

CLASSIC DRIVER

Geneva International Motor Show 2010 – Review



Motor industry bigwigs on parade at Geneva repeatedly told us that this is THE show to be at, not least because ‘neutral’ Switzerland means no single nation can dominate the automotive flavour. Germans, French, Italians, British... all get an equal chance to display their most ingenious, most creative, most desirable wares.

So where do we start? Roughly alphabetically, perhaps, with **Aston Martin’s new Rapide** causing a stir among the pundits, all keen to try the rear seats for size. The general consensus: size-wise, the **Porsche Panamera** offers a more practical solution for four-up travelling – but there’s no doubt that the Rapide wins hands-down on style. Also attracting attention was the limited-edition, purple-black DBS Volante personally specced by **Ulrich Bez** – and hence known as **UB2010**; while feelings are as ever mixed when it comes to the [little Cygnet city car](#), at last unveiled in the metal. There are no mixed feelings in the Classic Driver office, however: and we’ve written a separate story to prove it.





Moving through the alphabet we reach **Audi**, whose new wares were focused on low-emissions technology. The electric drive e-tron versions of its cars are fast becoming an entire model range, with Geneva seeing the **A1 e-tron** city car – or, as Audi would have us call it, '**Mega City Vehicle (MCV)**'. Meanwhile, the **A8 hybrid** concept on show boasted two propulsion units – a 2.0 TFSI and an electric motor, developing 245PS in total.



B is for **Bentley**, **BMW** and **Bugatti**. **Bentley** was another premium marque paying much heed to alternative fuels, announcing that its **FlexFuel** technology (whereby petrol and E85 bioethanol can be used in any proportions, from a single tank) has been extended right across the **2011 Continental range**. That includes the [new Supersports Convertible](#) with its remarkable W12 6-litre engine, displayed on the **Bentley** stand alongside the all-new **Mulsanne**. What a joy that despite the necessary attention to environmental issues, there is still room for such a glorious flagship of unadulterated luxury and performance. The world would be a poorer place without it; and, indeed, without the remarkable shooting brake, designed by **Carrozzeria Touring Superleggera** on a **Continental GTC** chassis, which we'll be covering in more detail next week.



The **BMW** stand at **Geneva** gave many the opportunity to see the new, sixth-generation **5 Series** up close for the first time; but the **Bugatti** stand surprised us. While visitors could ogle several examples of the **Veyron**, including an ‘expanded’ chassis revealing the awe-inspiring strength of the gearbox, there were no examples of the four-door **Bugatti 16 C Galibier** concept – although it had been on show at a private event in **Geneva** the night before; and it’s one of those cars that looks far, far more impressive in the flesh than in pictures. “We don’t want to put it on general show until we know whether we’re going to produce it or not,” was Bugatti’s answer to our question.



Accelerating on through the alphabet, we backed off to admire the new ‘anti-retro’ **Citroen DS3** – a rival for the **MINI** but with typically French charm (that will seal the deal for you, one way or the other); and then it was flat-out to the **Ferrari** stand, where even the **458 Italia** had to compete for attention with the new **Ferrari 599 hybrid** in matt green (matt satin paint was definitely a theme for **Geneva 2010** – it seems that

'matt is the new metallic'). We'll be looking at this hybrid technology in a separate feature – along with one of the few, true surprises of the show... **Porsche's mid-engined 918 Spyder** with plug-in hybrid technology. This concept sports car joined the [911 GT3 R Hybrid race car](#) and **Cayenne S Hybrid** on the **Porsche** stand; as well as, of course, the more traditionally engined new-generation [Cayenne we covered recently](#) in **Classic Driver**.



Scrabbling back up the alphabet after that slight interruption, we reach **Jaguar**... and the unveiling of its latest evolution of the **supercharged XKR coupé**. This is the fastest XK ever, now that the electronically limited top speed has gone up from 155mph to 174mph, and it looked good alongside the luxurious, highly acclaimed **new XJ** that we'll be driving next week. Next came **Lamborghini**, which had an even lighter, even more powerful new version of its 'already lean' **Gallardo LP 560-4**. This latest model – the **LP 570-4 Superleggera** – has lost 70kg and, with its 570PS, can rocket from 0-62mph in 3.4 seconds.



On the home straight, we lift off for the **Mercedes** stand, where the new **E-Class Cabriolet** sat next to the **F 800 Style concept** – a new four-door coupé with (for the concept only) sliding rear doors: see our separate news story. And still on ‘**M**’, we agree that the new **MINI Countryman** looks better in real life than it does in the promotional videos playing non-stop in the background. The familiar **MINI** styling is still there, but in a much chunkier form to suit the crossover segment.



As we cross the finish line, there's just room to mention two marques at opposite ends of the spectrum: **Rolls-Royce**, where the bodywork of the **Ghost** demonstrated the true meaning of perfect paint. And finally **Smart** – the launch pad of so many city-car ideals that once seemed bizarre, but are now commonplace. It was on the **Smart** stand that we found **Rolf Sachs**, who has taken the unpretentious little city car and applied his design philosophy to “give it a soul”. [Click here](#) to read our interview with him...

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