
Miura 40th Anniversary Tour

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After months of planning and much anticipation, the Miura 40th Anniversary Tour rounded off last weekend at the biennial Grand Prix Historique in Monaco, a fitting conclusion to an event which celebrated the iconic sports car's original appearance at the 1966 Monaco Grand Prix. Bob Wallace, the factory's lanky New Zealander development test driver who had driven the Miura prototype from Sant'Agata across the Alps to Casino Square 40 years ago, penned the road book introduction to this anniversary gathering:

"The idea for this trip came from Lamborghini himself together with Dallara. They wanted to demonstrate to all that what we were doing was not B.S. and the car was functional in all respects. The trip was enormously enjoyable with enthusiastic escorts from the Italian Polizia Stradale all the way. We did the trip with no documents at all, merely an Italian 'Prova' plate on the car and were waved through all the border crossings like royalty. Lamborghini had bribed the doorman at the Hotel in the main square with a large amount of Francs to ensure premium position 24 hour parking. The

doorman then subcontracted the job to a local policeman or two. Around 11.30-midnight Lamborghini came out of the Casino, got in the car and revved the s**t out of it, at which point you could not move for the crowds of people. He then persuaded Bandini and Scarfiotti to do a couple of hot laps of the circuit. The noise of the car echoing off the buildings was fantastic. All in all a good way on his part to prove a point"



As you grow older you become more critical of what you did in the past, but I will always remember this car and the group of people I worked with. Best wishes to all of you."

Organised by Miura enthusiast and classic car expert Simon Kidston, the Tour attracted 12 beautifully presented Miuras from around the world, plus the one-off Lamborghini 400 Monza (auctioned by Simon whilst still at Bonhams last December) as official chase car and 1960s French Lamborghini importer Edmond Ciclet following the convoy in his lovely burgundy 350GT to provide mechanical assistance. It's not often the support cars are older than the participants.



Wednesday evening saw the teams converge on the five star Bellevue Hotel, located in the chic ski resort of Gstaad in the heart of the Swiss Alps. Goodie bags were distributed to eager entrants containing cashmere travel rugs from event sponsor Girard Perregaux, custom Miura Tour jackets by Italian fashion designer Mariella Burani (courtesy of her car collecting son Andrea) and personalized leather clipboards by Modenese firm Schedoni. A small army of transporters disgorged their precious charges which were quickly locked away in the hotel's immaculate underground car park whilst their owners enjoyed the first of several high calorie dinners upstairs. Two teams of mechanics from nearby Garage Pichler (who look after many of the cars in local resident Bernie Ecclestone's collection) attended to small niggles including the points and plugs of a Sicilian owned Miura S, driven that afternoon from Bologna, and a recalcitrant fuel pump on the ex-Shah of Iran Miura SVJ, acquired from Hollywood A-lister Nicolas Cage by its current Iranian owner. Any worries about getting the cars dirty or wet didn't last long though...



Thursday morning dawned overcast in the Alps, and the raucous, 168 cylinder gathering broke the peaceful silence before heading out of the hotel grounds and down the mountain like a multi-coloured mechanical snake, much to the amusement of the local Swiss farmers and children on their way to school. Several owners had chosen this event as their first ever outing in their cars, including the Lamborghini Monza which turned its wheels for the first time since being laid up in a Spanish garage in 1970. Another car, a bright red SV from Belgium, had covered just 6,000 miles from new. Then again, the SVJ had only been driven 5,500km in its entire 35 year life. And Piet Pulford's thunderous Jota replica had done 93km since finished, shortly before the factory's 30th anniversary celebrations in 2003!



As the drivers familiarized themselves with their cars, some for the first time and the others after a winter respite, the convoy gathered pace, crossing the picturesque Col des Mosses as cows in nearby fields turned nonchalantly to observe the noisy intrusion. Winding down the valley to the ancient Roman town of Martigny, near the winter resort of Verbier, the Miuras then turned West towards France, crossing the Col de la Forclaz and climbing to the town of Chamonix, where clouds gave way to showers. The first mechanical woes came when the SV prototype, restored in France a decade ago and still resplendent in Giallo Miura, developed overheating problems which were quickly remedied by Edmond Ciclet. After a cheerful foie gras lunch in a cosy wood paneled inn, Piet Pulford decided it was time to let the locals hear his Jota Replica in all its glory, and equipped with a pair of pliers and a bin liner, removed and stored his four very black looking exhaust silencers. The resulting cacophony when the car restarted after lunch provoked grins and laughter from onlookers and parents hands over children's ears, and that was barely at 3000 revs!



With the heavens now opening to a full scale downpour, the Miura Tour continued deeper into the French countryside, passing through Albertville, site of the 2002 Winter Olympics, and along the long, wide, tree lined Route Napoleon towards Chambéry. This gave many drivers the first real chance to open their Miuras up, with bursts of over 200km/h possible when gaps presented themselves in the light traffic. One Miura's windscreen wipers gave up at this point, luckily resolved with a bottle of Rainex, whilst another car's wipers refused to stop even after removing the ignition key. Italian electrics at their best...One of the most memorable sights of the Tour was the ex-Shah of Iran SVJ, preserved almost in cotton wool for most of its cosseted life, speeding along the straights in the sunset leaving a rooster tail of spray in its wake.



By now becoming more widely spaced, the Miuras began arriving at their first overnight stop, the Relais & Chateaux Hotel Ombremont on the Lake of Le Bourget. Glasses of Moët were gratefully downed by wet drivers as they arrived and gathered to share their experiences of the day's journey. An eight (!) course dinner followed in the hotel's glass fronted dining room (more foie gras) overlooking the spectacular lake as outside the cars sat quietly, their engines still pinging after the day's exertions, whilst the rainstorm began to ease.

To be continued...

Story: 'Beckerman'

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