

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Suit up and step aboard the Suixtil time machine

### Lead

The eagle-eyed among you will have spotted the distinctive Suixtil logo at historic motorsport events across the world, be it stitched onto a driver's shirt, or adorning the bodywork of a priceless classic. This is the story of the clothing brand inherently linked to the golden era of motorsport...

Founded in Argentina in the early 1930s, Suixtil capitalised on the immense popularity of motorsport and quickly became *the* clothing brand for racing drivers. The mastermind was Salomon Rudman, a Russian immigrant who built the business into a great success, driven by his passions, most prominent of which was motorsport. Suffice to say, he had a jolly good time along the way.

### The first professional racing gear



When the Automóvil Club Argentino established the national racing team in 1948 to contest the Formula One and Two Championships in Europe, Suixtil became the sponsor, supplying the alliance with quality racing apparel. The clothing in question was to be the first specifically designed for racing drivers, made from heat-alleviating fabrics and incorporating such features as deep pockets, to store essentials for Grand Prix endurance races, and high, elasticated waistbands to remove the need for a belt.

### Seal of approval



Fangio, Moss, Herrmann, Gendebien, González, Trintignant: just a few of the famous – and extremely successful – drivers who proudly wore the Suixtil logo, demonstrating the brand's prominence and popularity in the world of motoring racing in the '50s and '60s. It became the 'must-have' at the time for drivers across the world and, indeed, a quick glance through any historical tome on the subject demonstrates the omnipresence of the brand.

### Revival



Suixtil was closed in 1967, following the death of its founder, Rudman, and remained so until 2008, when Frenchman Vincent Metais re-launched the brand as a commercial venture selling quality and stylish menswear, centred on an authentic ‘Heritage’ line that takes direct inspiration from those Suixtil garments of the past.

“To us it seemed such a natural thing to do,” he told Classic Driver. “It’s a story that deserves to be told, because as with most stories from that time, it’s one of courage, faith and trials. I keep wondering what compelled these guys to race and I think the simplest explanation is that they valued the present, and not the future. They lived in the instant, all the time, and I love that philosophy. That spirit is still very much alive, but it’s been bridled.”

### A spirit captured



Metais has bolstered the appeal of the revived Suixtil by supporting the fiercely popular world of historic motorsport, and you’ll find the logo featured at almost every event on the calendar, even if it’s simply a well-placed sticker. “It’s funny because the cars are emblematic of the spirit we’re trying to capture, and it really started by chance. A bunch of my friends asked if we had decals, because they thought it would help with exposure. So we made some for them and now we’ve started shipping them with every order. It’s amazing the response we’ve had.”

### More than just clothing



As before, Suixtil is about far more than just clothing. “It’s connected to an audience of people who are fascinated by the same thing we are,” says Metais. “The clothing is interesting, of course, but to me it’s just a vehicle – just a medium of that same passion we all share for that era of motorsport.” Metais is incredibly knowledgeable on the subject, and his enthusiasm and ambition is infectious. “We didn’t have to reinvent the wheel – it was there, we had Suixtil, and at the time it was universal. Motor racing itself was just an extension of the vitality that people had after the Second World War, and it was such a great time.”

# The sky's the limit



Given the burgeoning interest in classic cars and historic motorsport, we'd say the future looks bright for Suixtil. "Ultimately, I'd like to do so much more," concluded Metais, "but I'm grounded in reality. I think people like the fact that it's not fickle, not ever-changing – it's an era, and it's authentic." We wish him the best of luck...

*Photos: Suixtil, Tony Baker/Classic & Sports Car, Bernhard Völker, Vercelli Archives, Tom Burnside © santens.co, IMRRC at Watkins Glen, BARC Boys, Gene Bussian, CORSA Research, Archives Maurice Louche, Rémi Dargegen courtesy of RM Sotheby's, Classic Garage Marc Vogers, Peter Singhof.*

## Gallery

























