
Follow a judge at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance 2015

18 August 2015 | Matt Stone

As I played with the calendar functions on my phone, then ran the sums, it struck me as amazing that this was my 34th Monterey Car Week. The lapel pin marked my 20th year as a judge, and this time around I was a Chief Classic Judge, overseeing three classes of post-War sports and racing cars.

Embracing evidence of use



Pebble Beach from the inside is, and isn't, what you'd think. In my honest opinion, it's the best and most significant field of 200 great classic cars of all stripe to be found at any time, on any single day, anywhere in the world. It is not, or at least is no longer, a beauty contest purely for trailer queens. In fact, entrants are rewarded for their participation in the optional 80-mile Tour d'Elegance that takes place the Thursday before Concours Sunday. Our chief judge emphasises that we judge cars, not owners, and that over-restoration is neither rewarded nor encouraged. Evidence of use, enjoyment and maintenance are appreciated, and the old rumour about getting points knocked off for blades of grass stuck in tyre treads is simply not true.

Heavyweight judges



Our team of more than 100 judges is a knowledgeable, international group of collectors, transportation designers, restorers, racers, authors, historians and otherwise in-the-know types. In other words, they really know their stuff and work hard to judge fairly and even-handedly, to achieve the best and proper result. Which happens far more often than not. Nowadays, the show also wholeheartedly embraces preservation and survivor/unrestored machines with their stories, and often with their hard-earned patina intact.

The big show goes big



Pebble bristled with many anniversary recognitions and special categories this year, including a special roster of du Pont automobiles, those fashioned by Touring de Milan, Pope automobiles and the many high-points from the history of Lincoln and Continental. One particularly popular special class this year comprised Mercury customs – lead sleds of the 1950s, custom style by gents such as the Barris Brothers, Dean Jeffries, and other name-brand custom builders of the period. Pebble goes all out for Ferraris about every 10 years, and 2015 was one of them. Great road and racing Ferraris from every era dazzled the field with spectacular coachwork and singing V12 engines.

Concours-worthy... Mustangs?





Few thought they would ever see Mustangs on the vaunted greens of Pebble Beach, but this year a category of early and prototype Shelby GT350s put eight of Carroll's great Mustang 'sport cars' on the turf. Sir Jackie Stewart strolled the field, holding court and the rapt attention of the many show-goers appreciative of the three-time F1 World Champion's viewpoint and impressive career. Sir Stirling Moss, who has long served as an Honorary Judge, also strolled, chatted, and perused the field.

A wrap for another year



After all the results had been tabbed, four final nominees gathered at the foot of Pebble's famous presentation ramp: three pre-War 'heavy classics' and an oddly wonderful-looking Abarth sports coupé. When the herald trumpets blared and the confetti and fireworks were launched, an absolutely commanding and uber-elegant 1924 Isotta Fraschini Tipo 8A bodied by Worblaufen took home the heavy crystal as 2015's Best of Show winner. The triple black and heavily chromed stunner is the pride and joy of the Jim Patterson Collection, coming to Pebble Beach from Louisville, Kentucky, USA.

Some consider this rare and perfectly proportioned droptop to be among Pebble's best-ever overall winners.

Special classes and commemorations for 2016 are pending and will be announced soon. And with luck, I'll be back to judge for my lucky 21st time.

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