

Concours

“Concours d'Elegance (**French:** *concours d'élégance*) is a term of French origin that means a "competition of elegance" and refers to an event where prestigious vehicles are displayed and judged. It dates back to 17th-century France, where aristocrats paraded horse-drawn carriages in the parks of Paris during summer weekends and holidays.^[1] Over time, carriages became horseless and the gatherings became a competition among vehicle owners to be judged on the appearance of their vehicles. These events are often held at [automobile shows](#), after racing competitions or, especially in the United States, as a fundraising event for charities.”

Wikipedia

Want an argument? Simply mention the word ‘Concours’, a word that is regularly bandied about when either discussing, restoring, buying or selling MGBs. It constantly appears in advertisements (“...of Concours standard”, “...winner of the 1995 Hobart Concours...” etc.). What does it mean to the average owner? To some, very little. To others it is a ‘measure’.

It has long been part of the vernacular of MG owners (and other vehicle owners) and as a concept, it **potentially** has many positives:

It **should** give buyers an idea of a car’s condition.

It **should** help sellers in justifying a higher selling price.

It **should** give those who are aiming at returning their vehicles to a more ‘original’ state, a guide in that pursuit.

In most cases it reflects a great deal of love, time (and money) that an owner has devoted to a hobby.

I place a lot of emphasis on the words **‘potential’** and **‘should’**. I see absolutely nothing wrong with the idea of a standard to measure your vehicle’s condition. There are however, innumerable issues that have somewhat tarnished the value of the claim that a vehicle is of ‘Concours’ standard. Listed here are but a few.

1. Originality v Perfection

This argument appears to ruffle many feathers when people discuss ‘Concours’. Is a vehicle that has been owned and maintained dutifully since it left the showroom of *Concours* standard? It would be hard to argue the affirmative. Such a vehicle would have a paint that would reflect the ravages of time, rubber components that would have deteriorated over the years and other issues that age has inflicted on it. This car would surely not fit the term ‘Concours’ but would be regarded more valuable by many as a testament to the owner’s care and the vehicle’s resilience.

Conversely, a vehicle that has (in most cases) been stripped to its bare metal and reassembled, using only parts that look immaculate, finishing up looking as good as (or in some cases, better than) the day it left the assembly line **should** have a greater chance of falling under the original meaning of the term *Concours* (**“...judged on the appearance of their vehicles.”**).



Whilst both of the vehicles described above have equal merit, it is impossible to reconcile these two conditions under the one umbrella. It seems that we are co-opting the original meaning of the term to mean something different. That 'something' is not clearly understood and floats somewhere between 'preservation' and 'restoration'.

2. Judging

Here we enter the realm of 'subjectivity'. Whilst measures have been taken to minimize 'personal judgement', it can easily slip into the process (intentionally or unconsciously), causing a fair bit of consternation.

Most clubs hold annual Concours events as a service to their members. These events place a huge burden on committee members to staff such events; the largest of this burden is that placed on members required to carry out the judging (**acknowledgement of this task needs to be highlighted and appreciated!**).

Apart from the sheer number required to carry out the task, the technical knowledge required to evaluate the vehicles is a topic of great contention. The technical knowledge required is enough to scare most members from volunteering for this task. To minimize this difficulty, most clubs have developed a comprehensive set of rules and guidelines to make the task of judging less onerous. Good examples of these are the MGCC (Vic) (a most comprehensive document), MGCC Sydney and MGCC (Qld).

3. Comparing apples with Australian apples

As this website hopefully has demonstrated, there are enough differences with the Australian assembly process to render any judging nightmarish. In an attempt to simplify this, I have enclosed a 'suggested' solution. Using the format of the three clubs previously mentioned, I have attempted to make the judging of Australian-assembled vehicles simpler, by inserting the unique 'Australian' variations. Any club that wishes to use this is more than welcome. (See below PDF).

http://mgbsmadeinaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/CONCOURS4_28-01-2020-v6.pdf

P.S.: If there is any interest, I would be willing to provide a sheet (or two) of photos/graphics highlighting all the features referred to. Additionally, if there are any alterations that you deem necessary (errors in the information provided, please contact the writer.

In conclusion, I would contend that the term has lost some of its meaning and reverence. Whilst I am sure we all could make a list of suggestions that would/could restore its meaning and reverence, we should all agree that **ALL the clubs need to be congratulated and encouraged in the work they carry out for their members.**

If you have any concerns, I suggest you should contact your local club.

Roger Sharpe

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