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## FIA SAYS YES TO GROUP B HISTORIC RALLY CARS

A HOST OF PRE-1986 Group B rally cars will be eligible for points scoring on all FIA European Historic Sporting Rally Championship rounds in 2012 following two years of planning, drafting safety regulations and trials on events.

The FIA has created a new Category 4 for the spectacular Period J1 (1982-85) cars, excluding those banned at the end of 1986, so expect to see a wide range of Group B machines vying for rally wins alongside the established front-running Group 4 Ford Escorts and Porsche 911s.

John Hughes, president of the FIA's Historic Motor Sport Commission, says: 'There are half a dozen Lancia Rally 037s already running, a couple of teams are building long-wheelbase Audi quattros and Renault 5 Turbos, plus others with Opel Ascona/Manta 400s and the Citroën Visa 1000 Pistes.'

The 12-round championship starts with the Rally de España Histórico on March 8-10. See [www.fia.com](http://www.fia.com) for the full calendar.



Jaguar's XJR-14 will finally race at Le Mans, in a support race for 2012's 24-hours

## JAGUAR XJR-14 GOING BACK TO LE MANS

One of three 1991 Sportscar World Championship TWR Jaguar XJR-14s built is expected to join the Group C Racing grid at the Le Mans 24-hours support race on June 16 (the Le Mans weekend is Sat-Sun 16-17, not 11-12 as incorrectly stated in the last issue). And it could be joined by a Peugeot 905 too.

The Jaguar qualified for the

1991 Le Mans race but TWR withdrew it before the start, considering it too fragile to last for 24 hours. Gareth Evans is expected to drive. The Peugeot, now owned by Rupert Clevely, came third at Le Mans in 1992. See [www.groupcracing.com](http://www.groupcracing.com)

If you're going to Le Mans don't forget to drop in at the popular Classic British Welcome in Saint Saturnin from 9am on Friday June 15. This year's featured marque is Triumph. See [www.classicbw.org](http://www.classicbw.org)



## Simon Kidston

*Highs and lows of a memorable motoring year*

**I**S 2011 REALLY ALMOST OVER? Thinking the years are going by faster is surely a sign of getting old, but what a year it's been. Highlights were many and lows blissfully few, and despite not being particularly religious I've been looking skywards to thank someone for such good fortune, especially these days.

The Kuwaiti concours at the start of the year was unlike anything else on the calendar. Patronised by Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser, a man with a voracious appetite for beautiful cars old and new, it gave participants like me a rare glimpse into a completely different collecting mind-set, not to mention a slightly surreal opportunity to show a beaming Tony Blair around the cars – though whether that's a plus or a minus is your call. My only regret is that the Aston Martin DB4 GT Zagato 'evocation', complete with monster wheelarches and alloy wheels, lowered roof and tea-tray boot spoiler, wasn't part of the concours: I would have enjoyed watching judges Ulrich Bez (Aston Martin's CEO) and Marek Reichman (Aston Martin's chief designer) deploy their best diplomatic skills on that one...

Villa d'Este was as exclusive and elegant as ever, and driving down in a pair of McLaren F1s was almost as much fun as my presenting job there. Best of all was meeting Seventies 'Marlboro Man' F1 ace Arturo Merzario and watching and listening as he put the Best of Show Alfa Romeo 33 Stradale through its paces. We filmed him on board too: stand by for the video.

If adrenalin and the buzz from a cheering crowd are your style, nothing beats the Mille Miglia – and the next best thing to taking part is hosting it, which means you meet all 375 teams and precede them along the 1000-mile route. My awe for the Mercedes 300 SLR is no secret, but flagging it off into the warm Brescia night having just chatted with driver Mika Hakkinen and co-pilot Juan Manuel Fangio II really was special. And the sound of that unsilenced straight-eight... nothing else comes close.

Pebble Beach saw attention focused back on trophies and dollars. A streamlined Voisin took top honours in the concours, and if that means more newcomers recognise this largely forgotten but pioneering and eccentric French marque, I'll applaud too.

Even more headlines centred on the new world record price paid for a car at auction barely two hours later. \$16million is a lot of anyone's money, but perhaps most telling were two facts: first, it had been torched for the insurance money when almost worthless and painstakingly rebuilt before Ferrari authenticated it, and second, the 73-year-old under-bidder had never bought an old car before this year and now he has rather a lot of them. This tells me that new money is coming into the hobby – which many will decry as the arrival of investors, but few will complain if their cars become worth more – and that these players want reassurance from some greater authority that they're buying the right car. Which is fine as long as that authority is open, even-handed and motivated by preservation rather than restoration.

Lows? The loss of a brother who was as obsessive about things on two wheels as I am about things on four put everything else into perspective, but he was doing what he enjoyed best: riding. So my toast on December 31 will be to him, and always making the most of our passions.

*Simon Kidston lives and works in a world filled with the finest classics. In between acting as a consultant to collectors and performing as the multi-lingual presenter at top European events, Geneva-based Simon ([www.kidston.com](http://www.kidston.com)) finds time to enjoy his own cars, including a Porsche 911 Carrera 2.7 RS and a Lamborghini Miura SV.*