

CLASSIC DRIVER

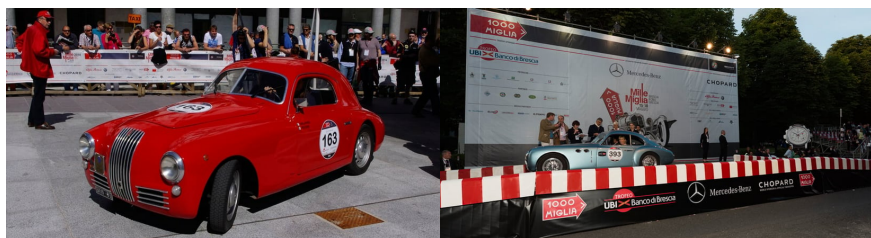
Mille Miglia 2014: Aspirin and champagne

Lead

What a challenge - at the Mille Miglia last week, it was time once again to test the limits of man and machine. We bring you a report of the action...

The Mille Miglia, the most famous historic race in the world, still intrigues and delights like no other event. It fascinates spectators along the route between Rome and Brescia, as well as those lucky enough to take part in their classic automobiles. This year, the adventure began with the technical inspection: drivers' licences, vehicle documents and FIVA papers - everything must be in order. This even applies to the numerous famous faces, such as Brian Johnson of AC/DC, Jay Leno, Adrien Brody, Luc Evans and Paloma Picasso Thevenet - with her husband, Eric Thevenet, in a red Lancia. Mark Gessler, this year in an Alfa Romeo 6C 1500 GS, revealed his recipe for a successful Mille Miglia: "The most important thing in the Mille Miglia is to enjoy the journey, to enjoy the people and automobiles - and to make it back to Brescia in one piece. That is a good result."

Radiant sun and roaring engines



The feel of the sun and the sound of the engines fills the traditional 'Punzonatura' on the Piazza della Vittoria. You come across Andrea Zagato with his co-driver and wife Marella Rivolta Zagato in a 1957 Alfa Romeo 1900 SSZ, next to a Fiat 1100 Gobbone from the 'Blonde Insight Team' and a very unusual classic that turns out, on closer inspection, to be a 1947 Healey Duncan Drone. The mood is relaxed. Next morning at six on the dot, the clock starts: three cars per minute roll away from the central stage in Brescia. Even presenter Simon Kidston can be seen to jump out from behind the wheel of an immaculate Jaguar D-type. The race is on - and in the first few kilometres, the participants are already stuck in traffic. However, the police are themselves Italian to the core, so they are happy to lead the race cars past the blockage by driving along on the pavement.

'Vampires' with dusty faces and bloodshot eyes



After an exciting night drive towards Padua, the second day sees the field head for Rome. No alarm clock is needed by the drivers in the Mille Miglia, however - the ripping sound of pre-War engines tears them from their beds before dawn. The cars surge through small villages, past cheering locals and across flowering landscapes. But 15 or 16 hours behind the wheel leave their mark, and when the convoy starts off in Rome the following morning, some participants appear like vampires, with dusty faces and bloodshot eyes. But their tiredness is rewarded by one of the most beautiful stages - it's time to head through Tuscany, before the drivers, co-drivers, and their machines reach the destination in Brescia, exhausted but happy.

A charming adventure



Even Hollywood actor Adrien Brody was thrilled. He travelled the route in a black 1956 Mercedes-Benz 300 SL Gullwing. "I've always loved cars - especially the classics," admitted the Oscar winner. Although he was unable to complete the route because of preparations for the Cannes Film Festival, he leaves feeling highly impressed: "There is something wonderful about being in Italy - it's like being in a Fellini film. A charming adventure."

Brody's place is taken by Fritz Kaiser, whose 1947 Cisitalia 202 SC Berlinetta broke down, but thankfully he can now

continue in Broday's Mercedes. As it happens, Kaiser is not only a participant in the event, he is also the digital partner and main sponsor. It was Kaiser who helped The Classic Car Trust to launch itself as an information and knowledge resource for classic car collectors, and it was thanks to this expertise that, as just one example, the Mille Miglia Link-App was born. This allows participants to retrieve relevant information via their iPhones and communicate with other teams.

Più Veloce!



Then, as suddenly as it started, the Mille Miglia is over. This year, victory has been secured by Giordano Mozzi and Stefania Biacca in their 1928 Lancia Lambda Tipo 221 Spider. Yet anyone who has survived the thousand-mile trip through Italy has plenty of reason to celebrate. What remains, above all, is the memory of a unique adventure – and the shouts of the spectators at the roadside: "Più Veloce!"

Photos: Massimo Delbò / Staud Fotos made available by The Classic Car Trust

Gallery

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