

CLASSIC DRIVER

Tantalising treasures uncovered at Techno Classica Essen 2017

Lead

Although some prices may have cooled, the enthusiasm for classics is still hot. One of the newer buzz words being uttered through the dense crowds of the Essen halls is "living past", with many of tomorrow's collectors looking for future stars...

"Very, very beautiful", exclaimed three Chinese students, who were attending Techno Classica for the very first time. They all agreed that once they are successful in their careers, they will immediately buy a nice old car from Europe. Over 2,500 cars, from more than 1,250 exhibitors, were displayed at the fair, with a growing presence from the big manufacturers, which are beginning to recognise the importance of cultivating tradition within their business models.



Last year, about 40 percent of the cars on display were sold. This is a good omen for the still young company of Girardo & Co., which, at its Techno Classica premiere, had a matching-numbers 1955 Lancia Aurelia B245 Spider America and Ralph Lauren's 1996 Porsche 993 GT 'Strassenversion' on its stand. "We were very pleased with Rétromobile, but you can immediately feel the seriousness of prospective buyers here", says Max Girardo. Markus Fograscher from HK-Engineering is also in agreement with this. Throughout the show, the Mercedes-Benz specialist had seen growing interest in the 300's smaller sibling, the 190 SL. "Our customers work a lot and they want to spend the little free time they have enjoying their classic without any worries." Although life is becoming increasingly digitised, Fograscher believes that personal contact is irreplaceable and the best way to provide the quality of service customers demand.

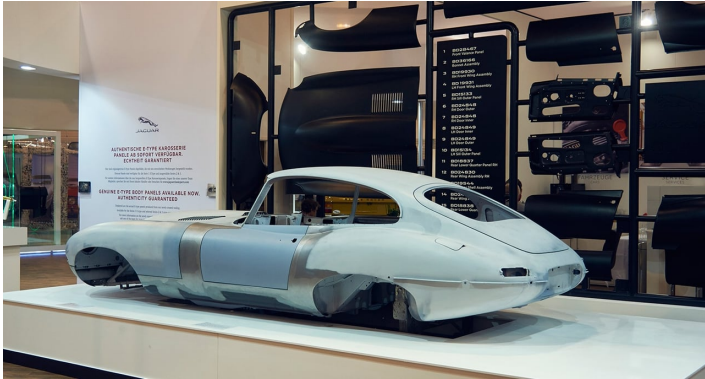
When participating in a trade fair, one of the most important rules is to have a simple, clean stand, which doesn't distract from the vehicles you're presenting — a technique Jan B. Lühn has mastered. Among the motorsport heroes he had gathered was a very rare ex-Le Mans 1981 Porsche 924 GTR, which a collector has recently decided to part with. No less impressive was the cream Audi Sport Quattro from the eighties, with its classic black and olive leather interior, which had a price tag of almost half a million euros.



If looking for the newest trends, just take a quick glimpse around the halls of Essen. From Thiesen's beautifully designed 1968 Frua Maserati Mistral 4000 Coupé to Mechatronik's modern 2009 Mercedes-Benz SLR "Stirling Moss", interests are diverse. Many dealers are responding to the growing demand for such nineties classics as the BMW M5 and Porsche 911, with many stands looking more like used car lots on the outskirts of town. Bargain hunters with empty shopping bags have likely experienced the ups and downs of finding a deal. There are always discoveries to be made, such as DeLeon Classic Cars's matching-numbers Lancia Fulvia 1600 HF Fanalone Corse, of which only 200 were built, listed at nearly 60,000 euros or perhaps the rather optimistically priced Datsun 240 Z of a Belgian dealer for 43,000 euros, with an additional handwritten claim of "no rust." But if you do find a car that arouses interest, like the charming silver Glas coupé in one of the free-range areas, then you must act quickly as availability can change rapidly.



The biggest appeal of Techno Classica is the juxtaposition of great automotive tradition with newly restored examples. The price of most of these restorations are usually only revealed upon request, but to some collectors, it's a small investment with often greater returns in the end. The big manufacturers have long discovered that their classics not only illustrate the DNA of their brand, like the anniversary of the Opel and Volvo, but can also form an entire separate business model, as with Ferrari and their Classiche certification program. Lamborghini's new Polo Storico's stand displayed a breathtaking ex-factory 1971 Miura P400 SV, as well as the body of their next project, a 1976 Countach LP400. In the VW hall, Porsche celebrated the 40th anniversary of the 928, and while Rolls-Royce put the spotlight on the Wraith, Bentley and Bugatti highlighted their history with old and new models displayed side by side.



In contrast to Aston Martin, which helps its customers search for specific models and their subsequent restorations, Jaguar is taking an innovative and individual path with the 'Reborn' programme. The very first E-type Reborn, a Series 1 fixed head coupé from 1962, was shown at Techno Classica. Initially limited to 10 examples and restored to original specification in a new workshop in Coventry, the E-type Reborn is available at a starting price of 333,000 euros. For those without the means to purchase an entire Reborn, there was a brilliant selection of E-type bonnet wall decorations.

Essen wasn't just great for prospective car buyers — scale models of every size and an abundance of spare parts and memorabilia from every era will have kept visitors content. And for those forward-thinking individuals, this year's Goodwood Revival outfit could have been obtained from the numerous purveyors of vintage clothing.

Photos: Frederik Dulay for Classic Driver © 2017

Gallery

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