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2011 Fairfield County Concours d'Elegance

This show, after eight years, is one of the places to be for car collectors

by Donald Osborne



Michael Alan Ross

SCMer Robert Wilder accepts the SCM Significant Vehicle Award for his 1955 Gilco-OSCA-Comirato Special

Coming of age is a rite that can take many forms. For a concours event, it generally doesn't involve bloodletting or alteration of body parts, but it can be clearly sensed and seen.

As so many new events have crowded the calendar in the past few years, the first hurdle for all is simply survival. Once past that, it takes a particular combination of location, entries, attendees, sponsors and something ultimately indefinable to make an event the place to be on a given weekend.

The Fairfield County Concours d'Elegance of Westport, CT, is one such place. In its eight years of existence, it has established itself on the spacious and gracious grounds of the Fairfield County Hunt Club, filling the Saturday of the weekend with car club and seminar events as well as an autism charity benefit tour masterminded by noted vintage rally masters Rich and Jean Taylor.

Building on the Presenting Sponsorship of Porsche Cars North America, which arrived in 2008, auctioneers Bonhams brought their automobilia and motorcars auction to the show in 2010, signaling another major step forward.

For 2011, it all seemed to come together in the effortless way the best shows do in their prime.

Clubs and cars galore

The Classic Car Club of America's Metro and New England Regions held a Grand Classic at the show on Saturday, with the winners of their concours judging invited to be shown in a special display on Sunday's Concours field. Also on the field Saturday were the New England Region Ferrari Club of America, Jaguar Club of Southern New England, Maserati Club of America Northeast Region, the CT/Westchester and NYC/LI sections of the Mercedes-Benz Club, the Audi Club of North America's Northeast Chapter and the Connecticut Valley Region of the Porsche Club of America, with one

winning car from each invited to Sunday's show.

Between Saturday and Sunday, the ample grounds of the Hunt Club welcomed more than 10,000 spectators. Sunday saw more than 100 cars and motorcycles arrayed in chronological order from 1903 to 2011, as well as 83 cars in special and featured classes. Entrants came from as far as The Netherlands, the U.K. and California.

Special displays included Formula 1 cars highlighted by the 2009 Force India VJM02 in which Giancarlo Fisichella finished 2nd at Spa. Team Principal Vijay Mallya entered the car.

Other cars on display seen were racers driven by James Hunt and Peter Revson, as well as a 1931 Bugatti Type 51GP. Also honored was the legendary Chrysler Hemi V8 engine, with an assortment of Hemi-equipped machines that ranged from a Cunningham C-3 — one of three on the field — a Chrysler Ghia SWB Prototype

and even a Hemi-powered generator.

One of the judged featured classes included a salute to the Jaguar E-type's 50th anniversary, and the class boasted James Strickland's 1961 E-type roadster chassis number 006, a lightweight competition coupe from the Collier Collection and Mallya's D-type, which showed where it all started.

Barn finds — and preservation

The Fairfield County Concours pioneered the showing of barn find cars, and its second annual national search yielded such gems as the last "lost" Cunningham C-3, a Mini Cooper and a delightful Lancia Appia.

To illustrate the difference between barn find and preservation, a FIVA-sponsored Pre-War Preservation class was on the field, with the nod going to a wonderfully kept 1930 Ford Model A Tudor, which beat stiff competition from a host of luxury classics.

Each year, the concours honors people in the hobby who have worked to broaden the reach of the community, and this year's recipients of the "Sharing the Passion" award were the Featured Artist, writer and SCMer Peter Egan, for his years of great storytelling about life with cars and motorcycles, and McKeel Hagerty for his work in establishing the Collectors Foundation Operation Ignite! for youth involvement, and the Historic Vehicle Association, the North American affiliate of FIVA.

Top honors, or the **Grand Prix d'Honneur Domestic**, went to the stunning 1929 Stutz M-8 of Ralph Marano Sr., and the foreign prize went to the majestic 1926 Hispano-Suiza 6B of Frank Ricciardelli.

SCM, a founding sponsor of the show, awards a trophy for **Significant Vehicle**, chosen and presented by yours truly, the show's emcee. This year's winner was a wonderful little Italian racer, the name of which was almost longer than the car — a 1955 Gilco-OSCA-Comirato Special owned by SCMer Robert Wilder.

It has also been said that a measure of a great show are the vehicles in which spectators arrive. And although there were no Hispano-Suizas spotted, a look through the parking fields of the 2011 Fairfield County Concours revealed another show unto itself, further proof if any were needed that this show has well and truly arrived. ♦

Details

Plan ahead: September 15–16, 2012
Cost: \$35
More: www.fairfieldcountyncours.com



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