

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Paris Best of Show 2012](#)

Lead

Creative show, performance fair, barometer: the Paris Motor Show has many faces, and even more stars. We've had a look around the event, and now reveal our personal favourites.

Zuffenhausen's music of the future: Porsche Panamera Sport Turismo





The 911 Carrera 4 was expected to debut in Paris, but no-one expected it to be joined by a new Panamera concept in the vein of a shooting brake. Although it's still officially in concept stage, in all likelihood it will make production – meaning that the Ferrari FF will now face stiff competition in an ever-expanding niche. Even more interesting is the design language that the Sport Turismo will pass on to the next-generation Panamera family. The well-balanced proportions, intricate headlights and slender rear lights really add to the appeal of a car whose previous incarnation seemed somewhat ungainly; indeed the details will also feature beyond the Panamera series, and be absorbed into Porsche's design DNA as a whole. Further contributing to the visual drama were the hints of neon green applied to the insignia and brake calipers to indicate the car's hybrid disposition – perhaps the Porsche designers have relaxed a little and attended an Electro party or two in Berlin?

Back to the start: Bentley Continental GT3





Brian Gush must be a happy man; while Bentley designers are obliged to create elegant and sophisticated road cars for a discerning clientele, the Director of Chassis, Powertrain and Motorsport has been afforded a certain degree of freedom. A freedom to, among other things, apply a rear wing to the Continental so outrageous that you would swear the hue of the nearby P1 darkened from McLaren Orange to Envy Red, resenting its undoubted aerodynamic prowess. The GT3 racer will spearhead Crewe's re-entry into motorsport, debuting in its final form next year with the intentions of adding a new chapter to the rich competition bloodline of the marque. While that return is still a year away, seeing a Bentley with bright orange tow-hooks and side-exit exhausts brings a smile to the face for now. Good stuff!

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McLaren P1: Changing the game (again)





It seems like we've been waiting for an eternity to see the successor to the McLaren F1 – and the day has finally arrived. An ultra-organic design, a 700bhp output with supplemental KERS input, and a complex active aerodynamic system emulate the company's Formula 1 activities – although we'll have to wait until Geneva next spring to see the finalised production version. There it'll meet the Ferrari Enzo successor in what promises to be one of the greatest automotive showdowns in history, but for now that should give us just enough time to understand exactly how the numerous intakes and outlets work...

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The dream of flying: Rolls-Royce Phantom Aviator collection





In addition to the Art Deco models, for us the Rolls-Royce Phantom Coupé from the Aviator Collection is a highlight of the show - even if the special edition already appeared in Pebble Beach. The combination of a silk grey matt finish and an interior with mahogany and tobacco leather is one of the most elegant compositions that we've seen from Rolls-Royce in the past years. Few visitors will notice the orange-needed clocks by flight instrument specialist Thommen - a reference to the aviation roots of the company.

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British double victory: Jaguar F-Type & Range Rover





After the Olympic successes, a mere two victories may seem a little dreary - but this would be the last word you could use to describe the F-type or Range Rover. Both are truly contemporary, using subtle nods to their iconic forefathers rather than going down the all-out retro warpath, a practice which ironically seems dated. Both models couldn't be further in character from each other - one a colossal cruiser, the other an agile athlete - but each is crucial to its manufacturer's future. Having scrutinised both at their respective launch events, they're on our 'road map' of driving reports over the coming months - can they live up to the promises of dynamic excellence? We'll have to wait and see. For now, though, we happily gaze over the stunning three-door Range Rover Classic on the stand, and admire how much of its character has been absorbed by the fourth incarnation.

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Corrupted by the Raging Bull: Lamborghini Gallardo LP 560-4





We'll be honest, the Lamborghini Gallardo LP 560-4 shouldn't really be on this list; too often we've discussed the endless special editions throughout the car's decade of existence. But the Parma ham and Parmigiano buffet at the Lamborghini booth was so alluring – as was the trio of Italian showgirls stealing any thunder the Gallardo had left – that we're only too happy to focus on the merits of the facelift. New front and rear bumpers refresh the *R-ageing Bull*, although power remains the same at 560HP.

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Paris blues: The future is *not* orange





Red, white, brown – the popular show colours of recent years have now been joined by another: an azure shade of blue. Naturally, there are slight differences between applications. A Rolls-Royce Ghost from the Art Deco series gets the treatment up to its shoulder line, whereas the 911 Carrera 4 and Continental GT Speed display full coats of the mesmerising colour.

Attack of the Christmas baubles: Electric blue





Is it Christmas already? Not quite, though you might think otherwise to see the almost ubiquitous use of shiny foil colours in Paris. McLaren has clothed its entire range, including the new P1, in reflective orange, while Mercedes-AMG's new SLS Coupé Electric Drive stands out in searing, neon blue. Perhaps this helps to communicate the facts: 740HP, 1,000Nm and a price tag of more than 400,000 euros. Whether the show car's colour will be seen on the road... that's another thing entirely.





The French have used their 'home game' to show off their nation's automotive creativity to the full: Peugeot is displaying its supercar concept, the Onyx, with the wings and doors in pure copper sheet. And while we've already seen the Numéro 9 concept car from Citroën, pointing to the future of the French marque's DS line, it's dramatic to see it in the metal. Too bad the French concept studies tend to stay in the realm of the imagination, rather than making it onto the roads.

The right space filler: luggage set for the Audi S7





Real money is earned not by the product itself, but through the options list – or at least this is the case in the upper echelons of luxury automobiles. A popular addition to a truly premium car is a set of fitted luggage. Among the countless examples offered, we were particularly impressed by the light brown, Poltrona Frau leather of the Audi S7 luggage set.

Gallery

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