



Crowds see concours cars on parade at Kuwait City Marina

Astons Reign at the Kuwait Concours d'Elegance

by Jim Utaski

Aston Martins featured prominently at the newest major international show, the Kuwait Concours d'Elegance. Now in its third year, this still-improving event on the concours circuit strives to quickly achieve international importance and recognition. Its location, in the heart of the Middle East, makes it unique in many ways. It is hosted by the former Prime Minister of Kuwait, His Highness Sheik Nasser Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, who is himself an avid car aficionado. It is clear that Sheik Nasser has a world-class event in mind and is intent on improving the experience for all involved.

Before going to the impressive line-up of Astons, I'll share some of the other unusual characteristics of this event.

- The cars are available to public viewing for 3 days, instead of the usual 1-day 10.00 am to 4.00 pm schedule. Did I say days? The largest crowds appear after dark and under stadium quality outdoor lighting. Probably due to the intense heat of the day, most of the tours/crowds build quickly after sundown. The Sheik himself toured and spoke with each exhibitor on Wednesday night at the Opening Ceremony, along with a large entourage including TV cameras, paparazzi and the Chief Judge, Leonardo Fioravanti. Mr Fioravanti was the Director of Design at Pininfarina for 24 years during which many legendary designs became Ferrari reality.
- Something for everyone is another characteristic easily sensed. There were 60

invited concours cars in four historic classes divided by build years, along with 10 racing cars and a further nine Grand Prix cars. The 16 'Muscle Cars' of the 1960s and 1970s, all US made, were an unusual addition to the range, as were the Hollywood full-size movie cars from the Pixar animated movie *Cars* – Lightning McQueen anyone? Kids loved it. If you're counting, that's over 100 cars, each class set to an appropriate background of their own. Frankly, I was a bit jealous of the Grand Prix cars' location behind blue velvet ropes set aside a stone sea wall facing the flotilla of yachts in the harbour at the marina.

- The depth of international owner representation was also unexpected. Of the 57 cars actually present in the Concours



1923 AM Side-valve Tourer. Oldest Aston – first to arrive in Kuwait

Class of Historics, 17 different countries were represented. Included in the list beyond Kuwait were owners from Pakistan, Egypt, Japan and Bahrain; most European countries were represented and there were five entries from the USA.

- A hardcover book of photos and histories of all the entries is published with 2–4 pages devoted to each car in two languages. A remarkable keepsake.
- You know you are 'somewhere else' when you see a camel being guided along the seashore, or hear dignified ceremonial chanting; exotic palm trees you can only imagine seeing in Las Vegas, with many spectators in traditional dress of ladies in black robes and men in white.

Another aspect of the event you might not expect from a new concours, unless they have high aspirations, was the level of experience among the large group of judges. To pick just a few names familiar in the USA: Marek Reichman, Director of Design for Aston Martin; Ulrich Bez, CEO of Aston Martin; Horst Bruning, President of FIVA; Sandra Button, Executive Director of Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance; and Andrea Zagato, current head of Coachwork Zagato.

There was also a chance for the public to see all the cars, not just the winners, do a parade lap around the marina, although some of the more enthusiastic entrants chose to do a lap or two outside the official grounds on Kuwait city streets.

Speaking of sights which spark the imagination, one of the offered tours was into the surrounding desert: imagine a football field of sand covered with Persian rugs, kites

flying in a desert wind, minarets of the city behind and you have Walt Disney's Middle East vision of flying carpets, Sultan's Arabian horses, camels and falcons aside white tents at a palm studded oasis.

Back at the Concours, the sight of rare machines like a red Ferrari 250GT Breadvan, or a Maserati 250F Tipo 61 'Birdcage', or the silver and blue 1938 Talbot Lago 150 'Teardrop coupé', the eventual Best of Show Winner brought by Chip Connor, Hong Kong, brings you back to the fact that you came here for a unique car show.

Before you even enter the Concours cars area, you are treated to a huge display at the Aston Martin Outdoor Showroom specially built in an all white and glass two-storey structure. All the current offerings are there, including the latest production version of the V12 Aston Martin Zagato. Work Service offered a smaller display, including a DB5 and DB2/4. Overseeing the lot, Managing Director of Aston Martin Works Service, Kingsley Riding-Felce, clearly would have won a prize (though not offered) for the Briton Best Dressed all 4 days.

