence](#).



On one hand, an artfully neglected barn-find Maserati 3500 GT demonstrated the starting point of a full restoration, while the bright white, picture-perfect, Maserati Classiche-certified twin car showed what wonders Touring's workshop can achieve in a year of work. Naturally, Touring did not only tell the most convincing tale of rebirth - together with Faema they also served the best coffee at this year's Rétromobile show, matching the 1961 barn-find Maserati with a vintage coffee machine of the same year.





### Oh la la!

Italians might do it better in terms of elegance and design, but of course, the French auto industry did not miss out on their chance to highlight their heritage and future on their home turf. At Citroën, the 70th anniversary of the divine DS was celebrated with a beautiful exhibition, starring the recreated DS Ballon. Meanwhile, Renault displayed the most cartoonish cars of the show: [a historical land speed record car and its modern-day homage](#), injecting some Bonneville high-speed spirit into the Port de Versailles halls. One of the most iconic French brands is Matra – and it was great to see some of the famous blue racers united by the marque’s owners club.



### Print's not dead!

The pinnacle of French automotive history, though, must be the creations of Ettore Bugatti. Brand guru Julius Kruta has managed to unite three of Bugatti’s rarest and most fascinating cars from Molsheim at his stand, where a trio of Bugatti Type 59s had gathered for the launch of the ultimate book celebrating this milestone grand prix car. Designed by Marc Newson and compiling the history of all Type 59s, Kruta’s new ‘Bugatti Bible’ excited many of the big boy collectors attending the show – with the limited-edition selling well despite (or because of) its remarkable 59k euro price tag. [All three editions of the Bugatti Type 59 book are now available in the CD Shop](#). After all, print has been declared dead even more often than motor shows – so it was a pleasure to meet Ted Gushue and his publishing team promoting the book-making revival with their [beautiful Artifact and Type 7 coffee table books](#) over at the ERG stand. We cannot wait for all the new books releasing in 2025!





### Hammer Time

So what are the takeaways from Rétromobile? Is the collector car market withstanding the turbulences of global instability and socio-economic crisis? Are people still buying classic cars in 2025? While the dealers do not disclose their results, it makes sense to carefully look at the auctions taking place during Paris classic car week: at RM Sotheby's, the Le-Mans-winning Ferrari 250 LM was sold for 34,880,000 euros – almost 10 million euros above its estimate price.



After an LM had already won the ‘Best of the Best’ award at the Peninsula Hotel on Monday, the landmark Ferrari racer is certainly moving out of the shadow of the 250 GTO. Meanwhile, a Porsche 2.7 RS was sold at the same auction almost 200k euros below estimate, suggesting a market in flux – and creating opportunities for buyers who have previously shied away from certain iconic models due to their eye-watering prices. Things stay complicated and we’re excited about what the year will bring.





**Taking it cool from Zell am See to Paris**

In the end, we even met an ambassador of the young, contemporary car scene in the old Rétromobile halls: Christophe Duchesne. The [arctic road trip veteran](#) and designer at the much-hyped Milanese studio Borromeodesilva had piloted the open-top, no-windscreen, pink-livery, chassis-number-one Dallara Stradale from Milan via Zell am See for the FAT Ice Race for a snow drift and up to Paris, wearing not much more than a sheepskin jacket and beanie against the freezing cold on his 1500+ km road trip, but arriving at Porte de Versailles with his broad trademark smile. Maybe there aren't two car worlds out there, but only one. One in which people aren't much different, but just drive the cars they love and enjoy themselves along the way. No matter the birth year, no matter the Instagram followers, no matter the insurance value of the car. Maybe it's Paris that turns us into hopeless romantics, but wouldn't that be something to wish for?

*Photos: Błażej Żuławski / Jan Baedeker for Classic Driver*

**Gallery**









































































































































































































































































































































































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