

CLASSIC DRIVER

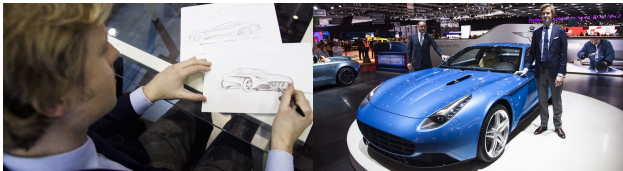
The most surprising cars of the Geneva Motor Show 2015

Lead

What's left to say about a motor show when the majority of the debuts were leaked in the press weeks in advance? Well, our man on the ground Jan Baedeker deliberately ignores the crowd-drawing premieres, and instead focuses on the special, unexpected stories...

Let's skip what you already know: Ferrari is using Geneva to [bury its long-held tradition of naturally aspirated V8 sports cars](#), Porsche is unleashing several [ultra-focused road cars](#), and [Mercedes just made limousines cool again](#). But following the crowd has never been the Classic Driver way. So, rather than a comprehensive list of the new metal on display, we bring you the 'Best in Show' guided by our personal highlights.

Carrozzeria Touring



The fact that Carrozzeria Touring is in Geneva among the industry giants is a minor miracle in itself. As was the case in its post-War heyday, the Milanese design emporium continues to focus on craftsmanship - forging expertly detailed bodies from aluminium to dress some of the most advanced chassis of the time. For the [Berlinetta Lusso](#), the basis is a Ferrari F12berlinetta, the inspiration is a 166 MM, and the result is simply stunning. Only five will be built, each taking 5,000 man-hours to produce. Svelte details such as the razor-sharp shoulder line that 'disappears' mid-arch - the type usually seen only on Villa d'Este's finest - would be almost impossible to achieve using ordinary production methods. The obvious passion of brand chief Piero Mancardi, designer Louis de Fabribeckers, and the rest of the tight-knit team shines brighter than the glitz of all other manufacturers put together.

Rolls-Royce Phantom Serenity



With Rolls-Royce's latest show-car, the (significant) value is not in the badge prestige, but rather the sheer volume of skilled work that has gone into it. Commissioned by an Asian royal, the [Phantom Serenity](#) was customised by the in-house Bespoke department to a level not seen since the Maharajas. Taking inspiration from Japanese gardens and Far Eastern tailoring, Giles Taylor's design team created a silk headliner, hand-painted and embroidered with cherry blossoms. Furthermore, the seats are covered with imperial-quality silk cloth from China, while the Hanami motif is reflected in mother of pearl, inlaid into the cherry wood of the doors. The Bespoke team worked day and night for almost a year to complete the car - and must have relished the opportunity to demonstrate their creative thinking.

Aston Martin DBX and Vulcan



In comparison to previous years, conceptual design studies are sparse at this year's show – and few would have expected it to be Aston Martin that brought two stylistic surprises, considering the stagnation of creative spirit in the last decade. But it seems the British manufacturer is back on track – literally – by introducing not only an ultra-limited circuit car for the gentleman racer elite, but also an all-electric crossover it bills as the ‘future of luxury grand touring’. The [Vulcan](#) is dramatic enough to have come from the Sant'Agata stable, and its rear light ‘sticks’ remind us of the Bertone Pandion that made its debut here five years ago. Meanwhile, the [DBX](#) is a surprisingly successful attempt at finding the proportional balance often missing from SUVs, and its jacked-up coupé appearance is somewhat reminiscent of a DB2. Inside, the minimalist leather interior has the feel of steampunk meets Star Wars. Perhaps not one for the purists, but it's refreshing to see Gaydon's creative waters running freely.

Ruf CTC



Who said motor shows should be restricted to modern cars? Porsche ‘artist’ Alois Ruf dares to follow Singer and co. for its latest project, albeit with a different focus: the firm's engineers have turned their hands to a 964 Turbo, bestowing it with 425HP and a variety of subtle visual modifications. Wearing ‘Fashion Grey’ with a contrasting Sherwood Green plaid interior, the RUF 964 Turbo is undoubtedly one of the most successful ‘rebirths’ of the show.

Ford GT



As ‘Classic Drivers’, we naturally gravitate towards the original rather the re-interpreted, so it was the stunning GT40 that first caught our instinctive eye. However, it must

be said that the 60-year-old's grandson exudes a similar level of charisma on its European debut. While a [hybridised V6](#) supplants a multi-cylinder monster of a motor, the 'blue wonder' has all the visual drama of its hypercar rivals, with a dash of humour, too: a billboard at the show's entrance entices visitors to inspect 'LaFord' once inside. Now, we simply await a Le Mans-ready racing version.

McLaren F1 Longtail



Forget the 'La Finale' Bugatti Veyron or the Mercedes-Maybach Pullman - the most valuable car of the show is likely to be the longtailed McLaren F1 GT that flanks its pseudo-successor, the [675LT](#). The dark green, road-ready 'Big Mac' is one of only three GTs made to homologate the legendary GTRs that won the GT1 category at Le Mans in 1997. With standard road cars supposedly commanding eight-figure-euro sums today, the mind boggles at what this GT would be worth should its owner - which happens to be the McLaren factory - ever decide to sell it.

Bentley EXP 10 Speed 6



A nimble, two-seater Bentley would be a reason to rejoice, particularly if it ends up looking as good as the [experimental Speed 6 concept](#). But after absorbing the pretty shape in its entirety, you might begin to notice some familiarities. The stillborn Hunaudières supercar concept from the 1999 Geneva show has clearly provided some influence, but not quite as understandable are the side window graphics and rear lights that must be giving Jaguar and Aston Martin's patent lawyers some food for thought, at the very least. Should these issues be remedied on its (inevitable) path to production, Bentley would have a sure-fire hit on its hands.

Land Rover Defender Heritage



When you've had your fill of premieres and supposed world-firsts, it's a relief to be able to turn to a faithful old friend in the form of a Land Rover Defender. With the primitive legend finally being retired from service this year, that won't be an option for much longer - but the wonderfully nostalgic [Heritage Editions](#) represent a silver lining if ever there was one. Even the old-style badges are enough to warm the collective heart, before a little piece of it is taken away forever when the dependable dinosaur is rendered extinct.

Gallery

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