If you are keen to see vintage Astons, including those you may not know existed, this was a great opportunity. Let's start with the oldest Aston – a one-of-one 1923 Aston Martin Side-valve Racing Car, owned by US AMOC West Member Peter Read, appropriately shown by Pete Racely. The next rarity was a 1939 Aston Martin 15/98 Open Sports, coachwork by Abbey, one of 25 of this model entered and shown by the AMOC East Vice Chair Don Rose.

The next, a 1949 DB2 Prototype one-of-four – this one built for Sir David Brown himself

and originally used for his personal transport. It raced by the next owner in the 1950 Targa Florio and Coppa InterEuropa at Monza. This car was last seen at Villa d'Este in 2010, now owned by Swiss AMOC Member Daniel Waltenburg.

Can we get rarer yet? How about a racing 1953 DB3 not in Spyder form? Yes, a coupé,



1966 DB6 Short Chassis Volante. First in class – Works Service Restoration



1963 DB4GT Zagato. William Loughren and family smile in Best European Car



1939 AM 15/98 Open Sport. Don Rose acknowledges applause



1949 AM DB2 Prototype. Daniel Waltenberg takes Nick Mee up to the podium

another custom car built for racing in the 1953 racing season. Its best finish: a seventh place at Goodwood. Wait, there's more. David Brown's daughter later owned it for 3 years and also raced it. She also had the only Aston custom wood dashboard installed. The current owner, Uls Mueller, also an AMOC Member, Swiss Section, tells me he has only shown the car twice at concours since 1998 as it is still used for racing throughout Europe.

The award for Class C runner-up, 1946-1960, was taken by a 1958 DB2/4 Mk I in green owned by Ali Mustafa Mahkseed of Kuwait. He was overjoyed at the Awards Ceremonies with a Class Award given the pedigree of the 19 cars in this remarkable class. The fourth Aston in this class, 1958 Aston Martin DB2/4 Mk III in cream, also of Kuwait, is owned by Sheik Mubarak S. Al-Sabah.

In Class D, 1961-1975, there was an Aston last seen at Villa d'Este in 2011. It's another rarity, one-of-19, the 1963 Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato owned by AMOC UK Member William Loughran. The Zagato won the award for Best European Car, no surprise there. It received even more than

the usual high attention as it could be easily compared with the latest V12 Aston Zagato with its designer Andrea Zagato present. This DB4GT/0189 was the last Zagato GT built.

The Class D winner among 15 entrants was a recently completed restoration by the Aston Works Service itself: a 1966 Aston Martin DB6 Short Chassis Volante owned by Mohammed Rezam AlRoumi of Kuwait. It was ivory with crimson Connolly leather and top, one of the short run of only 37 cars on the remaining DB5 chassis.

As we near 'overheating' on the one-offs, Brown's ownership and the short production runs, I close with another very unusual car. A 1972 Aston Martin DBS Ogle Design owned by the Kuwait Historic, Vintage & Classic Cars Museum itself. Based on the DBS V8, the body was done in fibreglass. One unique feature was 22 round holes cut in the stainless steel rear panel. The harder you brake, the more tail lights illuminate. This car is not stylish in today's eyes in the sense of the DB4-6 series, but remember that the 1970s also produced other unusual Aston designs, including the razor-like Lagondas.



1953 AM DB3 Coupé. Uls and Arlette Müller share a happy ride



DBS Ogle Design. Offers 22 points of light – the tail lights



1955 AM DB2/4 Mk I. Ari Mahkseed entry second in class

In total, there were nine Astons in the five appropriate classes, historic and racing, which totaled 68 cars. Thus, Astons were a very impressive percentage of the total. Perhaps this should not be surprising since the Aston Martin Company has a large Kuwaiti-based shareholding. Outside the judging field, large assemblies of locally owned Ferraris, supercars and motorcycles created another major spectator attraction for all.

