

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## British International Motor Show 2008



**Last held in 2006, the UK's only motor show returns to ExCel, the riverside exhibition complex just a short drive from Canary Wharf. Despite large holes in the exhibitor list (no stands from BMW, Audi, Volvo, Rolls-Royce, Aston Martin, Porsche, Ferrari or Maserati), there was just enough to interest a Classic Driver reader wishing to while away half a day off from the office.**

The sad fact of the matter is that 'old school' motor shows are devilishly expensive now. From a premium manufacturer's perspective, targeted exposure to the 'right crowd' can be gained on a much more cost-effective basis via events such as the **Goodwood Festival of Speed**, or **Salon Privé**.

It's a different matter for the mainstream, of course, and **Vauxhall** used the London Show to launch its next-generation, mid-size **Insignia**, and **Alfa** the goggle-eyed **MiTo**.



Up in **Classic Driver** territory, the main sphere of operations was the **Ultimate Collection**, based in the **Platinum Suite**, high up on the third floor of ExCel with access available only to specially invited guests, or those joining a hospitality package. In a slightly night-club-ish, air-conditioned atmosphere, visitors could sample cars from **Ferrari (599 GTB, 612 Scaglietti and 430 Scuderia)**, **Maserati (GranTurismo and Quattroporte)**, **Aston Martin (DBS and 'Kilgour' V8 Vantage)** and many more from **Bugatti, Mercedes-Benz, Koenigsegg, Lamborghini and Invicta**.

You could also order a hand-made suit, hire a super-yacht and buy a **Bentley by Breitling** watch. As if you didn't have anything else to do. The idea – a good one – was that it enabled *genuine* purchasers to have a leisurely look at their car/watch/boat/suit without the crush of everyday humanity and what'll-she-do-mister catalogue collectors.



Downstairs with the heaving populace (well, journalists on Press Day, at any rate), the **Ultimate Collection** had another, more accessible, display of much the same material, including a noteworthy line-up of **Spykers**, such as the remarkable **Zagato**. So, little Johnny can still have a good look at a **Ferrari** or **Aston...** from a suitably respectful distance.



On the stands, **Bentley** gave the recently launched **Continental Flying Spur Speed** its global debut, the four-door enjoying stand-space with a **GT Speed** and an **Azure**. There was no room for a **Brooklands** but the Crewe manufacturer *just* found space for a Perspex display containing one of the big coupé's colossal CCM front discs, fitted to **Speed Bentleys**, too. I never tire of gazing at these 405mm Frisbees: the largest brakes of any production passenger car on sale today.

**Mercedes-Benz** showcased its **BlueTEC** version of the stylish **CLS**, as well as several top-level **AMGs**, while



those searching for ever-more M-B horsepower need only skip lightly across the carpet tiles to **BRABUS**. On the Bottrop manufacturer's stand was the recently launched **Bullit Black Arrow**, the matt-black 730bhp, **V12-engined C-Class**. I had a chance to talk with the company's owner, **Prof. Bodo Buschmann**, and it's likely we'll be driving this car - on de-restricted Autobahns - before the end of the year. I cannot wait.



**Lotus** made news by launching its much-heralded **Project Eagle**. It turns out that the new car is a mid-engined 2+2, named the **Evora**, powered by a Lotus-tuned 3.5-litre V6 engine producing 280PS, and weighing just 1350kg. A lot of these figures relate to the 'prototype' so, although the revealed car appeared to be a running production model, there may well be many changes before the sleek GT appears on a street near you.



Over at **Jaguar**, the company's **XK/R-S** took centre-stage, with the **XK60** – a limited-edition version of the 'standard' XK8 coupé and convertible – launched in celebration of six decades of XKs. You get around £5000 of optional extras at no extra cost on every non-blown XK; that can't be bad. Next door at **Land Rover** were the **LRX** concept and the most luxurious **Range Rover** yet: the **Autobiography** edition, with 'more leather than any **Range Rover** before'.



And yes, there *was* a trugful of 'green' cars, the most interesting of which being **The Lightning Car Company's Lightning**, a 100% electric GT sports car. It did look good and, were it not for the fact that I expended several Joulotherms opening the hermetically sealed press pack, I'd say it was one of the highlights of the show.

Finally, if you fancy a break outside, there's the **Heritage Enclosure and Parade**, a display of supercars



past from **AC, Ferrari, Maserati** *et al*/that drives in convoy four times round the block daily.

For further details, see [www.britishmotorshow.co.uk](http://www.britishmotorshow.co.uk).

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