

# On Land

Though it's officially done co-branding with Ferrari, Girard-Perregaux remains a favorite for luxury racecar fans

BY NANCY OLSON



A variety of sports cars, including this Ferrari, attracted viewers to Lussori, the Girard-Perregaux retail partner during the Concorso.

When Ronald Jackson began his association with the annual Concorso Italiano, his goal was twofold: to "increase awareness of Girard-Perregaux and to sell watches," he says simply. And now, eight years later, this goal has remained the same, but the annual event, held as part of the Classic Car Weekend (August 19-21, 2005) on Monterey Peninsula, now affords an opportunity to speak to customers, who, year after year, keep coming back. The Concorso kicked off a weekend that comprised, among many other things, the Laguna Seca historic races and the renowned Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance at The Lodge at Pebble Beach.

"When we started at the Concorso, there was very little recognition [there] of Girard-Perregaux



as a watch brand," says Jackson, president and CEO of Tradema, exclusive United States distributor of Girard-Perregaux. He shares one anecdote in which a person asked the price of a watch he wished to purchase, was quoted "forty-two fifty," and handed the salesperson a fifty-dollar bill. With this obvious

misunderstanding of decimal placement, it was apparent the customer had no understanding of just what it takes to own a Girard-Perregaux timepiece.

But times have changed, and as presenting sponsor of the Concorso, Girard-Perregaux has grown concurrently with the event. Jackson estimates that in excess of 10,000 people stepped up to the timepiece showcase during the one-day event, held August 19 at the Black Horse Golf Course.

"We brought between \$2 million and \$3 million of product with us, each ranging in price from \$4,000 to \$100,000," he says. "People were standing in line waiting for us to open on Friday morning." Lussori, formerly Greenwich Time, of Carmel, CA, was the retail partner.



This year, the Concorso Italiano celebrated its 20th year at the Classic Car Weekend, the "world's premier automotive weekend." Touted as a "celebration of Italian style," the Concorso once again featured exquisite automobiles from such Italian marques as Lamborghini, Alfa Romeo, Maserati and Ferrari. In addition to the titillating display of cars that no man-on-the-street would ever expect to see in one place in a lifetime, a variety of notable vendors were also present. Girard-Perregaux is a perfect fit for the event, given its decade-long association with the Ferrari brand. In 1994, Girard-Perregaux and Ferrari entered into a co-branding agreement that culminated in the Girard-Perregaux pour Ferrari collection of timepieces. That association ended last year, but the relationship between fans of both brands is as strong as ever.



**Top Left:** Actor Patrick Dempsey, race driver Cort Wagner, GP USA President Ron Jackson, actor Ricardo Chavira, GP-sponsored race drivers Bill Auberlen and Patrick Long (also pictured above with Jackson and at top wearing helmet).

**Center:** Jack and Leslie Wadsworth, Concorso co-chairs

**Left:** The Girard-Perregaux Strada Club at the Concorso



The crowds lingered outside the Girard-Perregaux tent to view Ferraris, Masaratis and Lamborghinis.

#### Collections exposed

Jackson says that in the early years of the brand's participation in the Concorso Italiano, people would approach in specific search of the Girard-Perregaux pour Ferrari products. "But they also started looking at the other collections," he says.

As a result of this interest, the company was able to showcase its full range of products, including its collections of ladies watches.

"Our ladies watch business has grown as a result," Jackson says, adding that the ladies and gents collection of Richeville watches garnered particular interest this year, as did the Laureato. And while no new

products have thus far been created specifically for the Concorso, notable launches have taken place. This year the company introduced the Seahawk Tourbillon (see *International Watch*, September, pp. 70-74) was introduced.

Other events held throughout the daylong Concorso included a runway fashion show, La Bella Macchina (Hall of Fame) Awards, and the Italian manufacturer and designer presentations, featuring the Maserati Cambiocorsa Spyder and Quattroporte and the new Ferrari Superamerica and F430.

And lest anyone think Ferraris were the only curvy red display of

Italian craftsmanship present, a 273-year-old violin, called the Red Diamond, made in Cremona, Italy, by Antonio Stradivari, was also featured. A fifteen-minute performance was given midday "in an effort to provide entertainment for people who might attend the Concorso, but are not automobile fanatics."

Jackson believes that the Concorso Italiano offers "a unique opportunity to be very visible to an audience second to none." He calls it the "perfect storm"—a convergence of sophistication, taste, affluence and setting.

Just the right place for great watches. ©