

In the early morning hours every Father's Day for the past 24 years, unique, exotic and distinctive examples of automotive history prowl the quiet streets of Beverly Hills.

Transporters disgorge cars that usually reside in museums. A two-block span of Rodeo Drive - usually the province of shoppers, tourists and paparazzi - is closed off by the city for the day and turned over to the mechanical horde.

The Rodeo Drive Concours d'Elegance isn't a fancy car show held on a golf course with beautiful people in designer clothing sipping from flutes of champagne who have paid handsomely for the privilege. Rather the event feels more like a group of car enthusiast

got together, invited some friends to bring their cars out for a day, talked some of the local exotic car dealers to join with current offerings, and convinced the city to give them a venue for a day. In reality, that's exactly how it started and how it continues to operate.



# Competition Continues on Rodeo Drive



story and photos by Kevin Ehrlich and Mary Fischer

The event is open to the public without admission. Free. No tickets or reservations required. Over a hundred cars are lined up along the curbs and arrayed at intersections for the entire day and all of it is open for anyone to walk in and have a look.



The geographical proximity to some of the world's best car museums (such as the Nethercutt Collection and the Mullin Automotive Museum) and private collections means that the Concours attracts entries that would normally be difficult to see otherwise. Ironically, this occurs in the midst of exclusive stores with high dollar inventories with some noting "by appointment only" lettering on the front doors. But the result is a unique event comprised of an incredible collection of cars presented to anyone interested in an informal and spectator friendly environment.

Some years feature a theme but other years it is simply an interesting assortment of entries. There clearly is a degree of curation necessary as the entries change each year, and to ensure the variety on display every year. Walking along Rodeo Drive, one appreciates the broad assortment of new and old and of rare and collectible next to merely beautiful and well maintained. No one marque dominates, but it is usually a safe bet that the usual suspects of Ferrari, Lamborghini, Porsche, Aston Martin, Mercedes, McLaren, Jaguar, Bentley, and Bugatti will be there. Classics like Duesenberg, Chrysler, Cadillac, Delahaye, Packard, Pierce-Arrow and Rolls Royce are usually represented as well.

Novelties that may be less known like Voisin, Tucker, Morgan, and Koenigsegg have their own compelling stories to tell. (The amount of history in those four marques alone are enough to fill books.)

The 2017 edition was no different. The skies were blue and the sun shone through the palm trees lining Rodeo Drive. Boy scout troops set up booths to sell water to thirsty visitors. A variety of food trucks are parked on the side streets. Fathers with children, both young and older, walked along the sidewalks and the pavement, admiring the cars, stopping to chat with the owners and take photographs of their favorites. RM Sotheby's brought some featured cars that would be on the auction block at their upcoming Santa Monica auction. Always great to see a Ferrari F40 alongside a Mercedes 300SL roadster – both desirable, but two very different collector cars from two different marques and two different eras.

There was a variety of interesting Mercedes from various eras. A 300SL gullwing stretched its doors to the sky, providing the family companion to the roadster version further down





the block. A beautiful crème 1965 220 coupe provided a timeless example of two door motoring style. A two-tone green 1936 290 Cabriolet A gleamed with sparking wire wheels, large headlines, and long, swoopy fenders. An extensive restoration returned the car to a state better than factory-new. The Cabriolet was one of many along Rodeo Drive that had been previously shown at other high-profile concours like Pebble Beach.

A stunning black 1961 Mercedes 300D with a recent restoration completed by the Mercedes Benz Classic center in Irvine had its own presence. Highly polished wood trim, rich red leather interior and a complete luggage and picnic set (wine glasses included!)



tucked in the trunk gave testament to the time, effort and craftsmanship invested to restore it to its pristine condition.

Several vintage Ferraris and Porsches from the 1950s and 1960s also graced the boulevard. Porsche aficionados could linger on one of several Porsche 356 examples on display. Further along, a rare and valuable 1958 Ferrari 250 Tour de France coupe was parked. It is one of only 77 originally built for customer racing in the late 1950s. While this particular chassis never raced, it spent several years in the late 1960s in the company of the General Motors design staff in Detroit who used it for inspiration. Less rare (at least in Ferrari production terms), but still valuable, a bright yellow 1967 Ferrari 275 GTB/4 took up residence in front of the Luxe Hotel amidst signs for Rolex and Patek Philippe watches. Any of those alone would be a feature at almost any other car show elsewhere in the country.



For those fans favoring more modern machinery, offerings from Ferrari, Porsche, and McLaren mixed among the more seasoned cars. A pair of new Ferraris on one end looked for new buyers while a 2014 LaFerrari graced the curb in front of Cartier.



On the other end of Rodeo Drive, a trio of McLaren supercars certainly held their own. The McLarens from Auto Gallery were low, flat, exotic and striking as they were set against the backdrop of glass and stone storefronts and colorful blooming rose bushes.

The Porsche Design shop not only featured new Porsche road cars, but also had a Porsche 919 show car. The timing was perfect as the 24 Hours of LeMans had just concluded in France earlier in the morning with Porsche claiming an overall victory.



The Beverly Hills Fire Department provided their 1928 Ahrens-Fox fire engine. The City of Beverly Hills was the original owner and used it from 1928 to 1966. Thereafter the engine was put in storage until a restoration began in 1982. The restoration, which took 13 months and 3200 hours, was performed by inmates assigned to the fire department at the California Rehabilitation Center in Norco, California.

If all of this sounds like fun, circle Father's Day on your 2018 calendar and make plans to visit next year. After all, the setting is beautiful, the entries world-class, and the admission price just can't be beat.