

THE RACING CAR SHOW 2011

... OR TO GIVE IT ITS FULL TITLE, *THE AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL & PISTONHEADS: THE PERFORMANCE CAR SHOW & FIFTH GEAR LIVE ACTION ARENA*: PHEW! LIKE SO MANY EXHIBITIONS ONCE HELD IN LONDON THE R.C.S. MADE THE JOURNEY TO THE NEC SOME YEARS AGO, WHICH APART FROM BEING A FAR MORE SENSIBLE PLACE GEOGRAPHICALLY ALSO ALLOWS MUCH MORE FLEXIBILITY IN THE WAY THAT IT IS STAGED. STAGED IS THE OPTIMUM WORD TOO, FOR LIKE SO MANY PREVIOUSLY-PROSAIC THINGS IN LIFE MORE THAN A TOUCH OF SHOWBUSINESS NOW GRACES THE EXHIBITION, AS THE LIVE ACTION ARENA SHOWED.

AS I INTENDED TO REPORT ON THE DAY FROM AN ITALIAN CAR PERSPECTIVE THINGS GOT OFF TO A GOOD START HERE, WITH TIFF NEEDELL ARRIVING IN A NEW ABARTH 500 AND EXERCISING IT IN AN AUTOTEST. AFTER SOME CHAT AND DRIVING FROM TIFF AND HIS CO-PRESENTER JASON PLATO, VARIOUS DEMONSTRATIONS AND RACES BY A VARIETY OF USUAL AND LESS-USUAL RACING CARS TOOK PLACE, TOPPED OFF BY POSSIBLY THE MOST ENTERTAINING ACTION – RELIANT ROBIN RACING! YES, THERE WAS A STRONG DEGREE OF SHOWBUSINESS ABOUT ALL THIS, BUT AT LEAST THE PRESENTERS WERE SERIOUS MOTORSPORT FIGURES -RESPECTIVELY A 14-TIMES LE MANS COMPETITOR AND THE CURRENT BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPION- RATHER THAN THE ITALIAN CAR DESTROYERS EMPLOYED BY THE BBC.

EARS RINGING AFTER AN HOUR OF SQUEALING, SMOKING TYRES AND VERY MUCH ON-THE-CAM RACING ENGINES, WE WENT IN SEARCH OF ITALIAN INTEREST AMONG THE STATIC EXHIBITS. TO BE TRUTHFUL THERE WAS NOT A GREAT DEAL TO BE FOUND, BUT WHAT THERE WAS OFTEN TURNED OUT TO BE OF A SURPRISING NATURE.

MODERN FERRARIS OF VARIOUS TYPES WERE LOCATED THROUGHOUT THE HALLS, THIS ONE IN THE CURRENTLY IN-VOGUE MATT BLACK LOOKING VERY PURPOSEFUL.



THE ONLY LANCIA SPOTTED WAS A STILL-MEMORABLE RALLY DELTA IN THE COYS AUCTION ...

... WHERE THIS VERY RARE RACING DE TOMASO PANTERA WAS ALSO LOCATED. A ROAD-GOING EXAMPLE CAN BE SEEN JUST BEHIND IT AND A MASERATI MERAK AND A BIZZARINI WERE ALSO UP FOR GRABS.



A REAL FIND WAS AN ALFA 183T F1 CAR, SOMETHING VERY INTERESTING IF NOT FROM ONE OF THEIR MOST PRODUCTIVE MOTORSPORT VENTURES. IT'S A PITY THAT THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR ALLOCATING THE TYRES HAD CHALKED 'ALPHA' ON ONE OF THEM THOUGH!

OTHER COMPETITION CARS INCLUDED THIS MASERATI 250F (OR WAS IT ONE OF THOSE CAMERON MILLAR VERSIONS MADE WITH A STRONG ORIGINAL PART CONTENT?) ...



... AND A BEAUTIFUL OSELLA ABARTH SPORTS RACER.

ABARTH BRINGS US TO THE ONLY FIAT GROUP REPRESENTATION, ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE STAND WAS GIVEN OVER TO AN AMAZING AND HUGE 500 ABARTH RACING GAME THAT WAS VERY POPULAR WITH THE PUBLIC.



FIAT 500 ABARTH'S WERE TO BE FOUND ELSEWHERE TOO, ALONG WITH A £400 127 TRIALS CAR (NOW THAT *IS* CHEAP MOTORSPORT!) ...

... AND AN AUTOGRASS CAR WHICH BEGAN LIFE AS A SEICENTO BUT NOW HOUSES TWO TRANSVERSE FOUR CYLINDER ENGINES IN ITS REAR.



ELSEWHERE YOU COULD BUY A DRIVING SHARE IN A FERRARI 458...



... OR EVEN BUY A REAL LAMBORGHINI GALLARDO CONVERTIBLE (ONLY 9000 MILES, ONLY £82000) ...



... OR SIMPLY TRY AND STAY ABOVE IT ALL, LIKE THIS ABARTH GIRL.

ALL IN ALL IT WAS AN INTERESTING DAY OUT AND WHILE RATHER DIFFERENT FROM SUCH EVENTS OF OLD IT CERTAINLY PULLS IN A HUGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE. IT ALSO SURELY MAKES THE POINT THAT BRITAIN IS STILL THE MOTORSPORT CAPITAL OF THE WORLD.

MJB