

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Radiant classics oust dark clouds at the 2016 Chantilly Arts & Elegance](#)

Lead
As an outspoken art lover, Henri d'Orléans – the Duke of Aumale – would no doubt have taken great pleasure from seeing the ornate automobiles gracing his garden last weekend, as collectors from around the world brought their majestic classics to Chantilly for the annual Arts & Elegance concours....

Dark clouds over Chantilly



The darkening skies over the Château de Chantilly on Sunday morning did not bode well. With every grey cloud, the hope that the third edition of the Chantilly Arts & Elegance would remain dry slowly vanished. In anticipation of the forecast showers, the organisers arranged for a mobile gazebo to be placed over the concours participants, protecting both the most vulnerable cars and the international selection of jurors examining them from the worst of the weather. One such example was the 1932 Alfa Romeo 2300 Spider, which eventually won its class. Fortunately for us, the rain ceased long enough for the Vittorio Jano-designed beauty to parade around the winners' circle.

Back-seat saviour





Despite the occasional showers, the high spirits of the participants, the judges and the circa-10,000 visitors could not be dampened. The American collector couple Merle and Peter Mullin, for example, simply took to the spacious interior of their Citroën DS19 Majesty Spécial during a downpour. "You have to take the weather as it comes," commented the founder of the Mullin Automotive Museum in Oxnard. "You know, we've never sat in the back of this car, and I'm surprised how comfortable it is."

A daring mix



In contrast to previous years, the classes in the Concours d'Etat felt a little thrown together. In addition to traditional classes such as 'French coachwork masterpieces' and 'The former English marques', there were a number that called into question the meaning of the term 'elegance', including a 'Tribute to the Pozzi Racing Team' and a tribute to the 50-year career of Jean Todt. Elsewhere, however, the selection of interesting and beautiful classics was stellar, and befitting of the fabulous setting in which they were displayed.

An automotive treasure trove





The exhibition space occupied by the plethora of car clubs was equally impressive, and something of a treasure trove for classic cars. Everything from the Renault Gordini to the Aston Martin DB4 GT Zagato Sanction II was represented, illustrating the appetite of the French for the most unusual and eclectic cars, many of which you rarely get to see in any other country. It was also a pleasure to rediscover cars formerly only known about from literature, such as the prototype of the Citroën SM, bodied by Frua. With the red GT study, the Italian body-design master introduced his vision of the Franco-Italian partnership between Citroën and Maserati.

There can only be one 'Best of Show'



'Best of Show' can only go to one car, and this year's overall gong went to the beautiful Alfa Romeo 8C 2900B Lungo Berlinetta, from the collection of the former Microsoft president Jon Shirley. The decision to award 'Best of Show' to the Alfa was, of course, entirely justified, but we couldn't help feeling the jury played the 'safe card' – the daring entry list could have also justified a somewhat more courageous choice...

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2016

Gallery

