



This page:
Eleonor wearing a Richard Mille RM 07-01 with red-gold, diamond-set case.

Opposite page:
The vintage Porsche that took Eleonor and Elodie around France.

PART I

RICHARD MILLE'S DRIVE THROUGH

A decade-long friendship is put to the test in a 'battle of the sexes' driving challenge linked by two Richard Mille rallies.

BY ELEONOR PICCIOTTO

It was June 2009 and my family was just about to start dinner when my father (Laurent Picciotto, founder of Chronopassion in Paris) told us he had invited an Asian watch editor to join us. I remember I was sporting a plaster cast due to a skiing accident and, while a heatwave radiated across Paris, I had to arrange extra seats at the table. When our guest arrived, he had an American accent, an Italian style and the tattooed body of a Yakuza. He knew everything about anything and, as the evening progressed, it seemed like I was having dinner with a walking encyclopedia. That man was founder of *Revolution*, Wei Koh, and that night marked the beginning of a relationship that endures to this day. From a hidden admiration to a sincere friendship, we became colleagues, travel companions and fellow hellraisers.

Richard Mille is a manufacturer that I am emotionally bonded with. My father was a founding partner of the brand and I can recall the many dinners held at our home in the late 1990s when the great and the good from the watch world would descend to discuss the hows and whys of the project. I was just a child at the time and after eating would have to say goodnight, leaving the adults to discuss their grown-up stuff. (Only years later did I understand that these guys — especially Wei and my father — were also kids that just never grew up.)

Coincidentally, while I was experiencing the adventures covered on these pages, on the other side of the world my father was selling his personal watch collection with Phillips Hong Kong, including a few Richard Mille references.





From the backseat of a cab in the dreadful Parisian traffic, I watched live streaming of the auction on my iPhone having mixed feelings as I witnessed a unique RM 008 made specifically for him when he stepped out of the partnership go under the hammer for USD 364,372. A few seconds earlier, the RM 001 first introduced in Basel in 2000 in a limited edition of 17 pieces was sold at a hammer price of USD 263,665.



Eleonor joined the six-day Richard Mille Princess Rally with co-conspirator Elodie, driving from Paris to Saint-Tropez in a vintage yellow Porsche 356. En route, they took in the fairy-tale scenery of the French countryside while stopping occasionally for photoshoots with their Richard Mille watches.



A few months back, I met up with Wei and told him that I was participating in the women-only Princess Rally sponsored by Richard Mille, driving from Paris to St-Tropez in a vintage Porsche. “That’s so cool,” he said, following with the fact that he was participating in the McLaren Rally with Richard Mille, cruising through the wineries of Bordeaux, in the very same week. “Why don’t we do a Battle of the Rallies?” he suggested. “We can both wear the colors of the French flag and write about our experiences from a male versus female perspective.” The gauntlet was thrown down, and the challenge eagerly accepted.

ALL SYSTEMS GO

Despite the fact that I love driving as much as I love watches, I have to admit to having a terrible sense of direction, so it was lucky for me that the Princess Rally includes a good deal of laughter and food as well as gorgeous cars and superb watches. My co-pilot and I took up the challenge with enthusiasm and got caught up in the game like no other participating team. Dressed in blue, we departed from the legendary Place Vendôme on a bright Sunday morning, one of 90 vintage cars attempting the first stage of the rally, driving 375km at an average speed of 40km/h.





Clockwise from this page:
Eleonor takes charge of the maps. Elodie wears the RM 07-01 with brown ceramic case and red-gold gourmette bracelet; the cars made for a glorious sight against the backdrop of the French country roads; the RM 67-01 Automatic Extra Flat with stainless-steel case and rubber strap.

Driving across France was a magical experience. The inability to read a map led to the pleasure of discovering French country roads in a yellow Porsche 356 and took me back to a period in time I sometimes wish I was born in — no cell phones due to no service, no air conditioning, yet despite the 40°C-temperature inside the car, I actually enjoyed the feeling of my sweaty shirt sticking to my back and no traffic cops pulling us over for speeding. Driving at a low speed enabled us to appreciate the landscape — we glimpsed a rabbit running across wheat fields (faster than we were driving), butterflies long since extinct in the city, horses and cows peacefully grazing.

All was peaceful until... Elodie, my co-pilot and collaborator at our website *The Eye of Jewelry*, screamed “Bambiiiiiii!” so loud that I thought our engine was on fire. It turned out to be a deer entering the forest we were heading into. We were tempted to stop for some local honey whose signage boasted that it was “home-made and delicious”, but a quick look at our watches — an RM 07-01 in titanium and carbon TPT® and an RM 07-01 in red gold set with diamonds — let us know in white-rabbit style that we were going to be late.



“You have 11 minutes to do 4.37 kilometers in order to reach the next marker at the exact second,” Elodie informed me. Shrugging, I asked: “So at what speed should I drive?”

We stared at each other and dug deep into the depths of our collective memory bank to recall the math rules we learned at school and try to apply it to our pressing problem. Admitting a total fail, Elodie laughed before saying: “Just drive. We’ll figure it out on the way.” And we did. Half way through the rally, our car reached the 37th position. Congratulating ourselves, we decided that was not bad for a first time.

The rally highlight? Maybe it was the first morning when the car’s heating became stuck and I ended up driving barefoot. Or perhaps it was our daily photoshoot with talented young photographer Jules Langeard encouraging us to change clothes quickly in between classic cars in order to catch the day’s final sunlight. Or could it be the McDrive we visited after wisely deciding not to leave our car in the parking lot and both entering McDonald’s wearing several-hundreds-of-thousands-of pounds of Richard Mille timepieces on our wrists — a risk we were almost willing to take for the sake of two McFlurries topped with Oreos and M&Ms. In fact, I don’t think I can pick a single standout moment — the whole experience was one. My main question is, did Wei Koh’s rally experience top mine? I don’t think it is possible, but that’s for you to decide when you read about his adventure in the next issue of *Revolution*. ★

