

CLASSIC DRIVER

Super Troupers: Top 5 Supercars of the 80s

Lead

In popular culture, the Eighties will be best remembered for MTV, shoulder pads, stone-washed jeans and blockbusters such as Top Gun. On the automotive front, the decade saw the introduction of supercars with truly stellar performance.

1986 Aston Martin V8 Vantage Zagato





The first collaboration between Aston and the Italian design house, the DB4 GT Zagato, was held in such high regard that the two companies were understandably hesitant to create a follow-up. What finally triggered that step was the 1984 Geneva Motor Show, at which appeared the Ferrari 288 GTO and the Porsche 959 (already shown a year earlier, but now displayed in 'special edition' guise). Their existence persuaded top brass at Aston that the market for such capable, low-volume supercars was there; they just needed to find that extra facet of desirability to justify the price premium. Cue talks with Zagato, and the subsequent decision to produce a lighter, more powerful and more radically designed version of the V8 Vantage, in limited numbers. A total of 52 coupés and 37 Volante examples were built.

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1980 BMW M1





BMW's first (and up until now, only) supercar project very nearly didn't happen at all; BMW had contracted Lamborghini to produce the required numbers for homologation purposes, but the Italian marque's financial woes caused irreparable tensions between the two. BMW re-assumed control of the project and produced around 450 road-going examples. The M1's race-bred, straight-six, yet-to-be-revisited mid-engined layout, Giugiaro-penned lines and relative exclusivity ensure that the M1 is infinitely more popular now than it was when new; add to that the fact it had its own ProCar championship series starring then-current F1 drivers, and you've got the competition-pedigree box ticked, too.

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1985 Ferrari 288 GTO



Compared with the outwardly similar, series-production 308 GTB, the 288 GTO was an altogether different animal. First, the mid-mounted V8 was mounted longitudinally, not laterally. Second, twin turbochargers boosted power to around 400bhp. In addition, a longer wheelbase, bigger wheels/tyres and improved brakes gave the whole package – originally intended as a homologation special, hence the ‘O’ for *omologato* – colossal performance. A top speed of over 300km/h set the standard in the early 1980s.

Production never exceeded 300 cars and nowadays the car is highly sought-after. This example, from SPS Automotive Performance (H.K.) Ltd. in Hong Kong, has air-conditioning and electric windows.

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1988 Lamborghini LM 002



It looks like a military vehicle, a variation on the Hummer, and that's exactly how the Lamborghini LM002 came into production. First seen as the '[Cheetah](#)', a Chrysler V8-powered prototype built in the late 1970s to enter the lucrative US military market, once equipped with a V12 from the Countach, the LM002 became a

quintessential 1980s supercar.

It was most commonly found in the Middle East or North America, where its 290-litre fuel tank could be regularly refilled at something approaching a reasonable cost. You can buy this car from Swiss official Lamborghini dealer Lamborghini Porrentruy - Roland Affolter S.A.

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1988 Porsche 959





Few cars of the 1980s high-performance 'arms race' were more complex and expensive than the Porsche 959: a 4WD car created by the homologation process for racing and rallying. It was powered by a 450bhp version of the company's famous turbocharged flat six. For the first time in a production Porsche, the engine featured four-valve, water-cooled cylinder heads.

Apart from a three-position rotary switch (with 'Wet', 'Dry, or 'Icy' settings), the driver could rely on the car's electronic black box to automatically vector torque to exactly the right wheel at the right time. Up to 50 per cent of the torque was available at the front wheels. Making full use of the car's clever 4WD system, an experienced driver could sprint from zero to 100km/h in 3.7 seconds.

This car, for sale at Autosport Designs Inc., New York, was originally delivered to Spain when new. Its first owner was a well-known industrialist who kept the 959 in his possession until 2006.

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