

Society's elite gear up for the Gumball 3000 Rally

The Gumball 3000 was founded in 1999 by Maximillion Cooper, an ex-Armani model, who was inspired by the "Cannonball Baker Sea-To-Shining-Sea Memorial Trophy Dash", an unofficial, almost outlawed, coast to coast road race from New York to Los Angeles that took place four times during the 1970s before being cancelled due to concerns over road safety from police.

Maximillion Cooper set out to revive the spirit of the original Cannonball races in the summer of 1999, combining long drives throughout the day with decadent nightly parties. The original rally featured fifty of Cooper's wealthiest friends, who drove to Italy in extravagant and customised cars, before arriving in London and crossing the finish line. In an attempt to avoid trouble from the authorities, the Gumball rally was set up with no official timing and no prizes awarded, emphasising that it was a rally and not a race, although this didn't stop many of the drivers being fined for speeding offences during the rally.

In 2000 the rally returned, this time beginning in Spain. Once again stars from film and music lined up to compete, including drum and bass legend and erstwhile James Bond villain Goldie. The third rally in 2001 garnered tremendous publicity for the Gumball, mostly thanks to several members of the "Jackass" cast taking part and filming the adventure for an MTV special, which earned MTV their highest ratings for the year. The event was also covered by terrestrial British television for the first time in 2001, with BBC 1 broadcasting regular updates of the rally.

In 2002, the spirit of the original Cannonball races was well and truly in the air, as the Gumball Rally competitors raced from New York to the Playboy Mansion in Los Angeles, covering the original route from the 1970s. 2002's Gumball 3000 featured more drivers than ever before, with 175 cars entered into the race.

The Gumball continued over the next three years before 2006 heralded the year of the most ambitious Gumball Rally yet, with drivers scheduled to start in London and finish in Los Angeles just eight days later. Bam Margera and Ryan Dunn of "Jackass" entered the rally as did extreme sports legend, Tony Hawk with the drivers enjoying a post race party in L.A hosted by hip-hop aficionado Snoop Dogg. Unfortunately, the success of this race couldn't be replicated the following year.

Upon arrival in Amsterdam for the start of the rally on 2007, participants were met by Dutch police with 14 police cars and 7 unmarked cars. Rap star Xzibit had his license revoked for a speeding violation, and two cars were confiscated. Things got worse however, when German police stopped close to 70 cars for speeding offences the following day before tragedy struck just days later when two participants in the rally were involved in a high speed collision in the Republic of Macedonia. The drivers reportedly smashed into another car while they were doing speeds in excess of 200 kilometres an hour. The elderly couple they hit both died on the way to the hospital.

Despite the disastrous events of last year, Maximillion Cooper is running the Gumball 3000 once again this year, scheduled to begin in San Francisco and end in Beijing, China. The 2008 Gumball Rally is also set to feature many regular car enthusiasts with many [car credit](#) companies presumably rubbing their hands with glee at the thought of the money motoring fans will splash out on the ultimate car, all of them itching to rub shoulders with the celebrities involved in a true adventure of a lifetime.

About the Author

Elisha Burberry is an online, freelance journalist and keen traveller and watersports enthusiast. Originally from Scotland, she now resides in London.

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