

CLASSIC DRIVER

Mille Miglia 2004 - the legend lives on!



This year's Mille Miglia Retrospective took place from 6 - 9 May, the 27th running of the event. Every year new fans and classic car enthusiasts are drawn into the magic of this unbelievable road race from Brescia to Rome and back again.

The race of course began in 1927, in the decade of motoring adventure, when worldwide records and barriers were broken every weekend. The founders (later to be known as the 'Four Musketeers') G. Canestrini, A. Maggi, R. Castagneto and F. Mazotti, used the Northern Italian engineering stronghold of Brescia, together with the legendary Autodromo di Monza, as a basis for an event that dominated May-time motor racing until the late 1950s.



The essence of the adventure

(Jacques Ickx, father of the famous racing driver Jacky Ickx, and motoring journalist)

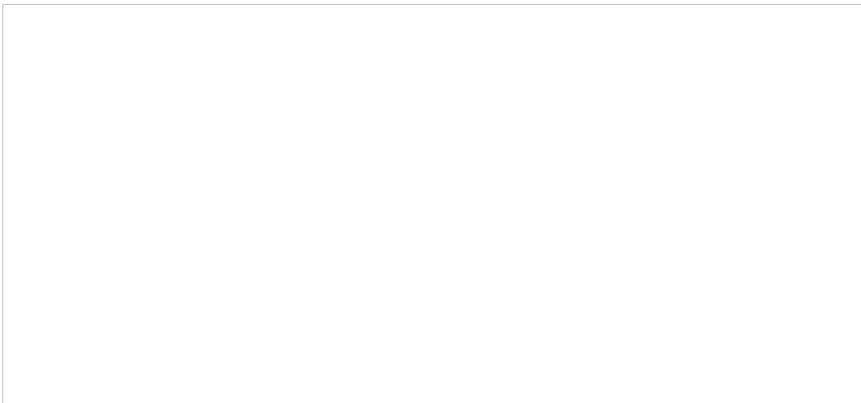
The first event, in 1927, was won by Ferdinando Minoja and Giuseppe Morandi, appropriately in a 'locally-built' O.M. (Officine Meccaniche) from Brescia. It took them 21 hours to complete the course.

As expected Italian cars and drivers dominated pre-war running of the race, Alfa Romeo being the pre-eminent manufacturer, despite Carracciola in a Mercedes SSKL scoring the first 'foreign' victory. After the war it was Ferrari's turn for dominance, again interspersed by the amazing victory of Stirling Moss/Denis Jenkinson in 1955, driving Mercedes' 300SLR to an average of 157.65 km/h over the 998 miles (1,606 kms). Incredible when you think the top speed of the car was only 300 km/h.



But hard driving has its price. The numbers of spectators and competitors seriously hurt or killed in the 1950s was growing annually. In 1957 Count Alfonso 'Fon' de Portago crashed killing himself, his co-driver Ed Nelson and 10 bystanders. This incident finished the event as a competitive one for good - and the name disappeared for a further 20 years.

The legend lives on



The retrospective event, re-introduced in 1977, is no longer a pure motor race. Nowadays the 'Mille Miglia Storica', as it is called, is run for serious enthusiasts owning original cars that either actually competed in the original events, or are at least of a type that did.





Thousands of spectators, some real classic car enthusiasts, others just interested locals, turned out on the Viale Venecia in Brescia this year, the starting and finishing line for the 'race'. For the 375 cars entered, there lay ahead 3 days and 1600 kms of hard driving in some of Europe's most beautiful countryside. Just like in the 'serious' meeting before 1957's tragedy, the event totally takes over the route for the duration of its running.



Technical inspection

This year's technical inspection took place on the Piazza della Vittoria, Brescia, and as always represented a high point of the meeting. Attracting many knowledgeable spectators, thirty years of priceless sports cars can be seen in one place. The honour of taking starting-place number 1 traditionally going to an O.M 'Superba' in honour of the marque that won the first event all those years ago.



At 9.30 am on 6th May the first car was flagged away, the whole 375 car grid not completely leaving Brescia until 8.25 pm. The first stage being Ferrara; which most teams reached by midnight. After two more days,

and back in Brescia, the winner was announced, the Italian/German pairing of Cané/Galliani in a 1939 BMW 328 MM Coupé. This was the pair's amazing 8th victory in the modern event.



Every year more and more people apply for entry. By necessity admission is difficult: only vehicles of a type that participated from 1927 - 1957 are accepted and sometimes only one model of each car is allowed. In addition to the 3,800 EURO entry fee there is also the need for a FIVA vehicle passport guaranteeing the originality of the car.



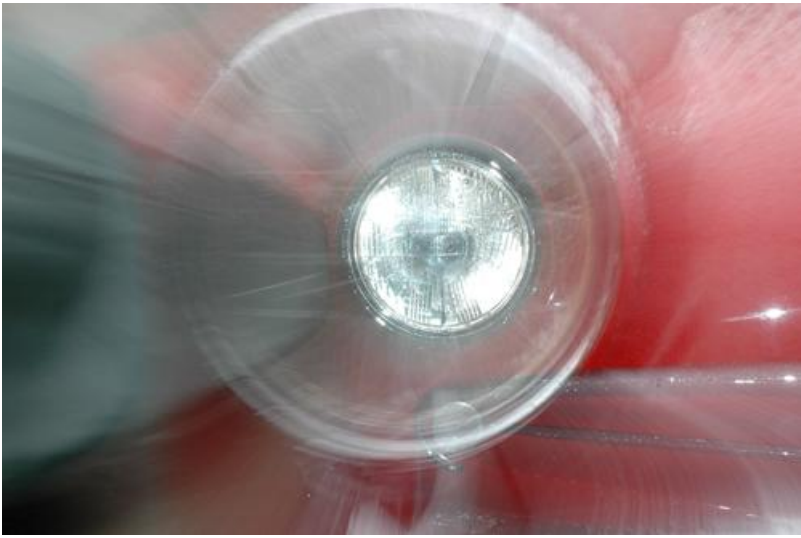
The result: The greatest car race in the world. (Stirling Moss)

