

Octane

Fuelling the passion



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THE REST OF THE BEST

You've seen the Pebble Beach winner. Here are some other all-time greats

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IT'S TOO EASY to dismiss the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance as an event that's dominated by Duesenbergs and other massive American cars of the Grand Classic era. But there's always a surprise in store, ever since the Preservation Class first stunned the crowds with unrestored relics in 2001. This year it was American Dream Cars of the 1960s, those flights of fancy that predicted a future that would never come to pass.

Few were more exciting in their day than custom car supremo Gene Winfield's *Reactor*, with its electrically retracting canopy, a car so futuristic (and so blatantly un-precognitive) that it even starred in *Star Trek* and *Batman*. 'Eartha Kitt drove it as Catwoman,' says Winfield. 'She was so short, we had to put a

cushion behind her.' Other wacky cars included the Lane Museum's 1967 Gyro-X, a two-wheeler powered by a BMC A-series engine and kept upright on its *two wheels* by a gyroscope that spins constantly at 3000rpm. Barking mad – and easily the most interesting car to see in action at the start of the preceding Pebble Tour. It didn't get much further.

To make the most of Pebble Beach, it's worth turning up when the fairways are still in darkness and many of the exhibits under cover. Make your way round with the 'dawn patrol' and you'll even score a souvenir hat. Without the crowds (and they soon build) in the way, you get an unfettered view of the cars. You're also treated to the sight of many



of them on the move, as they arrive to take their place by one of the most picturesque coastlines anywhere.

Appropriately, by the beautiful (and almost unique: it's one of two built) Aston Martin DBSC Touring Coupé, *Octane* runs into Aston design chief Marek Reichman, an honorary judge. 'Yes, I have a favourite,' he divulges. 'But I'm not allowed to tell you what it is. I have to follow protocol!' he smiles mischievously.

And what of that mysterious process? 'It's all over by 11.30,' says Jonathan Stein. 'We each judge a class, and it's a big class if there are seven or eight cars. I had a class of six.'

The clock ticks ever closer to the main announcement and tension mounts. Rolls-Royce design chief Giles Taylor is by the judges' enclosure, preparing himself. 'It's getting close to the moment now. I have to

present an award. It's such a spectacular event. So many special cars.'

Then there's Derek Bell: 'I've been judging all morning and I haven't finished yet. I've got to go and help decide who gets Best in Show.' That result you already know, but meanwhile special awards go to JD Classics founder Derek Hood for his spectacular '53 Bentley Continental in the Preservation Class, and to the crazy Gyro-X.

Ultimately, *Octane* catches up with winner Bruce McCaw on the ramp, a few minutes after the fireworks: 'I've been here many, many times and had the car several years. The question was whether to restore it or not.'

At which point Jochen Mass chips in: 'It's very well deserved, Bruce.' Indeed. And the last word goes to concours chairman Sandra Button: 'It's one of my favourite fields of any event. And this is such a beautiful car.'

Clockwise from bottom left, facing page

The irrepressible Gene Winfield with his *Reactor*, which appeared in *Star Trek* and *Batman*; Ferrari class celebrates the marque's 70th; '66 Bosley MkII Interstate restored following abandonment; 1960 Abarth 1000 Record Pininfarina Prototype hits the ramp; judging in progress; 1955 Alfa Romeo 1900 CSS Boano Coupé Speciale won the Post-War Closed class; Derek Bell with *Octane*'s Glen Waddington; stunning Ferrari racers; inside the ex-Bobby Darin DiDia 150 'dream car'; crowds as seen from the McLaren stand.