

# TOP 10

## LOVELY CARS

**'Thankfully  
Ferrari had a  
412 on the stand  
too. To my mind  
the old front-  
engined coupé  
harks back to a  
better day, when  
Maranello turned  
out Grand  
Tourers, not cars  
for nightclub  
owners and  
managers of  
page three girls'  
— Michael  
Harvey picks  
Motorfair's best  
lookers**

Shows can get very tiresome. Across stands the size of Ford's you can't help but reflect that this is little more than a polished and *parquet'd* parking lot. Most companies simply roll out the range, add a few ghastly audio/visual aids and sit back to wait for orders.

Upstairs at Motorfair this year, the stakes were a whole lot higher. Tempted no doubt by Christies' Bugatti Royale, a great call of auctioneers had set up shop. What they had to offer, for sale at a later date, really made you stop for a moment and contemplate the almost universal absence of elegance down below.

It would be wrong to tar all the contemporary manufacturers with the same brush. There are exceptions. At the top end of the scale BMW's 750iL must take the prize for the most imposing machine on the road. That extra-wide grille and those extra few inches give this machine real road presence. In a rear view mirror that sight would really move you over. Jaguar's XJ40, I'm afraid just doesn't hold a candle to it. This time last year we were all talking about the elegant new Jaguar profile. A year later it just seems bland.

That said, what the 'old' XJ12 Jaguar loses out in aggression to the BMW, it makes up for in quaint elegance. But I'd take the BMW, just for that £53,000 look of teutonic superiority.

Next door to BMW, Peugeot was showing the 405 for the first time. In that class its looks are second to none. Peugeot made the right choice going to Pininfarina for this car. It is both magnificently proportioned, and pacey-looking without being obtrusive. I don't like the way the swage line wraps itself around the leading edge of the bonnet — that's just a detail and the only one that grates on this car. The 405 does, however, beg the question why must the French go elsewhere to style their cars? Peugeot, even when it produced a pretty little car — the 205 — had it checked over by Pinin. Renault went to Giugiaro for the 21 and will do so again for the new 15s and 17s. And even Citroën has gone back to Bertone for the up-and-coming DX, having just lost its designer — an American.

At least Citroën makes it work. Stuck away at the back of the giant stand, out of the limelight and in the shadow of the AX and BX the CX is still one of the best-looking cars on the road. It looks today, 13 years after Citroën got the design over BMC, like it was drawn yesterday. It was the first big car to challenge the three-box shape and to bow to the influence of the wind tunnel. It's timelessness is a good indication of how far ahead it was in '74. Thankfully the DX looks like carrying on the tradition.

The only other 'modern' car worth a mention is the old Alfa Romeo 'Sud' Sprint. Eleven years old and cursed with Alfa GB's appalling Zender body kit it may be, but it is still one of the prettiest cars of any era. Why was this car never given the attention it deserved? With the right mechanicals it would sell in millions showing the Japanese just how to design a coupé into the bargain.

Opposite Alfa Romeo, and the centre of all attention, was the Ferrari F40. It's not proper to compare Pininfarina's styling of this car with the other road cars, see it instead alongside Porsche 962 Le Mans racers and the Silk Cut Jaguar XJR-8. Thankfully Ferrari had a 412 on the stand too. To my mind the old

front-engined coupé harks back to a better day, when Maranello turned out Gran Tourers, not cars for night-club owners and managers of page three girls.

Stop the rot Signor Ferrari and leave the flash to Sant' Agata. Upstairs it was an altogether different story. It's difficult to choose a handful of cars from all the magnificent metal there. Cars like the Figoni and Falaschi Delahaye, and, of course, the Royale attracted the crowds, but could hardly be called elegant — they are too excessive.

No doubt ignored by the crowds piling up the escalator to see the Kellner Royale, it was the Type 59 on our Bugatti stand that made it for me. More elegant, less cliché'd than the Type 55, the 59 looks like a racer.

Neil Corner's 59 runs on the original piano-wire wheels and its long, oh-so-slim racer's body cut with a 101 cooling slats. Quite the most beautiful car at the show — by a long way.

Along from the Type 59 sat Jim Allington's Ferrari 250 Testarossa. This car, although never a great winner, was driven by the likes of Gurney, Gendebien and Phil Hill. Restored by General Motors before the illustrator Allington bought it, the car is a perfect cross-over between racing necessity and aesthetic decoration. Too much might already have been said about this car but that doesn't detract from its beauty. Why don't racing cars look like this anymore, and why has Ferrari wasted this great name on that fat, tarty cruiser downstairs?

Not as famous a name as Testarossa, but just as memorable is the Jaguar XKSS. They only ever built 16 of these road-going D-types and the car on the Lynx stand used to belong to Steve McQueen. To me that makes this car more special still — the combination should have been more famous than Dean and his Spyder, but McQueen and the car survived each other, only for McQueen to die of cancer and the car to rot away. Has there ever been a more charismatic combination of man and machine?

The most classic of all the '60s super cars must be the Lamborghini Miura, this one finished in a lurid green. It may not show the car's lines (partly the work of a young Giugiaro) to their best advantage — that's done best by black. The green car, however, summed up this particular era perfectly. What is so remarkable is that the car still looks so very good, better than any Countach or Jalpa.

A lesser star than the Miura, but for me worthy of the great Lamborghini's status is the Fiat 124 Spyder. I've always loved this car, one of a trio designed by Pininfarina in the mid-'60s with the Alfa Spyder and Peugeot 504 Cabriolet. The 124 has only just died, after five years living under the assumed name of Pininfarina Spydereuropa — it was never imported into this country. That's a great shame since it is one of Pinin's greatest works. It looks like a million miles an hour standing still. Not bad for a 1600 twin cam . . .

**Alfa's Sprint, above,  
still a looker. Testarossa  
most beautiful Ferrari  
still?**



