



JUDGING AT...

THE QUAIL



Concours d'LeMons

One day, judging the best in the world. The next, judging the worst. Monterey Car Week was nothing if not varied for Octane this year

Words David Lillywhite Photography Mark Dixon





FRIDAY AFTERNOON. I'm standing on stage at The Quail, A Motorsports Gathering, to give the *Octane* Editor's Choice prize to one of the 255 rather special machines displayed on the manicured greens of Quail Lodge golf club. Visitors have paid \$600 each for their tickets, to spend the day happily wandering around the cars, motorcycles and artisan stands, and eating and drinking the finest food and wine.



THIS IS THE 14TH year of The Quail, and – you won't be surprised to hear – the biggest yet. It's the brainchild of serial car and motorcycle collector Gordon McCall, far more relaxed in content and in judging style than Pebble Beach.

Lucky that, because it's good to have a bit of artistic licence. Our mission ('our' being deputy editor Mark Dixon, US contributor Winston Goodfellow and me) is to select the winner of the *Octane* Editor's Choice. Previous winners have included a Daytona Competizione, gas turbine Lotus S6 and De Tomaso P70. Long ago we decided that it should be judged on *Octane* feature merit – not so much on condition but more on interest, style and topicality.

There's plenty to choose from, though in some ways not as much as in previous years. Blame all the Miuras, a stunning array in every colour to mark the model's 50th anniversary.

There's a fascinating Rivalries of the Ages display, and a great line-up of BMWs (to celebrate their centenary), but none is hitting the award-winning spot yet. The collection of sports cars facing the Bugatti and Bentley stands looks good, and two barn-find Cobras are fascinating. A silver GT that looks vaguely familiar catches my eye from a distance but a rival magazine editor is already chatting to the



owner, so it seems only polite to move on for now, position noted for a return visit.

Mark and I reconvene. He's been busy photographing the show and gulping down coffee, so I drag him to my favourites. John McCaw's Bentley 8 Litre is exquisite, just out of an extensive RC Moss restoration, but it feels worthy of a more formal honour than the *Octane* award, as little sense as that may make. Andreas Böhringer's patinated, unrestored

Ferrari 375 MM is wonderful but it's already well known so doesn't score so highly in the 'Why choose it now?' stakes. The Indianapolis Museum's highly original Ferrari 250 LM is exciting, but then so are many others. Wow, this is hard. We don't have a clear winner yet.

Erica from the McCall organisation phones me, asking for my thoughts. I tell her I think I need another 45 minutes, and she reluctantly grants an extended deadline. →

SATURDAY MORNING. I'm in the judges' area at the Hagerty Concours d'LeMons. Judges get a burrito, a lanyard and a clipboard, and are told to go find the worst of the worst. Visitors pay nothing and are promised 'even less' in return. Over the PA we hear: 'The true badge of honour in the car world is to get goose poop on your tyres from the Concours d'LeMons.' It's true that Laguna Grande Park does have more than its fair share of the stuff.



ALREADY I'M recalling the stress of picking a Quail winner the previous day. First World problems, eh? At Concours d'LeMons, time constraints are even tighter and results almost as closely scrutinised. I have two problems here: first, my fellow judge and LeMons veteran Dick McClure (in yellow T-shirt, left), is so busy chatting that we're struggling to get round the eight entries in the Rueful Britannia Class. Second, my face aches from laughing so much.

Once again, I'm not convinced we have a winner. There's a lovely Triumph Speed Six (a Vitesse to us Brits, and a Herald to the usually deeply knowledgeable McClure. I tell him how disappointed I am in him for not knowing the difference). The Triumph is great; not a Lemon.

An Austin A35? Owner Mara Brill explains how she bid on eBay for it, forgetting to tell her husband. 'Honey, will you wake up so we can talk,' she laughs. 'He said "No"... That was three years ago.' But, again, it's too good.

