

Not a common sight: anyone can drive around “topless” in summer, but in winter you need to be brave – and warmly dressed!

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here are two kinds of people in the world: those who treat themselves to a hot mint tea after putting on snow chains in the middle of a storm at minus 12 degrees on the Julier Pass, and those who opt for a cola on ice instead. Most belong in the former category, Louis Frey and Patrick Dätwyler in the latter. It's 17 January 2018, and many passes across the Canton of Grisons are closed due to heavy snowfall and squalls. It's also the first day of the “Winter Raid” classic car rally, which is taking place for the 15th time. Louis Frey is the only participant who has completed all 15 events. He and his long-time co-driver Patrick “Pädi” Dätwyler arrived from Muri in the morning for the “Winter Raid” prologue in St. Moritz this afternoon. Their vehicle: a 1934 Lagonda M35 Le Mans Rapide. If you know a little bit about classic cars, you'll probably be shaking your head right now. The Lagonda has neither heating nor a windscreen, never mind a roof. When a structurally identical vehicle won the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1935, nobody would have imagined that 83 years later, two madmen would be driving it in a four-day rally in the middle of winter.

“Mad” in this context equates to passionate. Louis and Pädi have been mad about classic cars since childhood. “Our fathers always drove classic cars. We met at a Mille Miglia

*YOU HAVE TO BE A LITTLE BIT MAD TO DRIVE A WINTER RALLY IN AN OPEN-TOP CAR. OR VERY PASSIONATE.*

when we were 16 and 20,” explains co-pilot Pädi. You can tell at a glance that these two get on well. After all, the chemistry has to be right if you're spending four days together at close quarters. But why on earth would they want to drive an open Lagonda in the depths of winter? “Anyone can drive a car in summer, but it's something really special in winter,” says Frey. The friendly workshop owner is indeed

15TH WINTER RAID

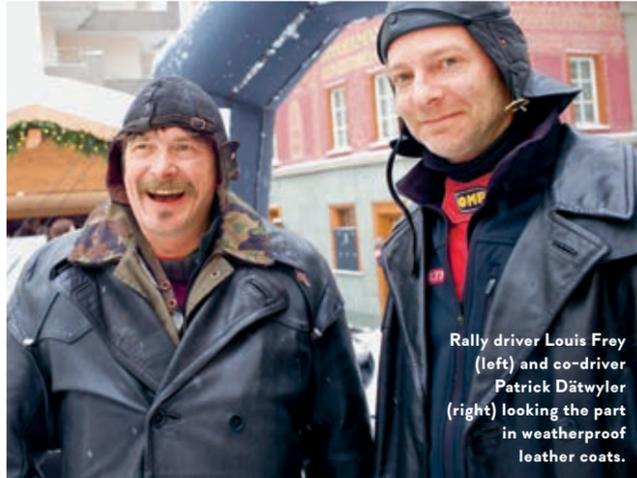
# FREEZING FUN

Louis Frey is a legend of the “Winter Raid” classic car rally. He is the only person to successfully complete all 15 rallies. We met up with him and his co-pilot Patrick Dätwyler just before the start of the 2018 rally on the Julier Pass, and accompanied them to the prologue.

PHOTOS: PATRICK BLARER, FABRIZIO D'ALOISIO (LEAD PICTURE)



Don't feel the cold: Louis Frey (left) and Patrick Dätwyler heating things up as they drive through the ice and snow in an open classic car in the Winter Raid.



Rally driver Louis Frey (left) and co-driver Patrick Dätwyler (right) looking the part in weatherproof leather coats.



Grand finale in the pedestrian zone of St. Moritz: the winter rally ends here, two and a half days later.



The Lagonda M35 Le Mans has no roof – and it doesn't have heating or a windscreen, either.

#### ABOUT THE WINTER RAID

Hans-André Bichsel, a doyen of the Swiss classic car scene, has been organising the “Winter Raid”, a three- to four-day winter rally that starts with a prologue in St. Moritz in January and then continues through the surrounding Alps, since 2003. The finish is usually back in the Engadin's Alpine metropolis. The “Winter Raid” is open to roadworthy, registered sports and passenger cars of vintage 1988 or older. There are lots of regularity, hose and navigation checks to complete along the way. The winner is the team with the fewest deviations from the various target times.

[www.raid.ch/en/winter-raid/winterraid](http://www.raid.ch/en/winter-raid/winterraid)

attracted to the unusual: Swiss TV recently featured a portrait of him after he had combined the chassis of a 1911 fire truck with a 1,000-horsepower aircraft engine. “Unfortunately I couldn't get a roadworthiness certificate for it,” chuckles Louis, as the radio plays

AC/DC's “Highway to Hell” in the background. “That would be just the song for us to drive to – if we had a radio,” they say in unison. And we believe them.

However, at the end of the day, these two daredevils are only human. Aren't they? Don't they get cold during the drive? “It's a matter of attitude – and wardrobe. You only get cold if it's warm and humid, because then you start to perspire, and once you're even a little bit damp, you stay that way,” says Pädi. “And if it rains, we sing a Swiss children's song about raindrops at the top of our voices,” adds Louis with a deep chuckle. In their greased leather military coats, the two are a perfect match for their pre-war vehicle. This doesn't go unnoticed, and spectators constantly ask the duo for photos. Louis Frey: “The Lagonda really attracts spectators like a magnet, especially at the start in the pedestrian zone in St. Moritz. Lots of people want to take a photo with us,

INFO

The 2019 “Winter Raid” runs for three days, 17–19 January

including ladies in long, white furs. We always warn them that our clothing and the vehicle are oily, but they're never bothered about getting dirty.”

Louis and Pädi aren't just two of a (unique) kind, they are also heartwarmingly free of affectations. Always approachable, appreciative, friendly and completely focused. That could be because driving the Lagonda is not something you can do casually. “Because you're constantly using your legs and steering, you're always

moving. You have to drive this thing with your behind. It's not like modern cars that practically drive themselves,” explains Louis. Indeed, when riding in the Lagonda, your whole body shakes with the vibration of the engine and you can hardly hear your own thoughts, never mind another person's words. The vehicle demands the driver's full attention – and quite rightly so. Louis and Pädi will be spending the next three days driving to Cortina in the Dolomites and back to St. Moritz in the toughest winter conditions.

Before the two set off, they confess slightly sheepishly that they really had wanted a beer, but opted for the cola because they were worried about the photographer. What was it again? There are two kinds of people. Louis and Pädi clearly are made of the stuff we can never get enough of in life. Gentlemen, start your engines!

Author: Fabrizio D'Aloisio

### At the finish line: three questions for rally driver Louis Frey



Louis Frey was practically born with a passion for classic cars.

**Louis, warmest congratulations on making it! How was the rally?** Fabulous! Starting with the prologue, during which we were able to drive through the St. Moritz pedestrian zone several times. The audience loved it! There were times when the car was covered in snow, and we could hardly see anything on the Julier. But then in the Dolomites we had blue skies and summer temperatures (*ed.:* that's 0 degrees). Co-driver Pädi was fabulous, and we got through without any problems.

**Did you like the route?** Did we! It was absolutely lovely and unique. What was also interesting was that – for the first time ever – we had to navigate to objects along the route and solve tasks.

**In short?** We were really able to put our foot down; the atmosphere was fabulous throughout, and the organiser couldn't have done a better job. And actually winning a trophy, the “Trofeo delle Dolomiti”, at the end was a complete surprise. We'll be back!