Homage to the Mille Miglia

Every year a special 'Mille Miglia Storica' Calendar is produced. These photographs, and many more, can be seen on www.realitylounge.de where you can also find out more about the calendar.





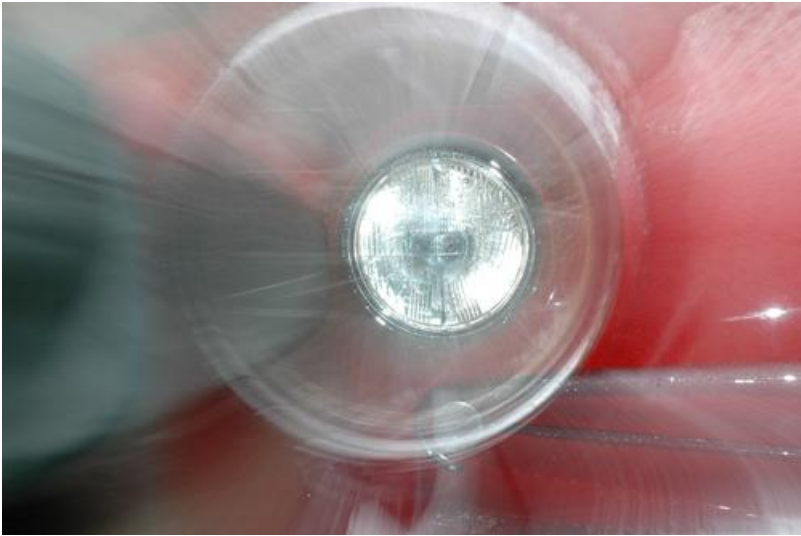






















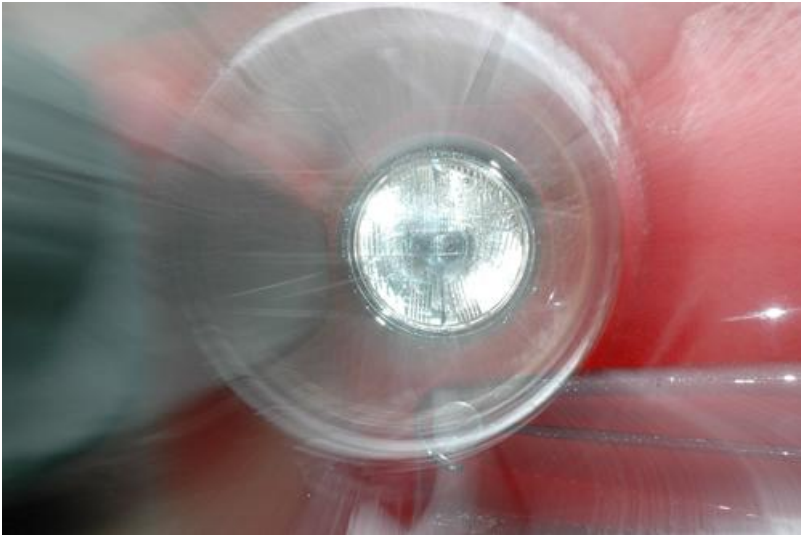
















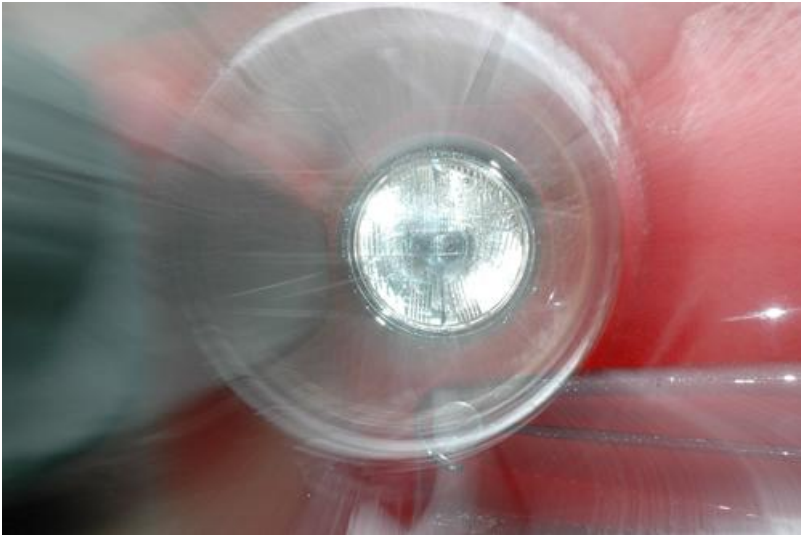
















*Text: Karin Adolph
Photos: Karin Adolph, Philipp Bauer, Alexander Kuhlmann*

Gallery

Source URL: <https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/mille-miglia-2004-%E2%80%93-legend-lives>
© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.