

CLASSIC DRIVER

[“A drive in this recreated Bugatti Type 59 made me a believer”](#)

Lead

The Bugatti Type 59 is one of the most mythical (and valuable) cars ever built. So far, our photo reporter and Bugatti disciple Rémi Dargegen chose to worship the five existing cars from afar - until Gubsøe Garage invited him to Denmark for a truly transformative drive.

Those who know me, know that I don't like replicas. I have nothing against reconstructions of cars which have disappeared or been destroyed. But replicas? No! It's a red flag. I would prefer to dream all my life about a genuine model with a proper history, even if I will never be able to buy it, than to own something fake, a counterfeit. This is especially true when these cars are totally new, with absolutely no history, no character, and no real parts from the period.



There is a whole debate around Bugatti Grand Prix replicas. The cars fall into two categories: the totally new builds, which to me have no value and shouldn't even wear the Bugatti logo, and the cars built using some original parts. These are questions you frequently hear during rallies or in the paddocks: "How original is your Bugatti?" and "Which parts made in Molsheim are on your car?". Some owners stay very vague, which says it all, while others are very sincere, which is definitely the best option.



That's actually what I dislike the most about replicas: People lying about their cars. If you own a fake car, the least you can do is own up to it, don't fool people! There's a great joke about the Type 35, which is the most iconic and most successful Grand Prix Bugatti: of the roughly 630 cars produced by the factory, more than 3000 still exist today. It is what it is; everybody wants to have their own Grand Prix Bugatti, real or fake, and for me that's a pity.

So I'll say it one more time: I don't like replicas. Therefore, when Gubsøe Garage and [Century Limited](#) invited me to Denmark to drive their Bugatti Type 59 replica, I was skeptical, even hesitant, as driving this car would go against my principles. But let's end the suspense here: this car made me change my mind about replicas - believe it or not!

