

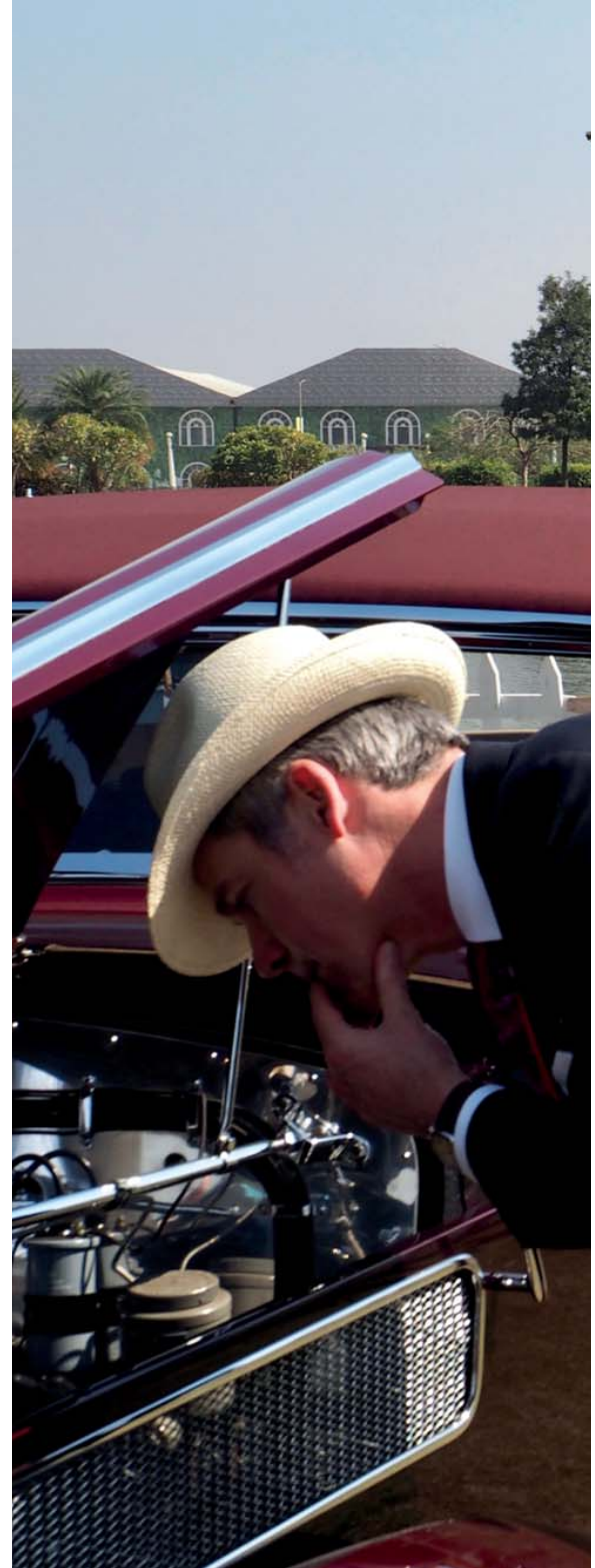


A PASSAGE TO INDIA

History was front and centre at this year's 21 Gun Salute International Vintage Car Rally in New Delhi.

Is emotion a sack of potatoes, so much the pound, to be measured out? Am I a machine?" to borrow a line from E.M. Forster's 1924 novel, *A Passage to India*. Well, there was plenty of emotion shown over machines at the 2018 21 Gun Salute International Vintage Car Rally and Concours Show held in New Delhi, India.

This magnificent event featured a romantic drive through the administrative heart of the city, around all the landmarks laid out by architect Edwin Landseer Lutyens (1869 -1944). This year's event was a luxurious affair – think black tie dinners at the homes of Maharajahs; traditional and unique dance entertainment from the different regions of India; a tour of the National Railway Museum; hip motorbikes and scooters; culinary delights such as Hyderabadi Dum Biryani, Machher Jhol, Rogan Josh, Sorpotel, Meen Vevicahthu;



VINTAGE CARS

by James Nicholls





and last but certainly not least well over 100 Veteran, Edwardian, Vintage and classic cars including international entrants from the USA, Australia, the Seychelles, Italy and the United Kingdom. As well as the international entrants held in such high regard locally, there were participants from Delhi, Kanpur, Jaipur, Udaipur, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur.

On the morning of 17 February, all gathered at the landmark India Gate, Lutyens' architectural memorial, to those who fell in the Great War and the third Anglo-Afghan War, between 1914 and 1921. As the vehicles gathered so to did the crowd for what was to be the start of one of the largest classic car rallies ever seen in Asia. Flagged off by the posse of dignitaries at the start line, the parade through Lutyens' Delhi (in somewhat disorderly fashion at times) made its way through the Inner Circle Road, along Raj Path (or King's Way) Road, Vijay Chowk, South Avenue Road, past the Nehru Memorial Museum on the Shanti Path Road, the PanchSheel Marg and ultimately, 36 hectic (traffic in Delhi needs to be experienced to be believed) kilometres later, to the Ambience Greens Golf Course in nearby Guragon.

