

BRISTOL ITALIAN AUTO MOTO FESTIVAL **2014**



“430’s definitely my favourite Ferrari”. If there were any doubt about the suitability of Bristol as a venue for a celebration of Italian automotive flair it was this unexpected greeting from a local resident as I climbed out of the car in the city centre at half past seven on a cold Easter Saturday morning. “Nearly 500 horse power, nought to sixty in 4 seconds. Beaut-iful!” he continued. Clad in a thick greatcoat of uncertain vintage and no less than three scarves, my new friend had just quit his overnight accommodation on the other side of Corn Street, probably due to the arrival of yet another Maserati Coupe, which was now making use of that particular alcove as it manoeuvred up into position on the pavement. However, having confirmed his unexpected respect for and knowledge of the products of Maranello he meandered away, followed by a faint whiff of something high octane, and left the arena free for the band of marshals in high-vis jackets and toting an array of ramps and assorted dunnage to go about their business of shoe-horning an array of Italian exotica up over the curbs and into their parking places for the day. This then was the start of the 2014 Bristol Italian Auto Moto Festival.



For every year since 2003, the BIAMF has taken over the old St Nicholas Markets area in the centre of Bristol for a day, bringing in several hundred Italian cars and motorcycles, and of course a great influx of visitors. The streets are cordoned off to normal traffic and quickly fill with people eager to look at and photograph the machinery and chat with the owners. Not only is this good for the local businesses but it also raises significant amounts for charities,

this year principally Help For Heroes and the Great Western Air Ambulance. Although for 2014 the date clashed with the Horsham Piazza Italia there was still a significant Ferrari presence, probably around 40 cars in total, including a good range of 308, 328, 348, 355, 360 and 430 variants. As for the 12 cylinder cars we had a 400, 456, 575 and a pair of 599s, as well as a solitary 512TR. Notable absentees compared to previous years were any Dinos and the older V12s, as well as any of the current model line-up, but a look at the Horsham attendance list shows their owners were not idle.

This year the event was celebrating in particular the 100th anniversary of Maserati and 40 years of the UK Ducati Owners' Club. These marques were therefore very well represented, with not just a large selection of current Maserati Granturismos, but also many 4200s and 3200s. The earliest, and my personal favourite, would have to be the very nicely presented 1966 Sebring Series 2. Designed by Vignale/Michelotti the styling is very much of the era, with a delicate glasshouse that modern safety regulations would make impossible to market today. Fitted with a fuel injected 3.7 litre straight 6, a car such as this would have been an alternative to an Aston DB6 but maybe a rung below the contemporary Ferrari 330GT 2+2, in both price and performance.



By the time the event opened formally at 10 AM the roads down the hill had become a literal sea of Ducatis, as well as a significant contribution from the MV Agusta fraternity, with a sprinkling of Aprilias, Moto Guzzis, Laverdas and Benellis. Maybe not surprisingly BIAMF always displays a strong mutual interest between the car and bike fraternities and it was good to discuss the finer points of the latest Panigale race replica as well as what Ferrari might do in response to the new Maclaren 650S. Of course at the beginning of April the bike world prematurely lost a significant figure with the death of Massimo Tamburini, architect of some of the most beautiful motorcycle designs with his trademark sleek fairings and single swing-arm rear suspensions. His legacy was certainly on show at BIAMF though, and despite the presence of several delectable Ducati 916s, my vote would go by a narrow margin to the MV Agusta F4 1000 in that wonderful red and silver colour-scheme that echoes John Surtees' utterly dominant MV from the late-50s, just before he swapped and did just as well in the 1960s driving those 'bloody red cars' that we in the FOC love so well.



Experience has shown me that arriving early for the BIAMF is essential if you fancy a prime spot and if you prefer to get the manoeuvring done without having to worry about increasing numbers of pedestrians once the shops start to open. Thus it was that the lone Countach to appear this year, a late-arriving silver 25 Anniversario, together with a Diablo Spider and a Murcielago SV, had to be left looking slightly forlorn down a side street when they should really have had a much more prominent site. The Countach still looks so dramatic and I love the story that it was named after the piedmontese expletive Nuncio Bertone is said to have uttered when he first saw Gandini's prototype. It's very appropriate but a very Italian thing. It's difficult to imagine an equivalent scenario where the Volkswagen board might have signed off the Bugatti 'Merde' rather than the 'Veyron' or in which, even using a more polite English equivalent, the Aston 1-77 might have ended up proudly badged as the '*Oh Good Grief!*' The naming of the F-150 as 'LaFerrari' may sound slightly awkward to British ears but the idea that it is a car that personifies the whole spirit of the Ferrari brand in the 21st century is completely right.



Twice during the day owners are encouraged to start their cars and show off la musica dei motori. Parked as I was next to a 430 Scuderia and just along from an Aventador I decided I couldn't compete but went off instead to listen to the Maseratis just up the hill. I love the sound of a Ferrari but the noise, even at idle, that comes out of any Maserati V8 really is music to my ears and must give their salesmen such an easy life: start the engine, give it a

couple of blips and take the cheque! This is certainly a popular feature with the general public and there was much recording going on with mobile phones. Samples are already available on YouTube as I type.



The final part of the day was a walk round by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Peter Main, who said some very positive words about the event and even proved that it is indeed possible to wear a tricorne hat while sitting in an F430, possibly the first time this has been attempted. All too soon though, 4 o'clock came round and it was time to start getting the cars away. It has hard to believe that apart for breaks for lunch and too many coffees I'd been standing around chatting with owners and enthusiasts for over 8 hours! We were briefed that to ensure pedestrian safety a 10 mph speed limit would apply until we had reached the main roads. This was pretty sensible in light of the still dense crowds but a bit ironic given that the pedestrians themselves were then calling out trying to incite some low-gear high-rpm action.



All in all it was a pretty good day, especially once the sun had made an appearance. Despite a 70 mile round trip the car was still clean, with not even a single bug splat, and only the finest film of dust and some nose prints on the side windows to show it had had a day out. It

was warm enough to have the top down both ways and my route had enough bridges and stone walls along it to invite some gratuitous use of the gear paddles. My thanks must go to Paul Hanmore of the Italian Auto Moto Club who is the force behind this event, and of course to the many marshals and other helpers, many of them also owners and without whom, as we well know in the FOC, it would be impossible to make these things happen.

Tim Gosling