

NEWS

FOUR ONE-OF-A-KIND AUTOMOBILES TO APPEAR IN 20+ LITER CLASS AT 58th PEBBLE BEACH CONCOURS d'ELEGANCE®

*Vehicles with engines displacing over 20 liters will be on display,
including Jay Leno's tank car, two cars with P-51 aircraft engines and
the only non-racing 21.5-liter factory-built Benz*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. (Aug. 7, 2008) – Four vehicles with massive engines displacing more than 20 liters, or more than 1,220 cubic inches, will cast their shadows at the Aug. 17 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. The vehicles, including Tonight Show host Jay Leno's tank car, will be highlighted in a special 20 + Liter Class at the 58th annual event.

On display will be the only long-chassis 200 hp "Blitzen" Benz; a custom Rolls-Royce modified to fit a massive 27-liter Rolls-Royce Merlin aircraft engine taken directly from a P-51 fighter plane; and a car utilizing the same P-51 engine on a hand-fabricated chassis known as the 1953 Swandean Spitfire Special. Standing out as the sole modern offering will be Leno's entirely custom tank car, aptly named for the 30-liter V12 Chrysler-built engine derived from an M-47 Patton tank.

"It's just ridiculous and probably the most inefficient fueled vehicle ever devised," said Leno. "There's no practical purpose to it other than it's just fun and people get a kick out of seeing it. In an era where things are getting smaller and smaller, this is a throwback to a time when things were really, really big."

While Leno's car is entirely custom built, with a wheelbase of more than 15 feet, early race car expert and longtime Pebble Beach entrant George Wingard's 1913 200 hp Blitzen Benz is one of the largest examples of early factory efforts to boost performance by increasing displacement. One of six famed Blitzen Benz cars, and the only one built with an extended chassis and a four-seat body, it set multiple speed-records throughout the 1920s.

"Early race car engines were almost always four cylinders," said Wingard. "Until manufacturers discovered engine balancing, increasing power meant increasing engine size, which resulted in cars that created tremendous amounts of torque. The power in the Benz submerges you into the seat and driving it is like nothing you've ever experienced."

These 20-plus-liter engines are some of the largest, most powerful ever used in automobiles. To put this into perspective, massive semi-truck engines, used to haul up to 65-ton loads, generally top out at 13 liters. And unlike modern gasoline powered cars, these giant powerplants reach their peak output at less than 3000 rpm – less than one-fifth of today's Formula One race car.

According to Wingard, “One of the P-51-powered cars will do 140 mph in third gear alone. It’s incredibly fast but, unlike Jay’s tank car, has a narrow wheelbase to cut through the wind, making it a hair-raising experience at speed.”

The 20-liter club class is a one-year-only display, competing among 200 of the world’s premier automobiles along the 18th fairway of Pebble Beach Golf Links®.

“This is a tongue-and-cheek class not based on anything but fun,” said Leno. “I go every year to the Concours – it’s the premier event of the year. The nice thing is that no matter how big of a car fan you are, I almost guarantee that every year there is a car you’ve never heard of that was built in some obscure period in Bulgaria... or wherever.

“I’m not even sure my car will be able to make it around the corner down there at Pebble Beach, so we’ll see what happens.”

First conducted in 1950, the Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance® (www.pebblebeachconcours.net) has grown to become the world’s premier celebration of the automobile. Only the most beautiful and rare cars are invited to appear on the famed 18th fairway of Pebble Beach Golf Links®, and connoisseurs of art and style flock to see these masterpieces. Charitable donations raised by the Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance® now total over \$10 million. Related events include the Pebble Beach Tour d’Elegance™ presented by Rolex, Pebble Beach RetroAuto™, and the Pebble Beach® Auction presented by Gooding & Company.

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