

Firing on All Cylinders in Atlanta

A fresh concours comes into its own in its second year

Story and photos by Mark Moskowitz



Rob and Leah Adams' 1956 Arnott Sports Special 1100 roadster won the Karen L. Krix "Spirit of the Atlanta Concours" trophy

All things considered, it's surprising that the Atlanta Concours on Château Élan's 18th fairway didn't happen sooner.

Atlanta is a car town. It launched one of NASCAR's first super speedways in 1960, its historic Road Atlanta exists in the upper pantheon of U.S. sports car circuits, and the city's Caffeine and Octane hosts more than 3,000 cars each month.

Granted, roadblocks can stop a concours before any cars hit the field, but those can disappear when you enlist the help of Don Panoz, a true car guy who facilitated the development of the sports cars and Le Mans class-winning racers that bear his name.

Panoz is also the developer of Château Élan, the 3,500-acre winery and resort that the Atlanta Concours calls home. And it has not hurt to have Mercedes-Benz and Porsche as concours supporters — both have their U.S. headquarters in Atlanta.

These synergies and a host of hard-working volunteers carried the Atlanta Concours past its first year in 2016 and through a more-than-successful second year on September 30 and October 1.

This year's event featured separate classes of Ford, Chevrolet, Cadillac and Chrysler's fabulous finned cars from the '50s and '60s. There was also a class featuring Lozier, a performance and luxury vehicle produced over 10 years in the early 20th century. Seven Loziers — perhaps the largest gathering since production — were displayed.

Jeff Chaffin, who admits to "always being obsessed with Brass cars," displayed a 1908 Lozier Model H Briarcliff. "The factory wanted the car raced; you could buy an optional larger accessory fuel tank, and the body came off with the removal of four bolts... The factory manual instructed the driver not to shift into fourth until you hit 60 mph!"

Unique stories and unique cars dotted the fairway. Robert Johns found his wife "hesitant" when he brought home his ivory 1941 Cadillac Series 62 convertible. "It drips and it smells," she said. A restoration, multiple wedding appearances, and reliability on a few 200-mile trips brought acceptance. "People smile at us and we smile back."

Tim Lingerfelt won the Early Porsche class. He had purchased his then-red convertible from Virginia Porsche guru Weldon Scroggum. Both had been surprised when the restoration process revealed orange paint; Lingerfelt relayed that it was the only 1965 356C cabriolet made in that color.

Floridian Frank Rubino brought a rarely seen Silverstone Healey, and Rob and Leah Adams deservedly won the Karen L. Krix "Spirit of the Atlanta Concours" trophy for their 1956 Arnott Sports Special 1100, a Coventry Climax-powered racer and creation of Daphne Arnott.

Best of Show American was the 1930 Packard 745 SP phaeton of Chip Cofer from nearby Tucker. Its award-winning restoration was completed in 1986. It sported a dual cowl and Pilot-Ray Self Steering Automatic Safety Lights; both were Packard factory options.

Best of Show European was the black-on-black 1937 Mercedes-Benz 540K Cabriolet of the Evergreen Collection — a 2016 Mercedes-Benz Star of Excellence award winner at Pebble Beach. Owner Steve Plaster had taken delivery of it just five months earlier. He had planned to fix a few dents and repair the supercharger prior to the show. "It was a snowball restoration: we had to remove the fenders to fix the supercharger, we found imperfections in the frame and more... we ended up investing more than 5,000 man hours."

Event celebrities included Publisher Keith Martin, who served as chief judge and moderator throughout the weekend, and honoree Bob Varsha, an Atlanta resident and a pioneer in Formula One race reporting in a then-less-than-receptive United States. Varsha also helped characterize and popularize Barrett-Jackson auctions as TV spectacles.

The 2017 Atlanta Concours was a success. Sponsors were varied and plentiful. Support from the local and national car collector communities was evident and encouraged by initiatives like the Magnificent Seven, allowing seven great cars from the Saturday "Drivers" show to appear again on Sunday for the main event and compete for their own trophies. Crowds approached 3,000 each day. By all measures a fabulous start for a very young concours in a town devoted to cars. ♦