

CLASSIC DRIVER

Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este 2012: Best of Show

Lead

Beauty blossoms with the years. Nowhere is this more apparent than at the Villa d'Este Concorso d'Eleganza, on the shores of the beautiful Lake Como – where Classic Driver was on location to lap up the latest displays. Here we present our 'Best of Show'.

The Grand Winners





The 1933 Alfa Romeo 6C 1750 GS might have taken the coveted Coppa d'Oro 'Best of Show' title, but it wasn't just the elegant curves which impressed the judges. Its class win at the 1935 Le Mans 24 Hours also edged it ahead of its rivals, proving, once again, the importance of provenance. A unique coupé shell by Italian coachbuilder Figoni – who also bodied Bugattis, Duesenbergs and Delages at the time – nudged it just ahead of its brethren for the 11-strong judging panel. Congratulations!

Interpretations of Elegance



The oldest classics at the Concours, from 90 years ago, appear to come from another world. It's hard to believe these massive road yachts from the likes of Rolls-Royce and Voisin – complete with never-ending bonnets, prominent grilles and Art Deco trimmings – once sashayed through European streets, as opposed to those with a Gotham City backdrop. The sight of a 1925 Rolls-Royce Phantom I or 1939 Mercedes-Benz 540K

floating silently down a catwalk will never cease to amaze.

The Art of Streamlining





As with many automotive technologies, the science of aerodynamics filtered down directly from the aeronautical and naval industries. The 1920s saw the birth of streamlining on the motor car, but it wasn't until later decades that the practice really took off: the bulbous bodies of the Tatra 87 and Volkart V2 Sagitta owe much to aerodynamic principles. Also proving that function can inspire form was the Pininfarina-bodied Maserati A6 1500 of 1947.

Heroes of Le Mans







The 24 Hours of Le Mans is often called the world's greatest motor race, and the cars and drivers who have triumphed at the Circuit de la Sarthe have become legends. Ferrari, Porsche, Aston Martin and Jaguar owe much of their worldwide appeal to their history of Le Mans success, and so it was all the more impressive to see the automotive heroes of this endurance race out in force at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este: Jaguar D-type, Aston Martin DBR1, Porsche 917, Ford GT40, Ferrari 250 GTO and 250 LM. We hope to see some of these cars in action in July, at the Le Mans Classic.

La Dolce Vita





Glamorous women, elegant hotels, warm summer nights, and a glass of champagne overlooking the sea; the Italian sports cars of the 1960s and 1970s represent this style of living and, at the Concorso, the most beautiful and rarest of these species gather. Peter Kalikow from the United States arrived in a stunning Ferrari 400 Superamerica, while the Italian Concorso 'regular', Corrado Lopresto, displayed a unique Lancia Flaminia Coupé and Gerard van Bergen from the Netherlands impressed with the prototype of the Ferrari Daytona. Perhaps the most exciting combination, however, was the Lamborghini Miura SVJ of 1972, and the Lamborghini Countach LP400 - a brutal masterpiece!

Little Jewels





Size isn't everything – something which manufacturers might want to remember, despite the recent boom in SUV sales. The decades following World War II saw cars that were lightweight, compact and sporty being built in Italy – cars which, today, seem almost miniatures. But being at the wheel of a 1954 Moretti 750 Grand Sport, a 1957 Abarth Fiat 500 or even a Porsche 550-1500 RS, as it winds through the Italian Alps, is an indescribable experience that should never be forgotten.

Stars of the Rock'n'Roll Era



American beatniks and European rock and roll weren't the only things to characterise the 1950s. There was also the Porsche 356 Pre-A, the Mercedes 300 SL and the BMW 507 - all of them as memorable as the rock stars of their day - roaring anti-heroes that epitomise classic elegance.

The Ferrari 250 Dynasty





Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the 250 GTO was a collection of the most expensive and most desirable sports cars from Maranello – the 250 GT cars of 1953-1966. Testa Rossa, Monza and GTO, all had at their heart the high-performance V12 engine designed by Gioacchino Colombo, and all were represented at Villa d'Este, along with many of their close relations.

Gentleman's Sports Cars



A gentleman need not show his success on the outside in order to assure himself of his position – and the same applies to his sports car. No extrovert presence is needed here, but restraint can be overdone; hence we chose the bright red Bentley S1 Continental Fastback Coupé of Sir Anthony Bamford as one of our favourites. For a summer jaunt from Lake Como to the Cote d'Azur, there is hardly a more suitable machine.

Concept Cars





As the popularity of Villa d'Este grows, its relevance to modern sports car manufacture increases. Illustrating this is the concept car category at this year's event, with several major manufacturers and design houses showing prototype vehicles. Headlining this part of the event was [Aston Martin Project AM310](#) (which sets the stage for the next-generation DBS to be revealed at this year's Pebble Beach concours), alongside entrants from Bertone, Pininfarina and Italdesign. Six of the nine entrants were painted in barely differing shades of red (the 'new black' of years to come?), but that didn't stop the burgundy Alfa Romeo 4C concept snatching the class win.

BMW Zagato Coupé





A bulging bonnet, 'double-bubble' roof and Kamm tail – even those with a passing interest in automotive design should spot the famous Zagato styling traits. As was the case with probably its most legendary creation – the DB4GT – the Milanese styling house has collaborated with a manufacturer to apply its own touch to a car already on sale. This time the partner is BMW and the subject is the Z4 sports car, its convertible arrangement supplanted by a unique coupé body. Alongside the usual Zagato touches, the grille is formed of hundreds of tiny 'Z's (like the Zagato-bodied Aston which made its debut at this very event last year), while the coachwork is painted in a stunningly deep 'Rosso Vivace'. [Full article >>](#)

Photos: Nanette Schärf / Jan Baedeker

Gallery

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