

CLASSIC DRIVER

Meet your heroes: The icons of the Gulf Collection

Lead

In the late 60s, blurred flashes of orange and powder blue captivated many a youngster: the unmistakeable Gulf cars were making history. Decades later, one of those schoolboys was able to fulfil his childhood dreams to the fullest extent...

"The life-sized version seemed like an apt place to start..."

When the German entrepreneur in question found himself with the means to complete his wish, there was no toe-dipping. He made an enquiry to Adrian Hamilton (of Classic Driver dealer Duncan Hamilton & Co) about a significant Gulf-liveried Ford GT40 the dealership was offering. He bought it and, around two years later, it had been joined by more than 20 stablemates, hand-picked (and subsequently looked after) by Hamilton on the entrepreneur's behalf.

Classic Driver was able to look over the fluorescent fleet, and we chose our favourites – not an easy task, given the eminence of each one.

Ford GT40 - Where the dream began



They say never meet your heroes; but they didn't say anything about not owning one. Our German collector vividly remembers the model GT40 that took pride of place in his bedroom as a youngster, and the life-sized version seemed like an apt place to start when circumstances allowed. This particular car (chassis 1084) took 4th place in the 1968 Spa 1,000km.

Porsche 917K - Le Mans legend



Many members of the ROFGO collection, as it's known, competed at Le Mans (the collection also contains a pair of Mirages and a Kremer), but the 917K was a soldier in one of the greatest battles. With Richard Attwood and Herbert Müller taking turns to man the turrets, it was only narrowly beaten at the 1971 Le Mans 24 Hours by the equally famous Martini-liveried 917 K.

McLaren F1 - Long in tooth and tail



Despite its now-legendary competition prowess, the F1 was, of course, originally built as a road car. It took a gentleman racer – Englishman Ray Bellm – to persuade McLaren to serve up a 'GTR' racing version; he then orchestrated a deal with Gulf to reignite the previously fruitful partnership (the ROFGO collection includes 7 of these fruits).

Bellm won the GT title in 1996; in 1997, he upgraded to this revised 'longtail' F1 GTR to fend off the challenge of the Works CLK GTRs and 911 GT1s from Stuttgart.

Aston Martin DBR9 - It could at least have been washed...



It might seem oddly grubby next to its gleaming siblings, but that's not any old dirt. One of the pair of DBR9s in the ROFGO collection, it proudly wears the filth gathered at Le Mans – where it won both the 2007 and 2008 GT1 classes, reminding us of its namesake DBR1's legendary 1959 outright win.

What's next...?

With most significant Gulfs currently in happy homes, there doesn't appear to be much scope to expand the collection at the moment: it already even includes a period Mercedes transporter (one of three built) which remains in the appropriate livery. The next project is to construct a purpose-built home for the group – Gulf-themed, of course.

Perhaps our dedicated German also has fond memories of a die-cast Martini Porsche...?

Photos: Jan Baedeker

Gallery

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