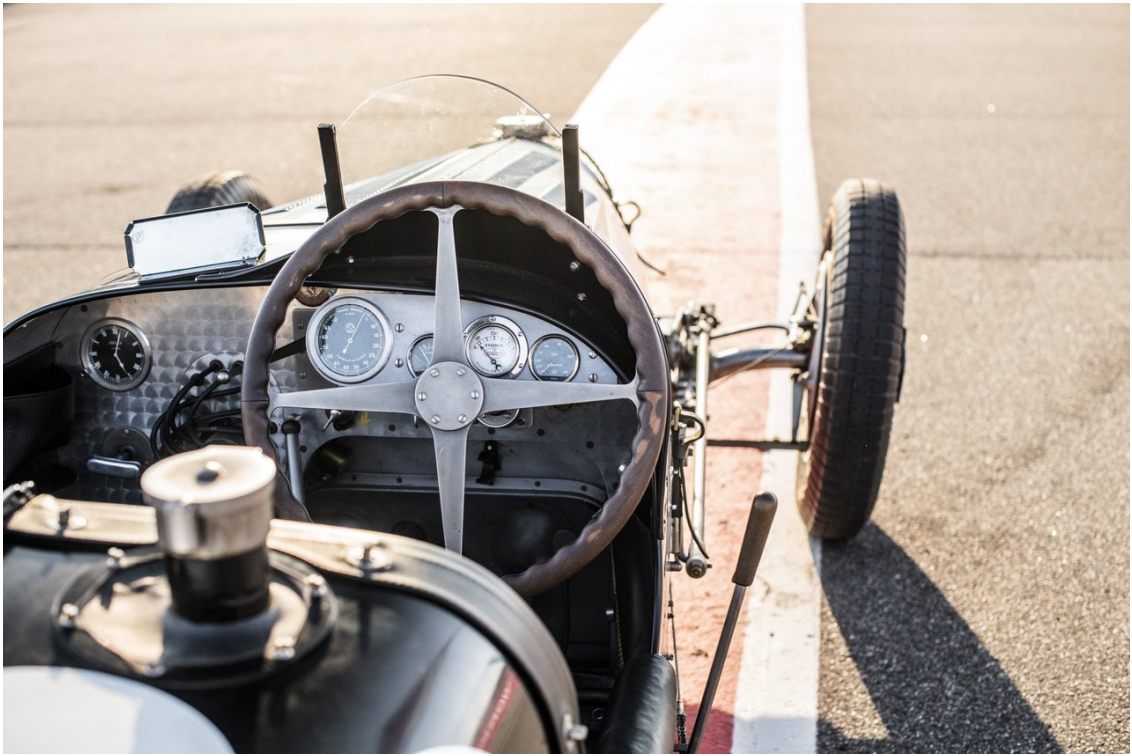




When I arrived, I knew more or less what to expect: a Grand Prix Bugatti is a Grand Prix Bugatti, and a Type 59 is a Type 59. Even so, when a Type 59 has been meticulously crafted like this one, it demands respect. There's a real presence when you see the car in the metal. Firstly, the proportions: Despite being relatively small, you feel the power with that long bonnet and the wide rear axle. Then there's the colour scheme, which is very Art Deco on this example and suits the car really well, in keeping with the period. The wire wheels are also absolutely legend, they're probably the most gorgeous wheels ever made and contribute a huge part to the car's beauty. And then there are all these subtle little details which make a Bugatti a Bugatti. It's indescribable: When you are in front of a Type 59, you just shut up, and admire it.



Then comes the moment when you have the right to fire it up for the first drive. Again, the sound, the music of the 3300cc straight-8 engine is totally removed from the engine note of a Type 35. In that case, it's absolutely monstrous! At first, I almost didn't want to drive the car, as you really feel the power, without even driving it. However, then you remind yourself how lucky you are, replica or not, to drive this piece of art on wheels.



On the first day, we took the car out on some country roads, so that I could get acquainted with it. After just a few accelerations, I was left speechless. The power never ends, and when you reach full throttle, it's like entering another dimension! What really surprised me is how agile the car is, and how precise the steering is. It takes you exactly to where you want to place the car in curves, in less time than you could ever think! The car is very, very alive, and like most racing cars — especially pre-war cars — you have to remain fully focused non-stop!



The second day promised to be even more exhilarating, as my hosts rented a small track close to the showroom to enjoy the Type 59 to the fullest. After a few laps to warm up everything, oil, water, tyres and driver, I started to increase the pace, and... wow! What a car! What a machine! What a monster! Obviously with so much power and torque, the car is more than alive, and you have to be careful, but what an immense pleasure it is to drive! The handling is mindblowing, the rear axle is very joyful, and sliding the car is an absolute pleasure.



Then, there's the sound, or should I say, the sounds! The engine is a huge component obviously, but also the gearbox, the compressor, and the pleasure of double de-clutching and hearing the sound of the gear lever in the selector. I had the privilege of driving the car for about two and a half hours. Every time I came back to the paddock, it was with an even bigger smile, with even more joy, as obviously, the more you drive the car, the better you know and understand it. I just couldn't believe how good this car is! More than ever, driving a pre-war car was an amazing experience that day! True, it was a replica, but it was an experience I'll never forget. Would I have driven a genuine Type 59 flat out on track? Probably not.



What I particularly like about this car is that you can't lie. You can't fool people. [There are only four Type 59 Grand Prix cars in the world](#), plus [the ex-King Leopold sports car](#) and the very few Type 59/50Bs. This car was built using some original parts from Molsheim, which gives it more authenticity, but still, it will never be a real Type 59 produced in-period in Alsace. And that's totally fine! Because it still is one of the best track tools and one of the most exhilarating racing machines you can buy, believe me!

Would I buy it if I had the money? Maybe. As we say in French: "Il n'y a que les cons qui ne changent pas d'avis." Only idiots don't change their minds. I don't like replicas, but I am not an idiot. And that day, I changed my mind.

Video: [Sincere Studio](#) Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2024

Gallery

Includes video

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