

CLASSIC DRIVER



Lancia or Facel Vega – Finding the ultimate Gentleman’s GT

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If you were looking for a 1960s Grand Touring car, the obvious choices include the Jaguar E-type and Ferrari 275 GTB. But what if your taste is a little more discerning, and you’d like something a touch left field? Either of this pair – a Lancia Flaminia or a Facel Vega – could well fit the bill...

Grand Touring. In the 1960s, it meant jovial road trips across Europe, culminating on the Côte d’Azur, where you could live *la dolce vita* brushing shoulders with the Jet Set. Choosing a car for such travels was no mean feat – sure, a Ferrari or an Aston Martin possessed all the right ingredients, but if you *really* wanted to make a statement, you couldn’t go far wrong with a Lancia Flaminia or Facel Vega. And the same can be said today.

True blue



This fabulous – and rather blue – duo is currently for sale at [Classic Driver dealer Pendine Historic Cars](#), whose showroom at [Bicester Heritage in Oxfordshire](#) is housed inside the former RAF bomber station’s blast house. The cars in question are a 1963 Facel Vega Facel II, one of just 27 right-hand-drive examples built, and one of the finest 1965 Lancia Flaminia 3C GTLs on the market.

Lancia’s shorter, more powerful Flaminia GTL was cloaked in a petite and very pretty alloy body, devoid of any unnecessary design ‘clutter’. At first glance you’d be forgiven for thinking it was a convertible fitted with a hardtop, but no. Perhaps the only feature that doesn’t quite agree with the rest of the car is the arrangement of four narrow headlights, though, of course, they were in vogue at the time – think [Ferrari 330GT](#) and [Bentley S3 Continental](#). “It’s a stylish equivalent to a 2+2 Jaguar E-type,” says James Mitchell, Pendine’s founder. This car is from 1965, the last model year, and was extensively restored in 2010, evident in the immaculate paintwork and near-perfect shut lines.

All singing, all dancing



The interior follows suit, and is a typically sumptuous place to sit. With wide soft leather chairs to drop into, fantastic all-round visibility and a near-vertical three-spoke steering wheel allowing a clear view of the two either-side gauges, the driving experience is remarkably effortless. The steering and gearshift are nimble and responsive, and the car is docile and light on its feet - “like a ballet dancer” as Mitchell comments. Its triple-carburetted 140bhp V6, however, is more than leggy enough for the sort of driving for which it was designed. Road tests from the period suggest an ‘easy’ 100mph cruise, and we don’t doubt it. That’ll be light work made of the sprint between Cannes and Cap Ferrat, then.

Preserve of the Jet Set





In comparison to the daintiness and subtle beauty of the Lancia, the Facel Vega is a completely different animal. Its angular body is vast, long and low, taking clear inspiration from the then-ongoing Jet Age. A tall, airy glasshouse not only lets four adults sit comfortably, but also allows sunlight to pour into the spacious interior, itself a model in luxury. The Jet Age theme continues inside, with thruster-like levers.

It's flamboyant, glamorous and brazen, particularly in this (original) shade of 'Iridescent Facel Blue'. "It just oozes style," says Mitchell. "I would call it the French equivalent of the Bristol, but so much more elegant." It's not hard to see why the likes of Pablo Picasso, Frank Sinatra and Princess Grace of Monaco were taken with the Facel Vega.

Intelligent choices



Beauty is contrasted with brute force when it comes to the performance, and with a Chrysler V8 developing 355HP, you'll never be left wanting more power. "It'll leave almost anything else from the period behind," says Mitchell. Plus you get undertones of that characteristic American V8 burble.

"These two Grand Touring cars are not obvious choices, but they're intelligent ones," summarises Mitchell. "The Lancia is among the last of Touring's Superleggera bodies that you can buy for under £100,000. That represents such good value for money, especially considering how good it looks. The Facel Vega is rarer and arguably better-looking than an Aston Martin DB5, yet just a third of the price." So you still want that Ferrari or Aston Martin? We're not so sure we can say the same. Tough

choice, gentlemen.

Photos by Amy Shore for Classic Driver © 2016

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