

CLASSIC DRIVER

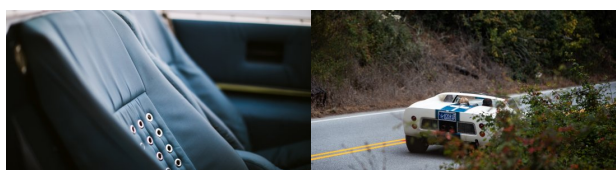
Showing a Ford GT40 Roadster at Pebble Beach with Girardo & Co.

Lead

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to enter a car into the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance? Max Girardo and the rest of the team at Girardo & Co. just did exactly that with a particularly special Ford GT40. We caught up with them after the confetti had fallen...

Max Girardo is no stranger to the Monterey Peninsula. He's visited 'Car Week' over 20 times and in his role as auctioneer with RM Sotheby's he bought the gavel down on hundreds of precious cars on the Californian coastline.

The sole surviving GT40 Roadster



But this year he popped his proverbial Pebble Beach cherry and exhibited a car at the prestigious Concours d'Elegance for the very first time. And not just any car, either – it was the Ford GT40 chassis #108, the sole surviving original Roadster and thus one of the most important examples of Ford's legendary Le Mans winner in existence.

"Showing a car at Pebble Beach is an entirely different experience to going as a spectator because it gives you a focal point for the week," he told us. "It's more fun because you've got something you have to look after and you're far more involved with and aware of what's actually going on at the rest of the event."

Realisation dawns



The open-topped GT40s were primarily used as development prototypes and this car, which Girardo's eponymous dealership is offering, is the only example of the six built still in its original configuration. Though it never turned a wheel in anger, Ken Miles tested it all over America, Jim Clark paraded it during a Formula 1 round at Watkins Glen, and Carroll Shelby even gave Henry Ford II a ride in the car at a VIP event. And Ford II never rode in his cars – Shelby clearly had the powers of persuasion.

The car is a great place to start while quizzing Girardo about his whirlwind week. "I think everyone imagines that when you go to Pebble you have to have a 40m-dollar Ferrari or a fully restored 1930s Rolls-Royce with unique coachwork," he explained. "But having done it now, I realise that's not the case. The concours is rather about interesting cars. I loved the preservation class, for example – a gentleman bought his beautiful Dino 246 GT and that's not a car you'd typically think would be winning awards at Pebble Beach."

Loud, really loud



Having flown in on Wednesday afternoon and checked the car was in order (a service, top up of fuel, and a detail was all the preparation the GT40 needed ahead of its moment in the spotlight) Girardo's week began at 7am sharp on Thursday morning's Tour d'Elegance. And it was at precisely that moment when he fell in love with the brutish Anglo-American sports-racer all over again.

"The tour was an unbelievable experience and the Ford was absolutely phenomenal to drive. It doesn't have a roof so it's not too hot in there and it's really loud, really powerful, and really easy to drive. I was so impressed with it."

Like Christmas morning



Fast forward to the crack of dawn on Sunday morning and 'Dawn Patrol', the customary grand arrival of all 200-or-so concours competitors on Pebble Beach's 18th fairway. "Waking up that early just isn't a problem when you're that excited. In reality driving onto a golf course isn't the most exciting thing in the world but it's the atmosphere and the fact you're in your own car making so much noise that's so much fun."

Girardo's Ford was entered into the Post-War Sports category alongside the likes of Jonathan Feiber and Heather Buhr's Maserati A6GCS Frua Spyder and Robert Bishop's (class-winning) Ford GT40 MKIIB, though he opted for the car not to be judged - it really was the taking part that counted. "Purely from a concours perspective, there is nothing better than Pebble Beach," Max concludes. "And for sure, showing a car is the best way to do Monterey Car Week." We'll be sure to keep that in mind, Max!

Photos: Stephan Bauer for Classic Driver © 2018

Gallery

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