An Amphicar? It's half-German, I point out to Dick, who claims to be outraged by this, though it's hard to tell between the guffaws. As Rueful as it may be, it isn't true Britannia. A surf wagon Morris Minor? 'Bad paint, cracked windscreen, Datsun engine – it's a trifecta of mediocrity,' urge owners Keith and Marilyn Brouzes, in vain. An MGB? Ah, it belongs to Dick, who despite his best efforts at subterfuge has been banned from entering it into the

concours. Good try, Dick. A second MGB has rubber bumpers and a scruffy interior but isn't nearly bad enough.

OK, how about this? An extended, limo-length, open-top MG Midget, unfinished and frankly awful. I'd seen it two days before at The Little Car Show, where indeed it was the least little in the entire show.

'What's it like to drive?' I ask owner Freddie Fuentes, who bought it in this state just a few weeks ago. 'I'll let you know as soon as I get a driveshaft,' is the deadpan reply. Hmm, is the sheer naughtiness of it not even being driveable a good or a bad thing? Dick is too busy laughing to advise. I'm not convinced he's concentrating. →



MONTEREY WEEK JUDGING

FRANKLY, WE DON'T have an obvious winner. Time is ticking away. Owners are watching us closely. Mark and I agree to go for one last circuit of the show field, but first we catch up with Winston. He's judged at Pebble Beach so he knows what he's up to. I tell him my choices with trepidation and he concurs... but then lowers his voice dramatically.

'You know [he pauses for effect]... my choice is the Lola GT,' he says. The what? Ah, the silver one that we were heading back to view. 'Holy Toledo, it is so cool, you're going to love it!' (Just for the record, Winston really does say 'Holy Toledo'.)

We hotfoot it across the field for our first proper examination of the 1963 prototype Lola GT Mk6, the first of three Mk6s built, which is widely recognised as the inspiration for the Ford GT40. If that's not heritage enough, how about this? Owner and race team boss Allen R Grant bought the Lola in 1965 from Lola founder Eric Broadley but did nothing with it for decades. 'I was too busy!' But with the 50th anniversary of the GT40's Le Mans 1-2-3 this year, he decided it was time – and the Lola was finished just days before The Quail.

We keep looking, just in case. But we know we have our winner. Good work, Winston.



BACK TO WHERE we began: the Quail stage. HVA president (and FIVA vice-president) Mark Gessler and I are standing to one side as Gordon McCall begins the award-giving with co-founder Sir Michael Kadoorie. There's a lot at stake but everyone is friendly and relaxed.

Mark gives the Preservation Award to the 250 LM and then it's my turn. The Lola GT (left) is pushed onto stage and Allen R Grant (above) accepts the award, a lovely sculpture by Richard Pietruska. The crew are so delighted that they seem reluctant to leave the stage, and compère Richard Charlesworth says over the PA: 'I think the *Octane* editor might need to help push his chosen winner.' Other class winners follow – including the Bentley and the Ferrari 375 MM. Seems our judging instincts are good.

THERE'S A GREY open-top Wolseley Hornet heading towards us, loaded up with four big blokes. A late entry! It pulls up, and both driver and front passenger attempt to open their doors, without success. A shove and some help from a bystander and the passenger door submits, allowing all four to disembark.

The middle of the Wolseley rises noticeably – it's so structurally unsound that it had sagged in the middle, jamming the doors. And it's a genuine Crayford, one of 57 given away in the UK in 1966 for a Heinz 57 soup promotion.

Owner Derek Tuttle is well into double figures on Mini ownership, and the Wolseley hasn't had much of a look-in during the past 13 years. It may be rusty but, as Dick points out, it has 'patina to die for' and is highly original. It even has its original picnic set.

'What's the hubcap in the engine bay for?' asks Dick. 'That's to keep the rats out,' replies Derek. Dick stops laughing long enough to whisper, 'We have our winner.' I couldn't agree more.

