

Concorso Italiano 2010

Michael Rockich

Legions of Ferraris, vistas of Lamborghinis, literally wave after wave of sports cars and other exotics including Maseratis, De Tomaso Panteras and Mangustas, Alfa Romeos, Fiats, Lancias, and non Italian marques as well covered the soft green fairways at Laguna Seca Golf Ranch. One must see to believe. The occasion was the 25th iteration of the Concorso Italiano on August 13, one of the largest and most significant gatherings of Italian automobiles in the world.

The Ferrari F40 Reunion Group brought F40s in force to the Concorso Italiano to celebrate 20 years of the F40 being in the USA. This reunion follows the one held last year at Concorso for the Ferrari 288 GTO, another supercar, recognizing its 25th anniversary. The gathering of 288 GTOs was memorable as the largest number of these rare exotics ever seen in one location. Interestingly the successor to the 288 is the so called "bad boy" F40. The exciting, muscular, somewhat planar F40 contrasts sharply with its more curvaceous sister, the Ferrari F50, of which several were parked nearby. Take your pick of styles, both are lovely. The Ferrari F40 was styled by legendary car designer Leonardo Fioravanti, one of Concorso Italiano's guests of honor.

Numerous De Tomaso Panteras were represented, along with a few of the more uncommon De Tomaso Mangustas. The show preparation and the original touches and special treatments of owners to these exciting and racy cars were especially notable, demonstrating these models are not losing popularity and collector interest.

Notable was Bridgestone's large tent and exhibit. This is not the first time Bridgestone has gone to unusual lengths to provide a top exhibit. Under Bridgestone's tent was the Formula One racecar that seven time Grand Prix World Champion Michael Schumacher drove a few seasons back. The race car showed just how light and in certain aspects fragile an F1 racecar really is, as designers push high technology to the limits to achieve maximum performance on the race track. Bridgestone is and has been for a number of years the sole provider of tires for all Grand Prix F1 races worldwide.

Once again the grandstand area provided entertainment, a fashion show, and insightful commentary on selected vehicles driven across stage, giving the usual show of cars for those seated. The excellent commentary could be heard over the PA system for those choosing to keep walking by the cars and exhibits.

Another aspect of the Concorso is the opportunity to speak owners of the exotic cars. A number of owners often sit next to their cars during the event. Much can be learned by speaking with owners, as they love their cars, and often enjoy expounding on them.

The Concorso is not without its amusing moments. One admirer was trying to learn more about the Ferrari F40 by questioning two owners. Before the owners could respond, a third person seated with them would interject comments about the performance and acceleration of certain very aged six cylinder American made cars. This was all well and good as each marque has its fans. But a laughable duel ensued of how to obtain responses about the subject of the day, the F40s.

In another amusing scenario, a photographer was attempting to photograph a lovely black De Tomaso Pantera with a large trophy next to it. The photographer asked the owner, "May I remove the trophy for a photo please?" "Of course," replied the owner. After the picture, the photographer moved for a different angle, but found the trophy had been replaced once again obstructing the shot. This process amusingly repeated several times until the photographer gave up, thankfully not irately, realizing the owner's joy in reveling in the well earned the award.

The Concorso has fortunately returned to a golf course as of 2009, providing comfortable walking. But be cognizant that it would be difficult if not impossible to take in everything Concorso has to offer in the single day it takes place.