

CLASSIC DRIVER

Five questions to Wilhelm Schmid, CEO of A. Lange & Söhne

Lead

At this year's Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este, A. Lange & Söhne's CEO Wilhelm Schmid was charged with handing over a unique timepiece to the lucky winner of the 'Best in Show' award. We caught up with him beside the glimmering shore of Lake Como, ahead of his moment in the spotlight...



What is your earliest memory of the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este?

The first time I heard about the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este was as a BMW employee around ten years ago, before I became the CEO of A. Lange & Söhne. It was spectacular. You have these magic moments that are so difficult to define, but I think the setting, the weather, the food and the cars – in other words *la dolce vita* – make it a perfect event for A. Lange & Söhne. Straight after our first trip to Villa d'Este, we decided to negotiate with BMW about becoming a partner. Thankfully the company accepted, and we're now in our fifth year.

What feedback do you receive from your guests here on Lake Como?

Our guests are usually very sophisticated, and there isn't a lot they cannot buy. They have the funds, the taste and the knowledge. After Villa d'Este, however, they usually have a completely different idea of perfection than they had before. Since they don't know each other before coming here they arrive as strangers. With all impressions gathered, they leave as friends.



If you could choose two cars to take home, which would they be?

I'm a big fan of two-seater roadsters. I think the red Jaguar C-type is a phenomenal looking car, but I also like the Maserati 200 Si. There is also a delectable little white Siata, but it is so beautiful I could probably never bring myself to drive it.

What is the connection between vintage cars and mechanical watches?

They say the difference between a man and a boy is the size and price of their toy, be it a car or a watch. Mechanical things attract men – classic cars and watches are a good combination because there are hardly any electronics present, if at all. The innovative A. Lange & Söhne Zeitwerk, for example, would work brilliantly with a Lancia Stratos, or maybe even a Lamborghini Countach – cars that, at the time, were completely out of this world, yet retained the classic six- or twelve-cylinder design principles.



Can you tell us about what makes the Best in Show winner's A. Lange & Söhne so special?

Many of these people have won trophies before, but what can you do with a trophy? It sits in your cabinet collecting dust. We thought why not have a trophy you could wear? We don't usually produce any individual watches, so when we built this unique piece it was quite a statement. Travelling and cars go hand in hand with time zones, so the Lange 1 Time Zone was the logical choice of watch for our guests here at Villa d'Este. On our [special 'Como Edition' Time Zone](#), CET is not represented by Paris or Berlin like normal, but rather Como, and the caseback is hand-engraved with the historic competition's coat of arms. I know that some of the previous winners are here this weekend, and they wear their watches with pride.

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2016

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