

CLASSIC DRIVER

These cars were almost too hot for the frozen lake at The ICE St Moritz

Lead

The heat was on last weekend in Switzerland's glitziest winter wonderland. And racing the priceless collector and concept cars across the ice of the lake at times felt like driving through frozen daiquiri. Still, The ICE St Moritz once again proved to be the coolest car event of them all.



If Disney ever decides to shoot an automotive spin-off for their animated fantasy musical Frozen, this could be the plot: while taking a selfie in a glamorous Swiss alpine resort, influencer queen Elsa accidentally freezes the whole valley and lake with her frosty superpowers. But instead of spreading panic and despair, the car-loving locals claim the frozen lake for racing and drifting around in their precious automobiles. Cue singing, tears of joy, and a happy ending! Now, replace queen Elsa with [Ronnie Kessel](#) and you get an idea of what happened last weekend at The ICE St Moritz.





Usually, you would expect to see such a line-up of iconic concept prototypes, championship-winning race cars and unique, coach-built beauties on the manicured lawns of Pebble Beach or in the estate of the Grand Hotel Villa d'Este. Now, for the third edition of the International Concours of Elegance - or simply the ICE - in St Moritz, the team around Ronnie Kessel and Marco Makaus managed to lure some of the world's finest collector cars onto the frozen lake of St Moritz.



And the ice was melting fast. This year's warm winter weather had almost put the event at stake - and while the ice was finally found to be safe enough for hosting dozens of cars and thousands of people, spectators were suspiciously walking around the pools of slush puppy that were forming around the cars, wondering if St Moritz was secretly planning to create the world's first classic car reef at the bottom of their lake, turning their jet-set village into an alpine snorkeling paradise for the super wealthy.



Luckily, the ice did not break, so we had the pleasure of seeing some of the world's greatest cars turning pirouettes on the ice for the very first time, well, ever. The most spectacular and instagrammable sight of the weekend certainly was the pack of concept cars and experimental prototypes, many of them unique artefacts of visionary design and automotive history. First of all, there was the Lincoln Indianapolis from the Pearl Collection - a bright orange jet-age glider designed by Boano in the 1950s that [we already presented you in our teaser story](#). Next to it, [one of two V8-powered Mercedes-Benz C111-1s](#) reminded us of the brand's gull-winged 1970s supercar that was sunk by the oil crisis. Brought to St. Moritz by the Mercedes-Benz Museum, the prototype was arguably the only car at the concours that money can't buy. Another childhood dream poster car was the Lancia Sibilo, a golden-brown sci-fi monolith designed by Bertone's wunderkind Marcello Gandini in 1978. The unusual car is part of the Lopresto collection, and we will never forget [the test flight around Milan that Corrado and Duccio Lopresto invited us to some years ago](#).



Still, the most spectacular concept car of The ICE was the mythical Lancia Stratos Zero HF. Also designed by Marcello Gandini for Bertone in 1970, the wedge-shaped UFO on wheels looked like it had just descended on the ice from beyond the stratosphere. Owner Philip Sarofim rightfully claimed this year's Best of Show trophy for daring to bring the game-changing concept car to the alps - and even drive it around the ice for some unreal snow-plowing laps. After the Zero had been crowded by people all weekend, Philip kindly granted us a tête-à-tête with his otherworldly car on Sunday morning.



The selection of cars shown at The ICE can certainly compete with the quality of Pebble Beach and Villa d'Este, but the St Moritz concours has one important advantage: you can actually see and hear the cars in action. This was especially important for the class of cars assembled to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Le Mans 24 Hours race. With a rare Bentley 3-litre from 1925 and a fire-spitting Ferrari 365 GTB/4 Daytona Group 4 racer from the 1970s as the illustrious bookends, the owners reenacted the famous Le Mans start by sprinting to their cars before drifting around the ice circuit for some anniversary laps. It was a pleasure to see [Gregor Fiskens of Fiskens in London](#) spray the spectators with snow while going sideways in an AC Cobra 289. Oh, and Miami Vice might have made white Testarossas fashionable, but only St Moritz's the ICE had the iconic white Ferrari Testa Rossa 'Lucybelles' that raced in the Le Mans 24 Hours in 1958. Don Johnson, eat snow!





Speaking of Ferraris, the ice-masters have made it a sport to attract the rarest and most valuable prancing horses to their winter event. After last year's appearance of a divine 250 GTO, this year's line-up somehow managed to raise the stakes with early Barchettas such as a 225 S Vignale and a 340 MM, all-star racers like a 250 Tour de France, a 250 MM and a 250 GT SWB Competizione, a stunning 750 Monza as well as an alluring 500 Mondial – and one of the weirdest cars ever made in Maranello, the egg-shaped Ferrari 166MM/212 Export [affectionately called 'Uovo'](#).



While the Ferraris were nothing short of breathtaking, Lamborghini disciples must have had a hard time not fainting at the sight of the unique, dark-green 'Millechiodi Miura' – the perfect car to celebrate the brand's 60th anniversary. Still, our favourite Italian racecar must have been the single-seater Maserati 420M 58 'Eldorado' once driven around Monza by Sir Stirling Moss. With its cartoon livery promoting the consumption of Eldorado Sud ice cream, there couldn't have been a better monoposto for the occasion.



If, on the other hand, British racecars are your cup of petrol-infused tea, you were able to drool upon the bright red 1937 Aston Martin 2 Litre Speed, a pale blue Jaguar D-type drifted across the ice by the gentlemen from Drivershall or the remarkable Jaguar XK 120 'Jabbeke Record' car with its diving bell cockpit (maybe there was more to the snorkeling reef theory, after all).



Still, the classic car best-prepared for the ice was of German origin; based on a Porsche 356A, [Valkyrie Racing's caterpillar-drive PXG Polar Porsche has been raced across](#)

[Antarctica by Renée Brinkerhoff for a very good cause](#), raising funds and racing to end child trafficking. After her adventures on the frozen continent, the laps on the frozen lake must have felt like a walk in the park.



St Moritz is not only a town where you are constantly surrounded by fur-coated Tintin characters engulfed in cigar smoke, gazing at the world through Onassis-size glasses. It is also a haven for all sorts of old-school sportsmen and knickerbockered daredevils - exploring the limits of physics through contraptions of speed has long been part of the local folklore. Just walk up the hill and watch the skeleton riders slide down the ice canal at the Cresta Run at death-defying speeds and you get an idea of what it's all about.



This spirit of gritty, old-fashioned sportsmanship is also what gives the ICE its unique appeal. Mingling with the many local automotive impresarios there was of course [Simon Kidston](#), driving his Bugatti Type 35 across the ice in true gentleman racer style, with Le Mans winner Tom Kristensen hard on his heels drifting around the lake in an Auto Union Type C. Just let that image sink in for a minute.



Still, the undisputed king of St. Moritz sub-zero cool must be Fritz Burkard who was constantly seen behind the wheel of one of his fantastic cars - including his Ex-Scuderia Ferrari Alfa 8C Monza - like a racing desperado piloting his rides just how their makers intended: at full speed and without concern for anything but the pleasure of speed and sound.



Before we retreated to Suvretta House to warm up with a steaming cup of Earl Grey and a piece of Bündner Nusstorte in the grand hotel's glamorous main hall, it was time to hit the ice track ourselves. So, we jumped into the 1947 Tatra 87 with endurance racing driver Katarina Kyvalova, who somehow managed to get the sturdy Czechoslovak minibus sideways to the applause of the spectators in a last farewell lap. Only at The ICE St. Moritz...

Photos by Błażej Żuławski for Classic Driver © 2023

Gallery

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