

CLASSIC DRIVER



They call it Mellow Yellow

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Bling! The small red 'T' lights up on the display in the elevator. The door opens and I find myself three metres under the ground. Artificial light bathes the object of my journey - the sharp yellow lines of the Gallardo. Like a sculpture in a conceptualist galley it attracts respect - but doesn't give affection.



But that is how I like it. A bead of sweat forms on my forehead as I realise I am holding the keys in my hand. I press the symbol of the an open lock - it clicks, then flashes, I step in and turn on the ignition. Short, rough sounds resonate around the underground car park and in the rear view mirror I see a grin on my face. I pull the right paddle towards me and select first gear.



Next scene. The autobahn, turn indicators blinking left. The cars in the right hand lane disappear fast as the thin red needle of the speedo hovers around the white '280' on its black background. Behind my head is only the satanic roar of the 10 - cylinder engine. It is the ultimate temptation and I am propelled forward by an animal force. With '300' coming up I am at peace - a new landmark for me, and everything is now completely bright and clear. A gentle foot on the brake brings me back to reality.

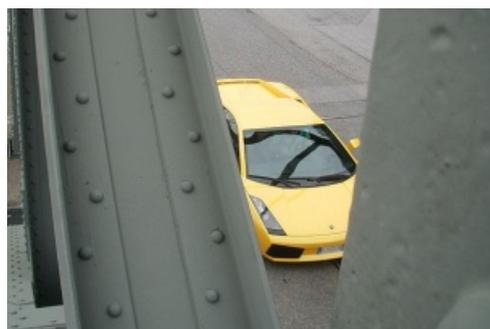




Change of scene. As night falls I find it difficult to sleep; today's images are too fresh in my mind. For the next seven days the car will be mine, all 500 bhp, 510 NM, packaged in a two-seater jet-fighter design by Luc Donckerwolke, the master of packaging small Lamborghinis. The TV cannot send me to sleep - I take two tablets.



Despite my restless night, the following day brings relaxation and for the first time I have a chance to concentrate fully and completely on my test-driving tasks ahead. The first few corners show how easily the car turns in its lower speed ranges, and the e-Gear on the steering wheel works really well. Despite its limited luggage-room, the permanent 4wd means that I would take this car on a winter vacation, although in good traction conditions the Visco clutch (a system that is not used elsewhere in the VAG empire) diverts 80% of available traction to the rear wheels.



The interior encloses the driver like a hand-made shoe, and the compact bodywork closely follows the interior space. Despite my 1.90 metre height, I can get comfortable behind the wheel and the view through the large, flat windscreen is good, with the large A-pillars, that make such a contribution to the side-profile of the car, ever-present. Visibility is certainly better than in the car's older brother, the Murciàlago. The instrumentation is not exactly AUDI, but being different from the other super-functional German makes is not such a problem.



I drive the Gallardo back to the city centre with some purpose and aggression. I want to get to know it better, and I am expecting some public reaction to the bright yellow car from the citizens of Hamburg. The first reactions exceed my expectations: young guys kiss the bonnet and want to shake my hand through the window, and people of all ages and sexes take out their mobile 'phone cameras when I rev the V10. I now know what it's like to be a celebrity - would they look at me like this in the supermarket?



Final scene. The autobahn again and I am now as one with the Gallardo. A perfect symbiosis of man and machine. The 10 - cylinder behind my head is singing its brutal song again and space and time are at the mercy of my right foot. On my own, passenger seat empty I travelling on an empty road. My heart beats faster as I switch with a fingertip into fourth gear and step on the gas. 190, 210, 230. Fifth gear. Click. 280, 290, 300. This is the real meaning of a sports car. Click. 307, 308, 309. I do not look back.

310. I become calm.

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