

2008 Grand National Roadster Show

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Grand National Roadster Show Dating back to 1949, the Grand National Roadster Show is, according to its promoters, the longest-running indoor car shows in the world. Though in the general sense the show's open to all vintage vehicles—trucks, motorcycles, and boats included—its emphasis is on highly modified varieties. And from all of those, the roadsters are king. In fact, the top title, America's Most Beautiful Roadster, belongs exclusively to what judges determine the finest example of 1937-and-earlier American-made models.

Once known colloquially as The Oakland Roadster Show (for its namesakes, the Oakland Exhibition hall and later the Oakland Coliseum, now the Oracle Arena and MacAfee Coliseum), the show has occupied several venues including the Concourse Exhibition Center (San Francisco), the Cow Palace (Daly City) and the San Mateo Events Center. For its fifth year running, though, the Granddaddy of Them All has called the LA County Fairgrounds in Pomona home.

Though many portended its doom upon its southland relocation, the show has figuratively exploded in both size and popularity. This year, for example, saw more than 500 entries; more than 250 specific classes, most of which with more than one award; and 10 specialty awards. As someone who walked every aisle of the nine buildings, I can say with good authority that to do the show any justice takes every minute of the three days it's open. But don't take my word on it that the show's worth seeing. For that, I defer to these 50 photos. Written by: Chris Shelton

If you're up on your history, you'd recognize The Ala Kart, the Barris-built winner of the 1958 and 1959 Most Beautiful Roadster title. Though wonderfully preserved, a well-intentioned attempt at a restoration decades ago prompted its present steward, John Mumford, to commission Roy Brizio Street Rods to recommission the former winner. If there's a flaw with it now, it's that it's probably too nice. Yeah, like we'll hold that against it. Restorer, preservationist, and reproducer of long-lost exotic parts, Don Orosco, flew the vintage flag proud with his Deuce AMBR entry. Equipped with a set of Kinmont Safe Stop disc brakes and a Riley OHV conversion (21-stud V-8), it bears some of the rarest and most valuable parts from the hot rod's formative years. Beauty, being the subjective thing it is, isn't so much a prerequisite for winning an award at an indoor car show. Instead, judges use a somewhat objective system of points based on display, attention to detail, and innovation to choose winners. As the judges' sheets proved this year, Rudy Necochea's Deuce-inspired roadster, a Scott's Hot Rods number titled Undisputed, won the teddy bear at the big ring toss. Nearly unheard of just a few years ago, a good number of the AMBR contestants this year bore a decidedly historic theme. For example, with its padded top, Packard grille, and tail-dragging stance, Rick Dore's '36 roadster bore the earmarks of a pre-war custom car. So, too, are the trim-adorned fenders historically rooted; they reference a practice made famous by Parisian coachbuilders Figoni et Falaschi when this particular car was still on the assembly line. Described by Steve Coonan (Rodder's Journal) as "a lowrider that custom guys could love," Richie Valles' El Camino was one of several dozen in attendance. With its Astro Supreme wheels, bias-ply tires, and conservative flake job, the era that this '59 represents merges what was the tail end of the custom-car's salad days to what could be considered the second generation of the lowrider movement. For the third year running, the Roadster Show has dedicated a building specifically to grass-roots cars built by devotees of the traditional aesthetic. While some may push the envelope on outrageous, the common ties that bind most of these cars are resourcefulness and honesty. Take this '53 Chevy for example. With a '55 Olds grille bar, Merc headlight rings, chromed OEM-style wheels, and Howard "Dutch" Darrin-inspired beltline trim, it derives every bit of its look from other cars of its era. Not only is this car a very personal expression of its owner, it's most certainly a driver. Grand National Hot Rod show Gallery