

CLASSIC DRIVER

No space for cowboys at Retro Classics 2017

Lead

Following the Rétromobile extravaganza in Paris last month, Retro Classics in Stuttgart is the next important indicator for the development of the market, at least among the private sector. The rodeo of crazy prices in recent years certainly seems to have given way to paint a calmer picture...



Stuttgart is a hub for classic cars, and that's not just down to its proximity to Porsche and Mercedes-Benz (though their influence is clear to see looking at many of the exhibitors at Retro Classics). The Stuttgart Motor Vehicle Association commissioned specialist BBE Automotive to carry out a study of the area, which highlighted some remarkable results. Compared to the entire country, the region has three times more classics and youngtimers. A fertile ground, then, for dealers and collectors looking for their next purchase among the 3,500 cars on show, or for enthusiasts perusing the countless automobilia stands or ogling manufacturers' latest and greatest machines.



With the new 'Passione Italiana' aspect of the show, celebrating the quintessentially Italian way of life, visitors to Retro Classics were able to wander among a delectable array of Italian machinery with the aroma of pasta and risotto filling their nostrils. From various Ferraris and Alfa Romeos to a more humble black Fiat 2100 from the 1960s that once served as a Popemobile, it wasn't just Parmesan cheese and olive oil heading home with many people. To celebrate the new addition to the show, the Museo Panini Modena sent a fabulous collection of Maseratis to Stuttgart. One of the most beautiful exhibitions, it featured, among other cars, a stunning A6GCS 53 Berlinetta by Pininfarina.





Just four weeks before Techno Classica in Essen, Retro Classics' exhibition halls were showing a trend towards modern classics, with a Porsche 911, which raced in all variants in the 1990s, as well as BMW and Mercedes-Benz models, dominating Hall 1. Apart from the typical, mainstream discoveries, visitors could also find a 1966 ACA Spider, a Colani GT, and a Ginetta G33 Bi-Turbo from 1992, as well as a shimmering gold Mercedes-Benz 380 SEL from the 1980s being offered for 25,000 euros — who knows how long that will remain available?

For Nick Aldering, co-owner of Classic Driver dealer Gallery Aldering — who had on his stand, among other things, a wonderful and rare black Lamborghini 400 GTS — the trend for vehicles from the 1990s was obvious: "Times are changing." The era of the "cowboys", as he called them, is over — there's no more riding the wave. "Twenty-seventeen will be a very good year, because we now know that prices have stabilised and where the truth lies." At the same time, customers are more informed than ever before through the internet.



In addition to numerous Classic Driver dealers, such as Mirbach and Thiesen, Arthur Bechtel was represented by a large stand. "Similar to Rétromobile, Retro Classics is one of the most important fairs", commented Anja Maria Schäfer-Oettinger. "And it's on our home ground." She also observed a rejuvenation in their target market, suggesting that beautiful Mercedes-Benzes from the 1950s and '60s are now being seen as strong investments, alongside real estate. "Classic cars are a growing market, and we're assessing the current environment positively — it's in good shape." She also anticipates China to come into play in coming years: "Classics aren't popular in China currently, save for museums, but this is bound to change. And then the market will be very 'hot', because of their strong purchasing power."



Enthusiasts of historical motorsports also had the opportunity to meet some great heros at the event, such as Eberhard Mahle on the Premiumfahrzeug stand, accompanied by his European Championship-winning 1966 Porsche 911. Pur Sang from Argentina probably made the longest journey to get to Germany, but to witness its Bugatti replicas — such as the legendary T 35, which, when fitted with its historic parts, can compete in historic races — the journey was definitely worth it.

Photos: Frederik Dulay for Classic Driver © 2017

Gallery

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