I got to enjoy the event without my Aston, a 1965 DB5C, which did not have to fly the necessary 14 hours. The 1955 Siata 208S Spyder with 2011 Pebble Beach Class win credentials was invited to this show field, and took home the Trophy for Most Elegant Open Car.

I close with reporting on a remarkable moment – approached by an elderly gentleman taking pictures, he questioned me:

"Are you American?"

"Yes."

"We love Americans. We could be living under the rule of Saddam Hussein!"

Photography by Fadel Al-Oraier, Head of Library/Photography, Kuwait Vintage and Classic Car Museum



The Kuwait Concours d'Elegance entrance

UMC 272 on the Road in Kuwait

by Daniel A. Waltenberg; photos by Don Rose, Steve Wakefield and Daniel A. Waltenberg

I was curious when UMC 272 and I received our invitation from Abdulaziz Saud Ishaq, Head of Kuwait Concours d'Elegance, Member of the Board of Trustees, Historical, Vintage & Classic Cars Museum, to participate

in the Kuwait Concours d'Elegance 2012 and did not have much of an idea what kind of adventure would bring us to the Middle East.

There was little information about the event on the web, but fortunately I found

a more detailed article called 'An Oasis of Automobiles' in the summer 2011 *RM Magazine*. I learned that it will be the third Kuwait Concours d'Elegance, which was first held in 2010 and is the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, a passionate Aston Martin enthusiast and great supporter of the event.

This year's motto was 'Passion for Speed' and it took place from the 15–18 February 2012. Unfortunately, my wife was too busy to join me and that is why I had to write up this article without access to her beautiful language.

Therefore, I decided to divert from the usual event description and to focus on the thing that cars were built for: driving (supported by photographs).

I left the cold Swiss mountains leaving the



Maroon and Rosso corsa



Pre- and post-war meet



On the road



To Kuwait City



UMC 272 in position

Cresta for a few days to arrive in warm, but not hot Kuwait, to participate in the event. Could it be more contrasting? I was looking forward to UMC 272 being photographed with some camels in the desert...

I met familiar faces, one of them being Don Rose, who participated with his 1939 Aston Martin 15/98 Open Sports Tourer with Abbey coachwork. We had plenty of time to spend together and when men get together because of their favourite toys, it could be ...

The Kuwaitis are car fanatics and we had the pleasure of experiencing this first hand on our way back to the hotel from a perfect Lebanese dinner on Thursday night (like Friday night in our world). We were caught in the most incredible traffic jam, reminding me

of a modern version of American Graffiti to a backdrop of 1001 nights.

Since entertainment is more or less focused on shopping and eating, the Arabian Gulf Street turned into the place to be on Thursday night. Thousands of Kuwaitis cruising in their automobiles (ranging from American muscle cars to European sports cars) were demonstrating their passion. Their energy lasted until the early hours of the morning.

What else is closer than trying to find a way to drive your Aston? All the Concours cars were locked up in the Concours grounds close to the Marina. Don told us that we will be driving our cars onto the ramp to present them to the public. This sounded like the perfect opportunity.

On my second day in Kuwait, I took the opportunity to take a private city tour and discovered that the Arabian Gulf Street was wide and actually followed the coast line from the Marina to the Kuwait Towers.

We agreed that after driving from the ramp, Don and I would head off on an adventure. Since the people of Kuwait are friendly and relaxed, it was perfectly easy to turn left into Arabian Gulf Street, rather than turning right into the Concours grounds.

The fun begun in light traffic, cruising at a decent speed on the Arabian Gulf Street. We received a lot of friendly smiles, but also saw puzzled faces since people rarely see such cars on their roads. We were heading to the Kuwait towers, where we felt the scenery would compensate for the missing camel photograph and make it a good entry into our photo albums.

The photos communicate the rest of the story much better than I can, except that it was a little challenging to get back into the Concours grounds, since they secured it with police and security guards. Having lived in the Far East for some time, I knew that a smile combined with persistence would solve the problem.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank H.H. Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah and the Kuwait Concours d'Elegance organisers for extending to us a memorable experience.

For more information about the Kuwait Concours d'Elegance refer to www.kuwait-concours.com.