

CLASSIC DRIVER

[The Kuwait Concours d'Elegance, 15-18 February 2012: Review](#)

Lead

With even more top-level entries than last year, the same high standard of judging from an international panel of experts and Kuwaiti hospitality at its finest, this year's Kuwait Concours d'Elegance was the best yet.

No [former British Prime Ministers this time](#), but His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, under whose patronage the event is run, graced the opening ceremony of the four-day event.

As last year, the Concours was held under the aegis of the Kuwait Historical Vintage & Classic Cars Museum, at the 5* Safir Marina Hotel. The entries were displayed in two locations, with 'Muscle Cars' allotted their own 'seaside' slot and the other classics on a newly laid 'lawn' near the Marina.





Bordering the Marina was a line of display-only cars that included the Wheatcroft collection's superb Mercedes-Benz W125 Grand Prix single-seater replica and a 2003 Bentley Speed 8 Le Mans car. In fact, as 'Passion for Speed' was the theme for this year's concours, there was a greater presence of racing cars than before, both on display and competing for honours in the Concours itself.

With a line-up that included the avant-garde Ferrari 250 GT 'Breadvan', a Maserati 250F and *Tipo 61* 'Birdcage', and a Carrera Panamericana-liveried 1953 Ferrari 375 MM, one could be forgiven for thinking this was another top-level European or North American meeting.





Add in the palm trees, shisha pipes and spectators in traditional dress, though, and there was no mistaking the exotic Middle Eastern location.

The word in the souk was that the overall winner was likely to be from Class B, 1931 - 1945 cars, in which there were some splendid examples including the 1937 Alfa Romeo 6C 2300B 'Pescara' and the 1937 Bugatti Type 57SC Atalante. The latter shared the same Hong Kong-based owner with the eventual 'Best in Show', the silver-and-blue 1938 Talbot Lago T150 C 'teardrop' coupé.





It can't have been an easy decision. The judging team, led by world-famous car designer Leonardo Fioravanti, had to separate these, and other truly world-class designs. 1963 Aston DB4GT Zagato or 1971 Lamborghini Miura SV? It's a difficult call.





And last year's Muscle Car class winner, Stanley Kryla from the USA, had some even tougher opposition this time. Bookending the raised Muscle Car display by the beach were a 1970 Plymouth Road Runner Superbird and an extremely rare 1969 Dodge Charger Daytona. Most of us felt it was down to a straight fight between Kryla's orange, 1972 Oldsmobile 442 Convertible and the 'SubLime' Superbird.

At the Saturday night gala prizegiving dinner it was, indeed, the Olds that won, the New Jersey man sprinting to the stage to pick up yet another award.

Fellow diners were slightly disappointed, however, that the amiable Kryla failed to celebrate his win in the manner of the Japanese class-winner, who'd had the foresight to bring along his Shinto priest, complete with ceremonial hand-drum.

From the state that brought us Allen Ginsberg and Frank Sinatra, the least we were expecting from Stan was an off-the-cuff Beat poem, or a gutsy rendition of 'My Way'.





Outside the judging field, daily attractions included meetings of local Ferrari owners, supercar owners and a massive field of customised motorcycles in the second Kuwait Motorbike Show organised by the Kuwait Riders. Despite a penchant for skulls, daggers and skeleton designs, the riders were the gentlest people imaginable.

And Aston Martin – a company with a large Kuwaiti-based shareholding – took the opportunity of launching its new V12 Zagato. The red car looked stunning, set on the specially built, gleaming white stand. Also present were a selection of Heritage cars, showcasing Aston's Works Service (now simply '[Aston Martin Works](#)') restoration and service division.





The spirit of the competition that started in 2011, with the expansion of the Concours into a global event, lived on in 2012. Everyone I spoke to, from all over the world, professed their enjoyment of this year's Concours: the hospitality of the hosts, the camaraderie of fellow competitors and the sights and sounds of an unfamiliar land.

Compared with 2011, it was of shorter duration and, like so much of the hotel's delicious dessert buffet, that much sweeter.

Photos: Classic Driver

Gallery

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