



# UMC 272 The Italian Job

by Keeran J. Waltenberg  
Photos by Daniel A. Waltenberg



## Prelude

The hand-built car, the smooth silhouette deftly crafted by experienced hands; my initiation into the world of Aston Martins four years ago, thanks to my husband, was also the day I could no longer look at modern, machine-made cars with the same eye.

Then our Aston Martin was accepted into

this year's Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este and there was no turning back! Surely the beauty of classic cars far surpasses modern ones and leaves an indelible impression on the eye. I was given the task of writing a brief on my long weekend escapade from Singapore to the Concorso.

The Concorso took place from 23 to 25 April at no other than the world heritage site, the Grand Hotel Villa d'Este in Cernobbio by Lake Como. This year 50 exquisite classics were accepted including two of the most important Aston Martin DB2s: the 1949 DB2 with chassis number LML/19/14,



UMC 272 – The Italian Job



UMC 272 at Villa d'Este.

UMC 272, and the 1950 DB2 Works team car with chassis number LML/50/8, VMP 64.

The volcanic eruptions spewing ash clouds and the consequent ban on air travel meant that I really did not know if I would make it; the uncertainty was unbearable. But my die-hard positive attitude paid off and at 8.00pm on Wednesday, 21 April, as we were enjoying some Peking duck on a balmy evening, Singapore Airlines announced that flights to Milan were to resume on 22 April – "Yes! Villa d'Este here I come!"

## Friday 23 April

The skies were overcast and it started to rain. Not the kind of weather suitable for a Concorso. The event started off with the registration and meticulous FIVA checks by the committee to ensure that the classics were what they claimed to be. The entrance porch to Villa d'Este was transformed into an exciting prelude to the Concorso as the special automobiles were driven up one by one for inspection. As we had completed this part of the event before lunch, we took the opportunity to discover the town of Como.

The organisation by BMW was impeccable. Participants were offered the latest luxury BMW models with chauffeurs to take them wherever they wished to go for some sightseeing or a wander. We decided to drop off at the centre of Como and, after an inevitable stop by a ladies' boutique, we headed off to a small south Italian sea food restaurant, La Cucina Di Elsa, a recommendation by the very happy boutique manager. She could not have done any better as the food was simply divine and the 'insalata di mare' fabulously fresh. We would have loved to explore more of Como but we had to leave to attend the participants' briefing back at the Grand Hotel Villa d'Este.

This year the historic cars were grouped



Lake Como on Saturday morning.

into eight different classes: three for pre-war and five for post-war cars. A: pre-war competition cars; B: pre-war open sports cars; C: pre-war open 4-seaters; D: closed 2-door cars from 1935 – 1950; E: post-war open sports cars; F: post-war closed sports cars; G: post-war competition cars; H: Styling studies 1952 – 1965. The committee judged the cars on the spirit of elegance of the cars and this was based on four criteria: quality of restoration, state of presentation, history and rarity.

Our Aston Martin UMC 272 was placed in class F post-war closed sports cars. It is the first DB2 prototype road car fitted with the 2.6 litre 6-cylinder Lagonda-Bentley engine built for David Brown. UMC 272 was showing herself again in Italy 60 years after she won the concours d'elégance of the second Coppa Inter-Europa meeting in Monza in 1950. At the very same event Lance Macklin raced UMC 272 and came second in his class and fourth overall with an average speed of 85.90mph. Will history repeat itself? The suspense of what would transpire the next day was exhilarating.

After the briefing, participants were invited to cocktails and the inaugural dinner.



UMC 272 at the FIVA check.





Preparing for the Concorso.

**Saturday 24 April (Private Event)**

We woke up to a beautiful day, there were no signs of any rain and the weather was turning out to be exactly what the Concorso had ordered. Breakfast was remarkable and the Italian sweet breads simply delicious.

There was a strict schedule starting from 8.30am for owners to ensure their cars were properly displayed on the grounds at the designated times. Eager participants and their entourage could be seen cleaning and polishing their cars over and over again. Our workshop specialist and friend, Rene Wagner, prepared UMC 272. Judging started at 9.30am with two groups of judges (each group had three judges) visiting each car and spending between five and eight minutes per car. This is the spirit of the Concorso. Each and every owner was proud of their entry and took their roles very seriously. Owners were prepared and put up their best presentations for their cars, complete with pictures and historical



Jackie Stewart, Urs Ramseier and my husband.

records. The line-up of 50 cars included rarities from Alfa Romeo, Bentley, Bugatti, Duesenberg, with coachmakers like Gurney Nutting, Pininfarina, Zagato, just to mention a few. The Grand Hotel Villa d'Este was turned into a big boys' playground. Having said that, I dare say that big girls were also entertained.

After the buffet lunch, participants had to prepare for the parade on the display grounds through the terrace of the hotel before the jury and participants. It was exciting to be driven in UMC 272 through the enthusiastic crowds as the talented Mr Kidston provided very interesting

commentary on each car's unique history in English and Italian. The winner of the Coppa d'Oro Villa d'Este was announced and the prize went to a 1955 Maserati, A6GCS, Spider by Frua. Participants were then invited to a boat shuttle on Lake Como and later to cocktails and dinner at the Villa Erba.

**Sunday 25 April (Public Event)**

The public exhibition of cars at the Villa Erba started at 9.30am and there was a record turn-out of visitors. The cars were once again inspected by the jury and there was also a public referendum on the BMW Italian



VMF 64, the 1950 Works team car.



Checking UMC 272.

Trophy for Historic Cars and the Concorso d'Eleganza Design Awards for Concept Cars and Prototypes. You will find all winners in the website mentioned at the end of this piece.

At 2.30pm all classics were again presented to the public and invited guests. Once again, I revelled in the drive over a red carpet amidst cheers from the passionate Italian guests. The car was then very carefully driven back to the car park at Villa d'Este.

Class winners for Historic Cars were exhibited on the terrace of the Grand Hotel Villa d'Este which provided a breathtaking view for guests from the hotel's main ballroom where the gala dinner was held. An award was then presented to the winner of the BMW Group Trophy Best of Show by the Jury. The evening culminated in a grand display of fireworks and with the perfect weather and the intoxicating Lake Como breeze, many guests chose to continue with relaxing banter and drinks on the terrace by the lake. For some of us who needed a little more action the evening continued with cool dancing back in the hotel.

**Monday 26 April**

Alas, the Concorso was over and the breakfast room seemed like a ghost-town without the now distant laughter and excitement of the participants. I had a flight to catch at noon and my long weekend was coming to an end. I wished I could have stayed a bit longer; we never wish for good things to end, do we? That's the beautiful thing about life, we treasure special moments and then have a choice of planning our paths to more pleasurable moments to come.

Another Aston at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este 2011? Perhaps ... till then!

For the list of winners, please visit [www.concorsodeleganzavilladeste.com](http://www.concorsodeleganzavilladeste.com)

From "Moments of Inspiration" by Keeran J. Waltenberg



The talented Mr Kidston provided commentary in English and Italian.



Keeran and husband Daniel with UMC 272.