What makes a historic car historic?

This question has been asked for many years and in many ways it not an easy job to give a reply to it. If you, for instance, visit the website of FIVA, you will find that it is a vehicle which is more than 20 years old. Most will agree but some will say: - Yes that is right in theory but what about a mass produced tinbox like the VW Golf? That, surely, must be too new and too uninteresting?

Well, most of us seem to have forgotten that the first Golf was introduced in 1974, which is more than thirty years ago. Who has recently seen a "Golf 1" on the road? I think almost all of them have been recycled. I also think that those still around in driveable condition represent a much lower percentage of the production than a car like a 1974 Ferrari model. So in a way one could argue that the Golf 1 is in fact more historic than the Ferrari from the same year. You could also argue that the Golf is probably even more historic than the Ferrari as it has provided transport and fun to millions of car owners whereas the Ferrari was and remains something very exotic and out of reach for the majority.

I have been in the hobby since I was a schoolboy just half a century ago. Over the years it has struck me that we always tend to look at yesteryear's cars as less historic than those from the years before yesteryear.

The EU has also tried to define a historic car. When they wrote the regulations for import of cars from third countries, i.e. from non-EU countries to a country inside the EU, they stated that "the car must be thirty years or older and must be in original condition if it is not a car that has been modified for a specific reason like a famous car used in motor sport or a famous hot rod. "

Confusing? Yes, as they never defined how famous it must be to be famous this regulation has different interpretations in, I think, all the 25 countries that form the EU.

The EU has also been looking at cars as pieces of art which is flattering but equally confusing. For instance, some countries have adopted a regulation that cars of a certain age may not be exported, just like old paintings or old furniture. But I do not think it is historic just because it is old. The car that won the F1 or WRC championships last year is, in my world, more historic than a 1912 Model T Ford. The further you get into this philosophical discussion the more muddled the whole thing gets. It would be easier if we could just agree that as a general rule any car that anybody thinks it worth preserving is historic. You have to have a rather generous attitude to agree with this as while you might prefer as Maserati 300 S, your best friend will dream of an Austin-Healey Sprite Frog Eye.

In fact, I think the only definition that holds water is that of the FIA. Article 1 of Appendix K states: "The FIA have created the regulations in Appendix K so that Historic Cars may be used for competition under a set of rules that preserve the specifications of their period and prevent the modification of performance and behaviour that could arise through the application of modern technology."

Article 1:1 goes on to say: " Historic competition is simply not yet another formula in which to acquire trophies, it is a discipline apart, in which one of the essential ingredients is a

devotion to the cars and their history. Historic Motor Sport enables the active celebration of the history of the motor car”

Appendix K will give you a precise answer. But even here we have a new phenomenon. We have the truly historic cars that are historic as well as to historic specifications. But we also have the cars without other history than that of the type but built to historic specifications. The experts of the FIA Historic Motor Sport Commission are here to explain and discuss how we could make sensible use of this new offer from the FIA World Motor Sport Council.

Thank you for your attention.

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