

CLASSIC DRIVER

Paris Rétromobile 2012: Review

Lead

Once again, Rétromobile was a mixture of glossy manufacturer stands with seldom-seen, previously hidden-way exhibits, coupled with a quality trade presence and more automobilia than you can shake a starting-handle at.

Mercedes, BMW, Porsche, Citroën, Peugeot and Renault excelled themselves with a selection of immaculate cars from their historic departments. At Mercedes, the theme was 'Le Mans', with a pre-War SSK, a wonderfully 1950s early 300SL racing car complete with wing, and the very last Mercedes to win the 24 Hours, the Sauber Mercedes C9.

Over at BMW, a BMW 2002 Turbo shared stand-space with a 1960s F2 car and several enduro motorcycles, while Renault showed a multi-coloured array of rallying Alpine A110s and R5s. The presence of two road versions, one pale blue and one lime green, showed that there is more to life than regulation wide-wheeled, French-blue-with-Elf-stickers faux rally machinery.

They looked stunning – a highlight of the show.





Citroën was celebrating some of the avant-garde models that have wowed and infuriated in equal measure over the years. I liked the psychedelic GS, an example of 'Citroën et L'Art'.

Porsche, on the other hand, lacking a suitably 'flower power' 917 *Langheck*, chose sober grey (a delightful 356 coupé) and metallic blue (a chrome bumper 911) as balance to an all-new, 991-series 911 that also featured on the Porsche Classic stand.

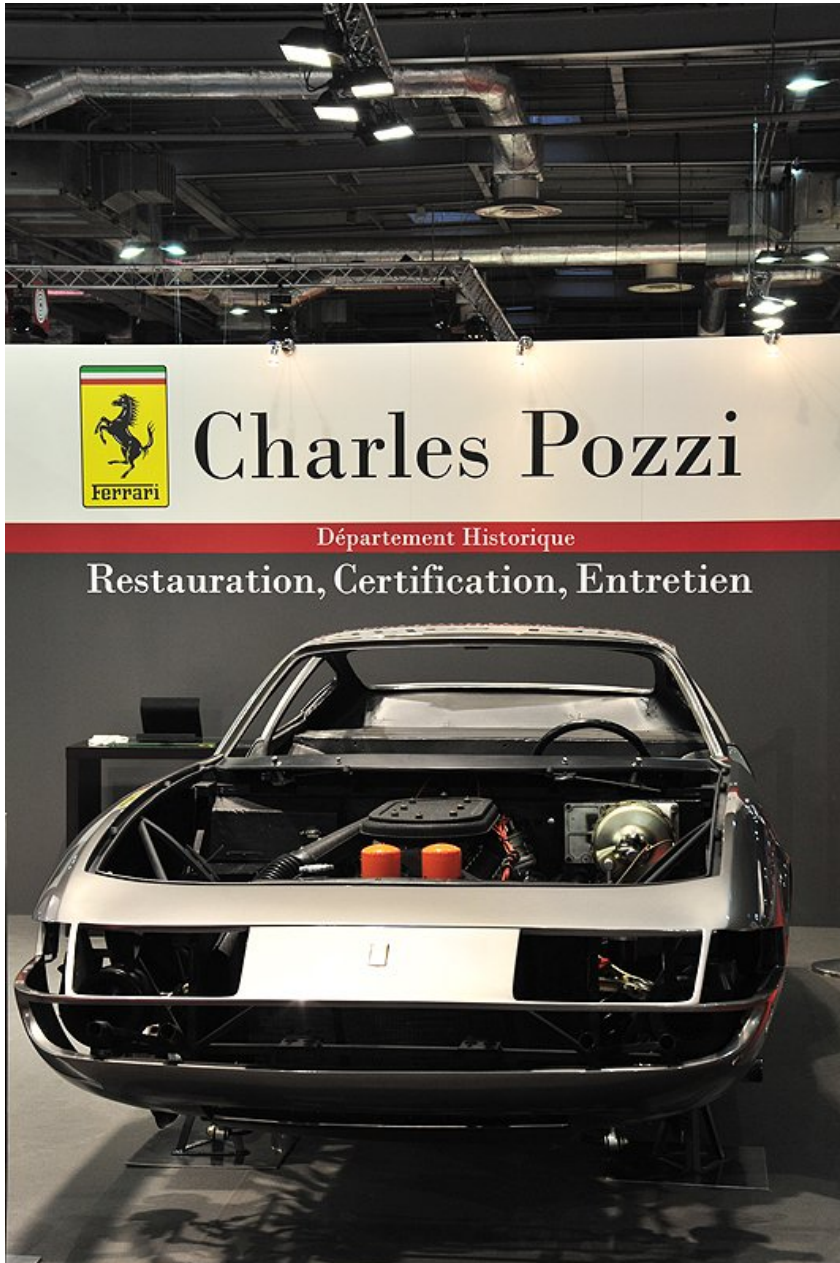


Elsewhere, the Mullin Collection dominated one end of Pavilion 3, with the metallic blue, ex-Williamson

Collection 1936 Bugatti Type 57SC Atlantic a stunning centrepiece amongst typically 'Pebble Beach', extravagantly styled cars from the 30s and 40s.

Greeting visitors on arrival were two original Ferrari 250 GTOs, a foretaste of this summer's activities when the model's 50th anniversary will be celebrated in style. Across the aisle on the Peter Auto stand was a Porsche 917 that will be taking to the track at this summer's Le Mans Classic, joined, one hopes, by a brace of 250 GTOs. In 1962, Noblet/Guichet finished second overall in a GTO, just five laps behind the winning Ferrari prototype.

And then drove the car back to Paris for dinner on Sunday night. Class, sheer class.





And if the Le Mans Classic, or any one of a raft of other classic events takes your fancy, the trade stands at Rétromobile were the place to be. London mews dealer [Fiskens](#) employed French GP driver Olivier Panis to help Gregor Fiskens unveil three sensational cars, all with French connections. The ex-Ford France GT40 and 1980 Grand Prix-winning Ligier JS11/15 were joined by a titan of the pioneering age of motoring, the 1908 Panhard-Levassor, a veteran of the 1908 French Grand Prix at Dieppe.



Hall & Hall's stand once again wowed spectators with another display of blue-chip racing cars. For 2012, Bill

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Harding and the Hall & Hall team had brought along a stellar collection of cars that included the first 'Ecclestone' Brabham F1 car from 1972 and the 1970 De Tomaso-backed Williams driven by Piers Courage. With their pre-1973 construction, that's this year's Monaco Historics entries sorted out.

And for the Le Mans Classic? Well, Hall & Hall was showing the last-ever factory-built Porsche 962, a Jaguar D-type and a Mirage M3 BRM Coupé.





With other top-level dealers such as Lukas Hüni, [Marreyt Classics](#) and Klaus Werner on hand, the standard of cars was astonishing.

And of course there were books, models, piles of headlamps, horns and headlining. Plus auction action on-site (Artcurial) and a little way away (Bonhams).

In other words, a typical Rétromobile scene. And long may it continue.

Photos: Classic Driver

Gallery

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