

CLASSIC DRIVER

Retromobile Paris 2003 - Report

Report by Don Rose

A massive turnout for the opening weekend of the 28th annual Retromobile show in Paris suggests that despite declines in the capital markets and the threat of war looming, interest remains high in classic cars and the market continues to be robust.





The theme this year is the Land Speed Record cars, with the blue chip holdings of the Beaulieu collection on display. Foremost among them are the famous Bluebird and Golden Arrow, lending a backdrop of high drama for the event.

In keeping with the theme and also the French location, an intriguing diorama was on view featuring the record breaking, Maserati powered Citroen SM with its fascinating competition history from the Bonneville salt flats in Utah. Jerry & Sylvia Hathaway, BOTH veterans of the 200mph club in the car were both on hand.

Many of the other more dynamic displays also reflected strong enthusiasm for French marques. Aside from the expected major stands from Peugeot, Citroen, and Renault (featuring some very interesting and rarely seen early record holders), fans of Facel Vega, Gordini, and Panhard, not to mention the full classics such as Bugatti, Delahaye, and Delage, would not be disappointed.

Custom and concept cars were everywhere to behold. Outstanding among the more outlandish creations is the Cadillac V-16 based 'retro-concept' exercise, designed and built for a well-known Belgian collector by Pur Sang of Argentina. Pur Sang, highly regarded as the makers of astoundingly authentic recreations of the Bugatti T35, conceived this fantasy dreamcar from the perspective one might have taken in the 1920s of a

futuristic racing coupe. Stunning in its execution, and resplendent in its maroon and cream livery, it features a fighter jet-style cockpit and all-around bearing as if something out of Jules Verne. Built up from an original but narrowed Cadillac chassis, it all begins with the monstrous powerplant and takes the theme over the top.

Aside from the actual cars, Retromobile boasts one of the world's great autojumbles, with numerous-to-overflowing purveyors of all manner of spares, period and modern accessories, books, toys, and models. Also posters and automobilia as well as motoring art both good and bad are plentiful.

A highlight of the show is undoubtedly the annual Christie's auction, this sale featuring 14 cars from the Freddy Heineken estate. All impressively maintained, most were owned from new with very low original mileage and made prices well into or above the catalogue estimates. Notable was the exquisite Bentley S3 Continental convertible which hammered at €130,000, no less than double the low end expectation.

There were 3 million-dollar lots sold, led by a fantastic and rare open Bugatti T55 Super Sport. Authentic and deliciously patinated, although rebodied (in period), it pulled an impressive €1,680,250 (with buyers commission) with another, very original T35B at €943,250. The restored and race-ready Ferrari 250TdF made a cool €1million at the hammer, matching its low estimate.

Much anticipated was the sale of the ex-Guezec Aston Martin DB4GT. It has been many years since a GT has been put up for public auction, as most of the trading in these desirable models takes place outside the glare of the spotlight. This LHD example presented nicely as an older cosmetic and mechanical restoration with an original looking interior along with its intriguing French race history. An adventurous catalogue estimate of €720-820,000 tantalized the curious and in the end hammered at €600,000 (€668,250) – a still spectacular result for one of these rare and versatile machines.

All-in-all, the sale appeared to be a success, as was the overall show in the opinion of this writer, a welcome respite to the slow season for classic events and the winter doldrums.

For a full results of the auction see the [Provisional Auction Results](#) in the Classic Driver 'Auction' section of the magazine.

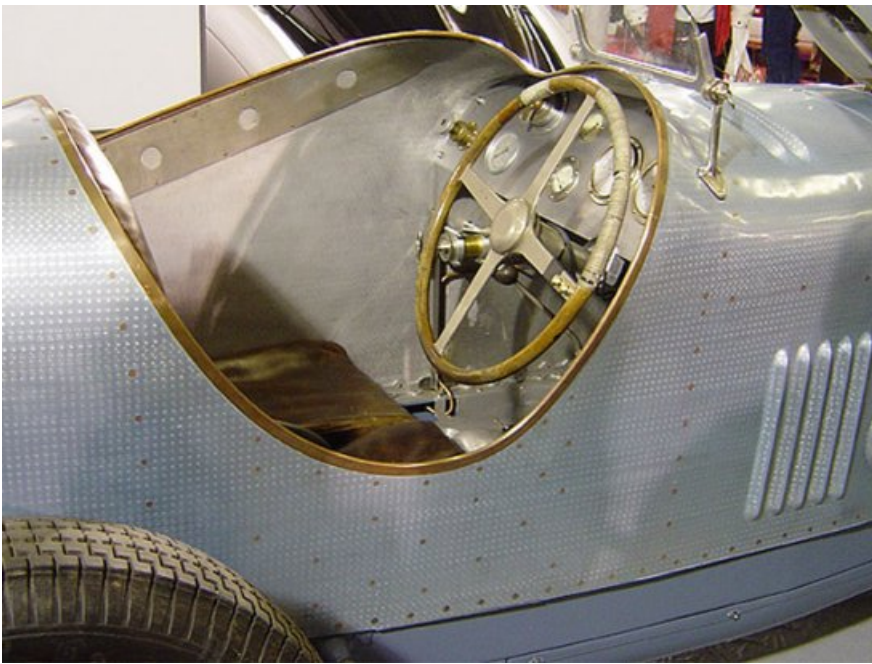
Here are some impressions of Retromobile 2003:

