



## Interview with a previous Concours winner

We spoke to Bilaal Mia winner of the d'Elegance class in 2014 and the d'Honneur Modified class in 2015, 2016, 2019 and 2022; with his 1989 BMW E30 318i, to find out what it takes to win.

Was 2014 your first Concours?

“Yes it was my first Concours, previously I did not feel that my car was up-to-scratch. It was missing a few clips, screws, nuts and bolts here and there. I did however help numerous owners from the Porsche Club, to prepare for several Concours’ and some actually won. So I know what it takes to win a Concours. One thing I can say is that you cannot prepare your car in one or two weeks.”

So when did you start preparing your car for the Concours?

“I started to prepare three months before the time, my family saw very little of me in that time.”

Can you share with us how you went about your preparation?

“I started from the bottom up, I cleaned the undercarriage, removed the wheels and then cleaned the wheel arches. I moved onto the shocks, the callipers, the brake discs and all the piping that is found within the arch.

On the undercarriage I came across some bolts that were looking old and rusty, those I replaced. Where the black paint on the undercarriage had been scratched, I had it touched up. I also cleaned under the chassis legs and had all new rubbers

fitted to the exhaust. Within the engine bay all metal and plastic surfaces were cleaned and polished, which include all hoses and pipes, oil and water reservoirs etc.”

What is your advice to entrants that wants to win?

“You need to have a schedule, start with the undercarriage, move from one end of the car to the other. Move onto the engine bay and then the interior. It is important to clean where the eye cannot see, judges will put their hands on the inside of bumpers and valances checking for dirt. Wheels need to be removed and cleaned on the inside. Seat and sunroof rails need to be cleaned, not always easy to detect the dirt but the judges will find it. Replace broken or missing plastic caps such as those found on the lock-nuts. I will stress this again, you need to give yourself between two to three months to prepare, with a set schedule.

Obviously you can get detailers to do it for you but the amount of satisfaction that you get when you do it yourself and win, is priceless.”

What would you say is the most difficult in terms of preparation?

“I think that your first Concours as a whole is going to be the most difficult. It does become easier after that.”

In terms of cleaning material what would be your advice?

“Invest in a good car care kit, you will need plenty of degreasers, get ones that are water-based as the acid-based products do more harm than good. Waxes, polishes and glass cleaners that have the right properties and compounds are not only meant to clean and shine your car but also to protect it. Cheaper polishes and waxes damage your paint and plastics in the long run.

I would therefore recommend Meguiars, Autoglym and Turtle Wax. These are tried and tested products, especially for older cars - they have been around for decades in South Africa and are reasonably priced. There are higher-end products like Swissvax, but they are expensive and I am not altogether sure that they offer better results all of the time.”