

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Diving into the Belgian classic car scene at the Zoute Grand Prix](#)

Lead

While Belgian car collectors may be discreet and modest, the cars they own certainly aren't. And if the Zoute Grand Prix was just a glimpse into what can be found in the garages around Belgium, we'll be back again soon — with extra film and a newfound enthusiasm for the Belgian car scene...

With numerous stories of neighbours just 50 metres away with a collection of over 100 cars or friends one's known for over 30 years concealing a Ferrari 308 and an Alfa Romeo Giulietta Spider under covers in their garages, you can't help but think "what automotive masterpiece do you have hidden away?" when you meet a Belgian collector. Lucky for us, there are a few events on the Belgian classic car calendar that let the world see behind the veil of mystery, and the Zoute Grand Prix is one of them.

Five in one



Now in its eighth year, the Zoute Grand Prix, held 5-8 October, featured not only a renowned concours d'elegance but also a rally, auction, GT tour, and an open-air car show for today's top marques. When talking with Belgian investment specialist Jan De Rue, he agreed that the appeal of the event is its variety: "To me, the Zoute Grand Prix is one of the best car events in Europe, as it's a perfect mix of rally, concours d'elegance, GT touring, and high-end performance cars on display in the streets of Knokke-Heist. As such, it appeals to all kinds of car lovers and attracts big crowds."

Oldtimer vs youngtimer



While the displays of today's top marques' newest models may attract the younger crowds, the rally is a great opportunity for everyone to see classic cars being used how they were made to be, as the route leads right through the centre of the prestigious town of Knokke-Heist. Alex von Mózer, the founder of [Very Superior Old Cars \(VSOC\)](#), participated in the rally two years ago in a 1928 4½-Litre Bentley and enjoyed himself thoroughly. "The Belgians really know how to throw a party!" And while Lamborghini historian and broker Olivier Nameche enjoyed the event, he did find one small fault: "It's unfortunate the rally is limited to cars built prior to 1965, especially for myself, as I can only enter an early-production Lamborghini 350 GT, but the quality of cars is wonderful every year, and there's always a 'star' car or two present."

Arms wide open



Over the past few days, it became more than evident that Belgian collectors don't discriminate when it comes to automotive preferences — they like the best of the best, whether it comes from Italy, Germany, or France. A sentiment that Bernard Marreyt, the owner and founder of [Marreyt Classics - Twin Cam](#), agreed with: "Cars have always been very important to Belgians. Belgium had more than 100 automobile manufacturers in the early 20th century, and after WWII, automobile production continued with assembly factories for Volvo, Opel, Ford, and Renault. We love cars from all over the world."

Traffic correlates to success



This presence of international automobiles at the Zoute Grand Prix had resulted in a more diverse presence of spectators and participants — something Kristoffer Cartenian, the sales manager at [Gipimotor](#), had noticed: "We've been attending the Zoute Grand Prix since the very beginning — we can clearly see that the quality of cars has improved a lot over the years, and what is also nice is that we have more and more international participants. I think that's very good for the event. I heard that, over the weekend, there were more than 200,000 people in attendance. And when I tried to drive away at the end of the day, it was a nightmare, so I believe the number was huge — traffic after an event is always a good indicator."

Sans waffle



While the wind and rain were a bit of an inconvenience for the concours on Saturday, the sun broke early Sunday morning and managed to warm up the field of sodden

entrants long enough for the crowds to get a good look and the judges to pick their favourites. Ensuring no one went home empty-handed, along with winners for all 12 classes, ranging from '1920 Tourers' to 'Ferraris of the Modern Era', there were 11 additional awards given to special examples, including the 'Best Preserved Car', the 'Coup de Coeur Award', and the 'Most Iconic Car'. And even though there were three classes celebrating the 70th anniversary of Ferrari, the car that truly blew the judges away to earn the Best of Show accolade was not a Prancing Horse but a British beauty from the David Brown era — the original 1964 Aston Martin DB5 used in the James Bond film *Goldfinger*.

Nowadays, the opportunity for under-the-radar collectors to be brought into the limelight does not come around often, but, on the rare occasions it does, such as at the Zoute Grand Prix, you won't want to miss what they have to show.

Photos: Sébastien Nunes for Classic Driver © 2017

Gallery

Source URL: <https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/cars/diving-belgian-classic-car-scene-zoute-grand-prix>
© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.