

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Amelia Island Concours 2004](#)



A blast of Florida sunshine at the tail of a long winter is one of the major attractions of attending the eighth annual Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance. Held this year on Sunday, March 14, the program has grown prodigiously and today is regarded as perhaps the second or third most distinguished classic car show after Pebble Beach, and perhaps Meadowbrook.

A spectacular day contrasted with the 2003 washout by rain, and the quality of the field suggested that participants were undeterred by last year's experience. Approx. 300 cars and motorcycles were entered, competing in 35 class categories. This year special interest classes featured 'Colorful Fifties' (spectacular finmobiles in outrageous hues), 'The Great Mercury Customs' (the most celebrated of the classic low-rider lead sleds), and 'The Cars of Bobby Unser', along with no fewer than 5 groupings specifically for Indy Pace Cars.

One of my favorites was 'The Cars of Carlo Abarth,' which featured 11 significant examples of these diminutive rockets. Abarths of all descriptions earned over 7,000 race victories in their era, often claiming wins in America for 'Team Roosevelt,' the team owned by the son of the ex-President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Even the model names are evocative: 'Testa Radiale,' 'Zagato Double Bubble,' and 'Record Monza Bialbero.' Beyond the ubiquitous Fiats, other Abarth chassis included Ferrari and notably Porsche.

Otherwise, a fabulous display of the 'usual suspects' was on offer for our viewing pleasure: Packards, Duesenbergs, Cadillacs, Auburns, and Pierce-Arrows ruled the roost. From the other side of the pond, Bugatti had a dedicated class which featured a stunning, silver-blue Type 57C Atlantic coupe. Post-war Bentleys were given a class as well, with the highlight for me being a Continental 'R'-type, resplendent in black, with the rare equipment combination of LHD, center-shift manual, and 4.9-litre block.

The full complement of the three GM Firebirds - concept/development prototype cars from the Motorama era rounded out the field. Turbine-powered with jet-fighter aircraft cockpits, these missiles-on-wheels are dazzling artifacts from the early post-Atomic age.

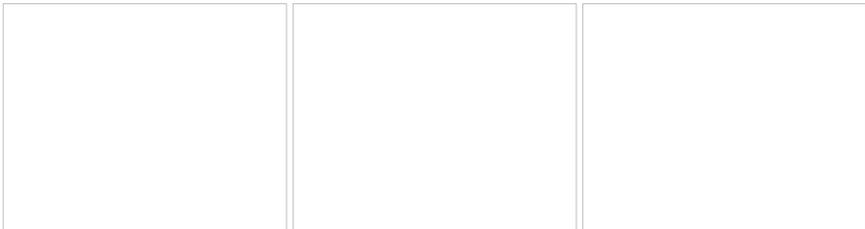
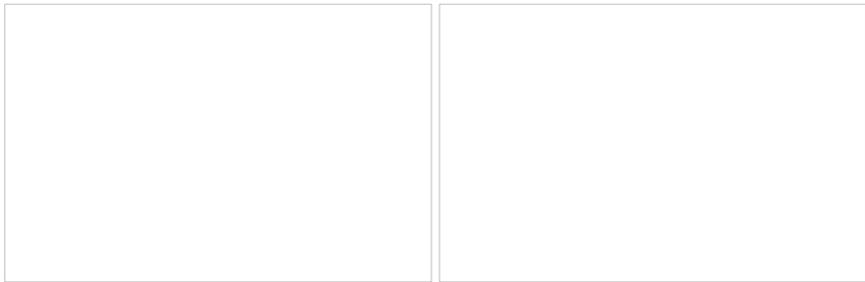
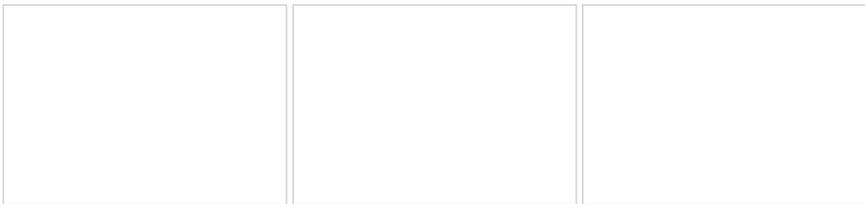
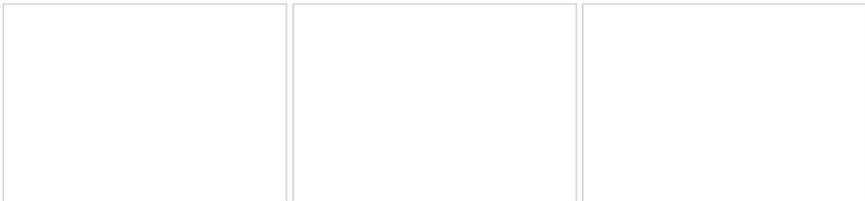
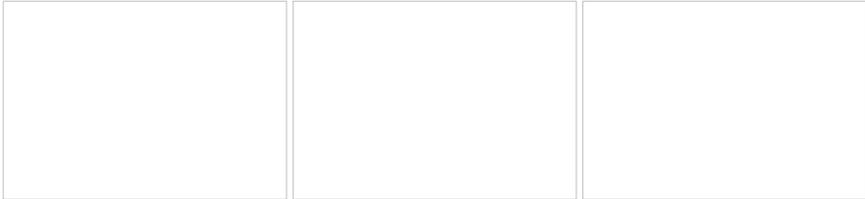
New cars on display ranged from the proletarian to the fantastic. Notable to my eyes was the Cadillac Sixteen concept. Excessive, perhaps - but impressive in execution, with detailing and build quality rarely seen in such display vehicles.

Outside the grounds, one could view the new Rolls Phantom, Maybach, Bentley Continental GT, Lambo Gallardo, and the brilliant new Spyker.

The whole pageant kicks off with an [RM auction](#) on the Saturday, with its own high level of eye-candy. Over 100 cars crossed the block, with 80%+ hammered sold. Many strong prices were realized although none of the anticipated million-dollar sales had materialized by the time of this writing.

Back in Massachusetts now, in the midst of one of our fabled 'Nor'easter' snowstorms, I'm already thinking about making plans to visit Amelia again next year !

Report and Photos by: [Don Rose](#)



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