Album I

Fotos: [Olivier Pénat](#)

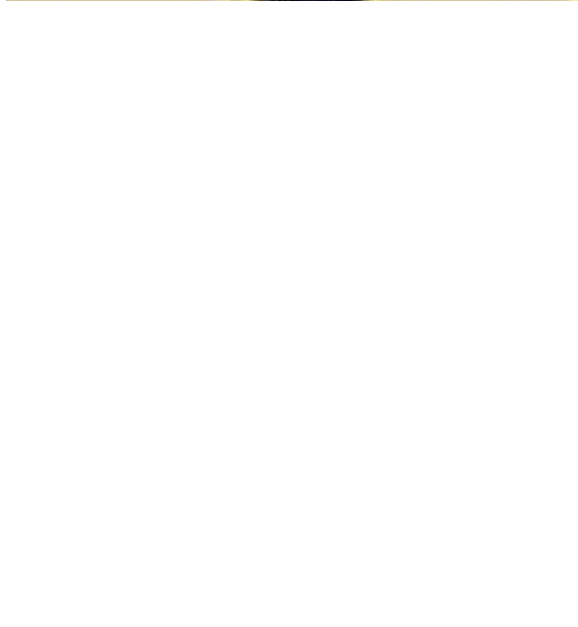










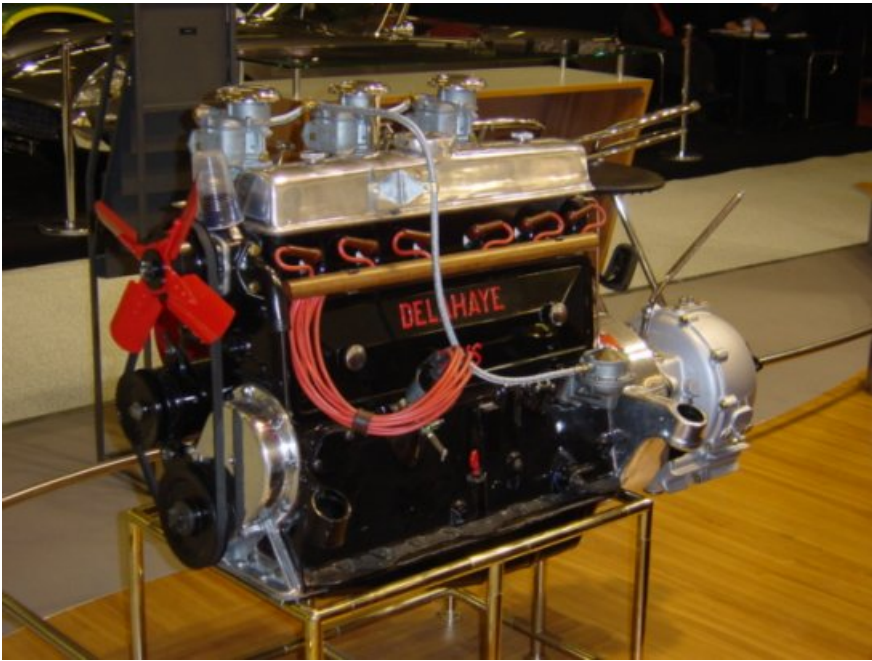






















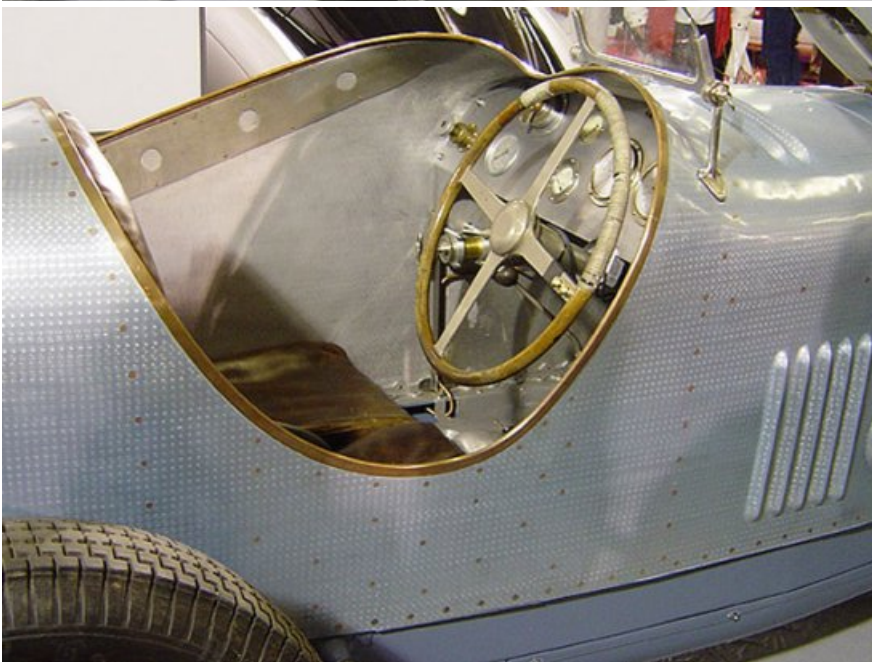




Album II

Photos: *Don Rose*













Gallery

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