We go to scout for more Brit vehicles, because it's never guaranteed they'll be sitting in the correct class – and we're also looking for a Worst in Show. Wow, there are some sights to see! There's just one more Brit candidate, a Bristol Lodekka bus, parked out on the road, and despite the tatty blankets on the seats and makeshift bed on the upper deck, it's not quite bad/good enough.

The Worst in Show is easy for Dick and I. Christopher Blizzard's 1974 Bricklin SV-1 (pictured right) has it all: it's rare, a terrible car to begin with, and even more terrible thanks to 40-odd years of neglect and 'interesting' modifications. And it's fresh from a stint at the 24 Hours of LeMons race. Winner!

By the way, bribing the judges is positively encouraged. I've gained six Lemon Drops and a dog biscuit, on top of the dollars I'd included myself as 'encouragement' for others.



AT LEMONS, the judges gather to hand over judging sheets. Dick has been talking too much to fill his out but we get there, interrupted only by fellow judge Bill Warner (yes, founder of the prestigious Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance), who booms: 'I'm awarding a new prize to the car with the sausage on the roof – The Worst in Show!'

Derek proudly accepts the Rueful Britannia prize for his Wolseley. And the Worst in Show? Incredibly, the majority of judges have voted the same way as Dick and I. It's the Bricklin! **END**





LEMON ENTRY

The question of what to arrive in at the Concours d'LeMons was neatly solved by Chasing Classic Cars star Wayne Carini

Words David Lillywhite Photography Mark Dixon

'MEET US SATURDAY morning, 8am, at Dodi's Auto Sales,' comes the cryptic message. 'Wayne Carini will be there.' OK...

It's the day before Concours d'LeMons, and fellow LeMons-judge-to-be Dick McClure has a plan. Is that the place with the 911 with the awful 959 body kit out front, I ask? 'Put your cock back in your pants!' comes the mystifying response. 'This is America.'

I take that as a yes, and just before 8am the next day Mark Dixon and I arrive at Dodi's on Del Monte Avenue, on the outskirts of Monterey. The 959-a-like is just the tip of the iceberg: here's a 912 with bubbly vinyl roof, a ratty 1980s Maserati Quattroporte and a UK-built Traction Avant, and there's Wayne Carini, star of TV's *Chasing Classic Cars*, fiddling with what would have been the rustiest Karmann Ghia I'd ever seen, had it not been for the three other Karmann Ghias alongside it.

'Hey David, what do you think?' comes the greeting from Wayne. 'Worst in Show?'

Now I get it! This is Wayne's entry into Concours d'LeMons. His film crew has gone home, and this is just a bit of fun for him. Turns

out his show made car-lot proprietor Dodi Khalil a bit of a legend the first time they collaborated on a LeMons entry, in 2010.

'I was looking for the cheapest car I could find on Craigslist,' says Wayne. 'I found a Toyota Cressida but it wasn't bad enough. Then I found Dodi's!' The resultant Volvo 1800ES, with home-made targa top, was dubbed the Krappen Targa by LeMons founder Jay Lamm.

As for Dodi, he just gets on with business. Seems that Dodi's is an essential visit during Monterey Car Week. Is that Freeman Thomas, designer of the Audi TT, wandering in? Yes it is.

And the Karmann Ghia? Aside from the obvious – flaking paint, dechromed chrome, tattered interior – a glance inside reveals very little in the way of floor, and a shove on the brake pedal reveals even less in the way of retardation ability. But we have a handbrake. And, it's an early ('58) cabriolet; VW friends gets very excited when they see my snaps later.

It's lucky LeMons is close by, though the drive in is hilarious, as is the applause at the showground. Does it win Worst of Show? I'm afraid not. Do we care? Well, maybe a bit ... **End**



Top and above

David and Wayne prepare themselves for the drive into Concours d'LeMons at (thankfully) nearby Dodi's Auto Sales. Dodi specialises in the less-salubrious examples of Euro classics.