

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Walking the automotive hall of fame at Concours of Elegance 2019](#)

Lead

A world-first display of Zagato-bodied Aston Martins, a special centennial celebration for Bentley and what is arguably the most significant Ferrari of them all combined to make this year's Concours of Elegance at Hampton Court Palace the finest edition yet...

The long, slender barrels of four side-by-side shotguns pointing skyward glisten in the late-summer sunshine beaming down on Hampton Court Palace. The Goliath and wonderful art deco car they're mounted to, a 1919 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost that was ordered new by the Maharaja of Patiala, has just parked up beside a freshly restored McLaren F1, telling of the Concours of Elegance's breadth.



They are two of the 60-strong field of fabulous motorcars which form the concours competition itself, an automotive beauty pageant that's established itself as one of the most high-quality and prestigious affairs on the classic car calendar. And uniquely, the competition is judged not by an external jury but by the participants themselves.

The 'Grand Arrival' at Hampton Court's beautifully kempt gardens was our first chance to ogle the Concours of Elegance class of 2019. And what a field it is. Ranging from a Napier L49 built at the turn of the 20th Century to the elegant Touring Superleggera Sciadipersia, which we revealed ahead of its debut at Geneva earlier this year, the significant assembly – perfectly arranged on the palace's picturesque avenues – is as beautiful as it is diverse.



Perhaps the most significant Ferrari in existence, a 166MM Barchetta that won both the Mille Miglia and the 24 Hours of Le Mans, was one of four of the diminutive open tourers present, lined up in formation directly in front of the palace.

Other standout cars for us included the quirky 1936 Scout Scarab, believed to be the world's first minivan, the Alfa Romeo 1900 Competizione SS with its typically unusual yet drop-dead gorgeous Zagato coachwork, and the bold Ruf CTR 'Yellow Bird', which starred in the cult-classic film *Faszination*. Company founder Alois Ruf was in great spirits as he ambled among his competition.



As has become the recurring theme at events this year, Concours of Elegance is also wishing Bentley a happy 100th birthday in fine fashion. Significant cars present include 'Old No. One', the famous 1929 Speed Six, and the legendary Blue Train, in which Woolf Barnato raced (and beat) a famous French train from Cannes to Calais back in 1930. There are few cars that embody the glamour and romance of Bentley's pre-War quite so well.

Arguably just as impressive at the concours cars is the world-first display of every single Zagato-bodied Aston Martin models in this, the Milanese design studio's centenary year. While Aston's connection to Zagato is well known, it's easy to forget just how many intriguing cars have resulted from the enduring Anglo-Italo partnership.



Curiously, it wasn't the sensuous curves of the fabled DB4GT Zagato known by its registration as '1 VEV' or the idiosyncratic wedge-shaped body of the [Virage Shooting Brake](#) that pushed our buttons the most. That honour went to the competition-spec V12 Zagato, an evil-looking model which made its debut in the same guise at Villa d'Este back in 2011 and subsequently competed in the gruelling Nürburgring 24 Hours.



There was also a smattering of Classic Driver dealers present including [Tom Hartley](#), [Nicholas Mee & Company](#), [Frank Dale & Stepsons](#) and [Fiskens](#). Immaculately turned out as ever, wearing a particularly sharp tartan suit, Gregor Fiskens arrived in the very first production Jaguar D-type, which is contesting the concours. Hampton Court was also the chosen venue for the public debut of the Ecurie Ecosse LM69, a beautifully sleek retro homage to the Jaguar XJ13 prototype.

Everything from the location and the quality of the cars exhibited at the Concours of Elegance to title sponsor A. Lange & Söhne and the way His Royal Highness Prince Michael of Kent casually arrives in his Bentley Blower and parks slap-bang outside the palace's front door is simply spot on.



Elegant, understated and quintessentially British in its execution, the ultra-photogenic is a real pleasure to walk around. If you're in or around London this weekend and you have the slightest whiff of automotive interest, a visit to Hampton Court Palace will be well worth your time.

Photos: Tom Shaxson for Classic Driver © 2019

Gallery

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