

CLASSIC DRIVER

Targa Florio Historic Rally, 9-10 October 2009

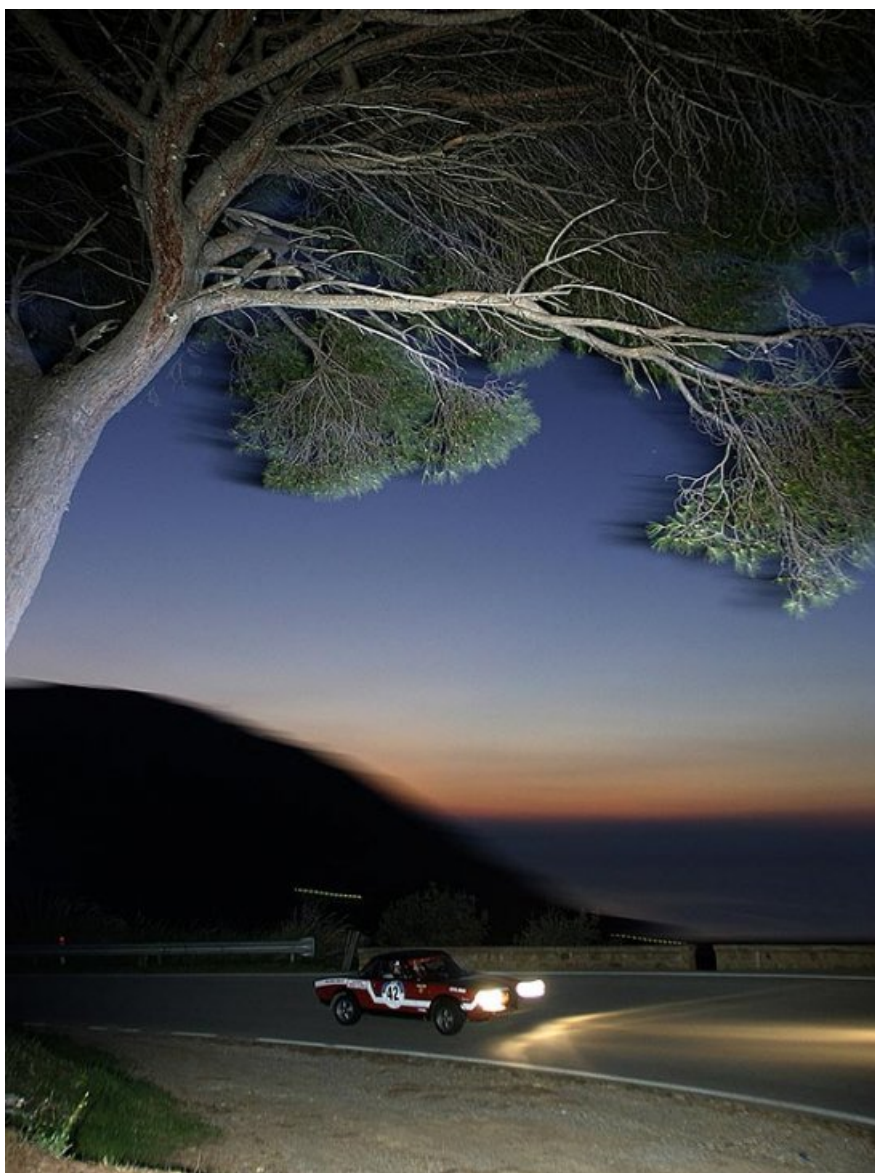


The Targa Florio. Mention that name to any motorsport enthusiast and the reply is likely to be, "Ah, those were the days. It's a pity there's nothing like it today..." and, of course, they're right. No longer are we allowed an out-and-out race over public roads - but the Targa's Piccolo Madonie circuit is still there, nestling in the Sicilian mountains just above the towns of Termini Imerese and Cefalu, a 44-mile twisting 'switchback' ride that waits to test man and machine.

Sadly, the grandstands and pits so strongly associated with the race have fallen into disrepair and lie slowly decaying just below the village of **Cerda**. We can, however, hope for a revival - the local authority has recently taken them under its wing.







And in any case, all is not lost. There are two events each year, both organised by the **Automobile Club Palermo**, that allow at least parts of this tricky circuit to be tackled at full racing speeds. May sees the running of the **Targa Florio** for contemporary rally cars and, in October, it's the turn of the historic machinery. For both events, long parts of the original circuit are closed to traffic, allowing timed sections where the cars can really stretch their legs.





This year’s historic event, part of the European and Italian championships, attracted an entry dominated by **Porsche 911s** (26 in all). Other runners included **Alfa GTAMs** and **GTVs**, **Opel Kadetts** and **Asconas** and a lone **Lancia Zagato**, plus **Mini** and **Fiat Abarth 696** – a huge variation in the 60 entries, reflecting the original **Targa Florio**.





Day one started at 3pm with local hero and Targa specialist **Nino Vaccarella** flagging off the first car from **Cefalu's town square**, the first section untimed but providing a magnificent spectacle as the cars threaded their way through the town's medieval streets. Shortly after came an 11km timed blast up the demanding **Gibilmanna** hillclimb. An untimed but monitored road section then took them back down the mountain and along the coast road, west towards **Termini Imerese**, before doubling back to do the whole route twice more, the last one in darkness.





At 8am the next day there was a hive of activity as service crews, stationed by the 'old pits', removed spotlights and tinkered with their charges before three laps ('giros') of the **Targa Florio** circuit, each including two timed sections. An early autumn sun shone on **Salvatore Riolo** and co-driver **Angelo Carlo Canova**, as they took their 'No1' Porsche 911RS to victory. They were quickest over all the stages bar one. As to be expected, the **Piccolo Madonie** circuit fought back... and some cars returned with evidence that their drivers had been lured into over-confidence by these magnificent hills. Just as they have done for the last 100 years.

For more details and full results, see www.targafloriohistoric.com.







Text & photos: [Roger Dixon \(www.rogerdixonphotography.com\)](http://www.rogerdixonphotography.com)

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