Notable mentions

The cars in their different classes were laid out, Pebble Beach-style, on the golf course, which was designed by the Hawaiian firm, Nelson & Haworth, and where it's possible to tee off at 9pm due to the floodlights. Over two days, 24 members of the international jury from Australia (myself included), Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Monaco, the Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States walked the course more times than if they were competing at the Open Championships. This was no handicap though as the wonderful machines brought together by Madan Mohan, one of India's largest collectors and the brains behind the event, elicited an enormous amount of enthusiasm among the judges. As Forster said, emotion was not to be

measured by the pound – certainly not in this case.

Lovely cars all, but a few deserve special mention. The Preservation Class won by the 1946 Chrysler Windsor with runners-up being a 1955 Fiat and a 1939 Lagonda V12, was conducted under the auspices of FIVA, the Fédération Internationale des Véhicules Anciens, with the organisation's President, Patrick Rollet of Belgium in attendance. The three standout cars of the whole event however were the 1922 Bentley 3-litre, the 1939 Delage and the 1937 Gurney Nutting Rolls-Royce.

The 1922 Bentley 3-litre, chassis number 141, engine number 62, was brought all the way from Perth, Western Australia (actually en route home from last year's Concours of Elegance at Hampton Court) by its owners Peter and Robin Briggs and two of their charming grandchildren. The car was the first ever Bentley to run in the first Le Mans 24 Hour Race in May 1923 finishing fourth and setting the inaugural lap record, thus establishing the tradition for those Bentley Boys' victories to follow. As well as winning its class in Delhi, it also won an award for most significant competition car and as a runner-up for Best in Show.

The other runner-up for Best in Show, winner of its class, and also for most significant international entrant was the 1939 Delage D8-120, chassis 51760 with coachwork by Henri Chapron. This stunning car is owned by Peter and Merle Mullin from California. The Mullins own the Mullin Automotive Museum in Oxnard, which could be considered a tribute to the French automobile. The Delage's original owner was a French general of the Vichy Government. After the war in 1946, he sent the car to California, but being unable to obtain a visa for himself he shot off to Argentina having sold the car to RKO Studios whence it was to appear in the 1951 Oscar winning movie, *An American in Paris* starring Gene Kelly, Leslie Caron and the music of George Gershwin. Peter

Mullin, the car's fourth owner, purchased this graceful automobile in 1987. Since then, it has taken part in many Concours d'Elegance with outstanding results.

A deserving winner

To beat these two cars, it meant that the winner of the 2018 21 Gun Salute Concours had to be a simply amazing vehicle and it is. The 1937 Rolls-Royce 25/30 owned by local D. Gidwaney is beautifully presented and features a stunning cabriolet body. It is only one of two of its kind ever built by Gurney Nutting, famous in coach building with

the company's work synonymous with Rolls-Royce, Royalty and Art Deco styling in motor cars. Gurney Nutting is perhaps most famous for its body work on the 1930 Blue Train Bentley, and Malcolm Campbell's Blue Bird land speed record car, but also had a strong association with India. It was fitting then that the Best in Show was the Gurney Nutting all weather Rolls-Royce cabriolet chassis number GR048, supplied new to HH Maharajah of Drabhanga, and which made everyone's draw drop in appreciation when first seen in the mist of early Saturday morning at India Gate. **J**



THE WINNERS CIRCLE

After much deliberation, checking, double-checking, the combined knowledge and expertise of the jury decided upon the following class winners.

Pre-War Classic: <i>European</i>	1939 Delage D8- 120
Pre-War Classic: <i>American</i>	1929 Graham Paige Tourer
Post-War Classic: <i>European</i>	1966 Volvo 122 Amazon
Post-War Classic: <i>American</i>	1960 Pontiac Parisienne
MG Classic	1965 MGB GT
Convertible & Roadster: <i>American</i>	1952 Cadillac Series 62
Convertible & Roadster: <i>European</i>	1963 Sunbeam Alpine SIII
Rolls-Royce Classic	1937 Rolls-Royce 25/30 Gurney Nutting
Bentley Classic	1922 Bentley Le Mans 3-litre
Limousine	1940 Buick 90 Ltd
Preservation Class	1946 Chrysler Windsor
Pre-War Italian Class	1926 Fiat 503
Post-War Italian Class	967 Alfa-Romeo GT 1300 Junior
Italian Piccolo	1955 Fiat 1100