

CLASSIC DRIVER

A new look on the Old Empire at this car rally and concours in St. Moritz

Lead

St. Moritz might officially be located in Switzerland, but during last weekend's British Classic Car Meeting it became apparent once again that the glamorous mountain resort is in fact a last outpost of the Great British Empire – and the ideal playground for the magnificent cars it produced.



There is a special connection between the alpine resort town St. Moritz and the United Kingdom of Great Britain. After all, the Brits have come to the sunny Engadin valley for almost two centuries – and it was them who put it on the map as a winter destination after hotel pioneer Caspar Badrutt lured them to return with a wager. Still today, the St Moritz Tobogganing Club and the famous Cresta Run are considered institutions of British class culture and sportsmanship. While all the Gentlemen you can meet at the Sunny Bar or the Dracula club might not have a British passport, most of them have a soft spot for rare, powerful and elegant cars from Britain. In fact, we cannot think of a better car to tackle the twisted mountain roads of Graubünden and the Engadin than a classic Aston Martin, Bentley or Jaguar.



Once a year, the finest automobiles made in Britain are celebrated during a road rally and a concours of elegance during the British Classic Car Meeting. Organized by Peter Egli, chairman of the famous grand hotel Suvretta House, the team behind the BCCM has recently grown to include local car enthusiasts and photographers Fabrizio d'Aloisio and Andrea Klainguti. Together, they have carefully reinvented the event, giving it a contemporary twist for its 28th edition. Inspired by the legendary 1966 movie "Grand Prix" with James Gardner and Françoise Hardy, this year's BCCM imported true racing spirit into the Swiss alps with a line-up of classic and more contemporary monocoque racers, including a rare Brabham and the Jaguar Formula 1 car once steered by Eddie Irvine, while the event's artwork was created by "Michel Vaillant" illustrator Christian Papazoglakis.



The weekend's most eccentric car was certainly the Bond Bug 700 ES steered to St. Moritz by Georg Dönni. In our view, the wedge-shaped, three-wheeled two-seater is the archetypical marmite car – an automobile that you can only love or hate. And we loved it! Still, one did not have to miss out on the iconic and universally-loved British classics that are the core of every BCCM – the Jaguar XKs and E-Types, the Austin Healeys and MGs, the majestic Bentleys and Rolls-Royces.



On Saturday, the participants had an opportunity to get on the road and experience some of Europe's most scenic and enjoyable driving passes on a round-trip across the Lower Engadin and Scuol, the Reschenpass, the South Tyrolean town of Mals and the wonderful Ofenpass. After a timelessly elegant black-tie dinner in the venerable halls of Suvretta House, the cars paraded in the grand hotel's graden on Sunday morning for the Concours d'Elegance.



And while some more modern cars like a 1980 Triumph Spitfire and a 1997 Bentley Brooklands were rewarded by the jury, and the preservation award was given to a beautifully original 1957 Jaguar, the title 'Best of Show' went to one of the most quintessentially British and elegant cars of them all – a Mulliner-bodied, 1952 Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith owned by Mauro Borella. Stunning the jurors and crowd alike with its elegant proportions, exuberant details, and rich history, the car perfectly emphasized the spirit of the special connection between St. Moritz and Great Britain that will most likely prevail until the end of days.

Photos: Davide De Martis / Rosario Liberti / Patrick Blarer / Fabrizio d'Aloisio

Gallery

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