

COTY

This is not about the world's largest fragrance company, but an organisation of the same name that was established around sixty years later: *Car Of The Year*. Yes, it may seem as though this competition has been around for even longer than the Eurovision Song Contest (which was first held in 1956, some seven years earlier) but is it any more relevant than the latter, debased as that has become by 'political' voting?

How is COTY organised? Those seven flags which surround its logo are not a random selection, but those of the countries whose main motoring magazines vote on the contestants: Britain, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Sweden and (since the 1980s) Spain. The chairmanship is rotated by country year on year and Germany is the only member represented by a journal not wholly devoted to motoring, their weekly news magazine *Stern*.

Rather than go into the detail of how the votes are cast and by whom, the point of this piece is to look at the event in relation to Italian cars -of course- so let's begin by seeing how the winners stack up by country:

France	13
Italy	12
Britain	11
Germany	8
Japan	4

However, it is not quite as simple as the figures imply. Some of the cars which nominally come from a manufacturer based in a particular country are actually made elsewhere, Fiat being a good example of this with their successful Panda and 500 of recent years, which are actually made in Poland!



Still, setting aside the composition of the industry, which models

the Italian overall score? While all three of the majors go to make up the total, Fiat naturally take the lion's share of victories with Alfa scoring twice and Lancia once. This is how it looks for each model, in their order of appearance:

Fiat 124; 128; 127; Uno; Tipo; Punto; Brava/o; Panda (2004); 500.

Alfa 156; 147.

Lancia Delta (1980).

The results always need to be viewed in the context of the times, the opposition that year and without the tempting benefit of hindsight, although quite how the Renault 9 or Simca 1307/8 (AKA Chrysler Alpine) ever managed to top the podium is certainly open to conjecture. That said, most winners were worthy candidates in their day, even if the benefit of historical perspective has sometimes proven otherwise, although the 2011 champion, the Nissan Leaf shows that the electric car, result can never be said to be predictable. That one came home ahead of the Alfa Giulietta, so were the Italians robbed? You can decide - but perhaps not just yet!



What of any other Italian near misses? In reverse order there has been the Alfa 159-3rd, Fiat Stilo-3rd, Fiat Multipla-2nd, Fiat Cinquento-2nd, Lancia Y10 -2nd, Lancia Thema-3rd, Fiat Panda-2nd, Fiat Ritmo/Strada-2nd, Fiat X1/9 -2nd, Alfa Alfetta-3rd, Autobianchi A112-2nd, Alfa 1750-3rd, Fiat 125-2nd and Autobianchi Primula-2nd.

Whatever it all means -if anything- it is certainly the case that the Italian marques have consistently held their own against the products of the rest of the world and with the new Panda and Lancia Y jostling with 33 other hopefuls for the 2012 crown this looks set to continue.

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