

CLASSIC DRIVER

Jingle bells all the way - Lamborghini Countach meets LM002

Lead

In the late 80s, if you'd ordered a V12 from Sant'Agata, it was either an edgy, wedgy supercar or a three-ton SUV monster. With the festive family season upon us, we chose to reunite the Countach LP 5000 S Quattrovalvole with the LM002...

The child-like grins of Countach owners were hidden behind mirrored Ray-Bans

Step back to 1985, and the Countach has been on the market for more than decade. Most supercars would look dated by this point, but the outrageously futuristic lines of the legendary Lambo are maturing nicely. Spring sees the Countach LP 5000 S Quattrovalvole revealed in Geneva – a brutal, barely controllable beast with a V12 now of 5.2-litre capacity (and four valves per cylinder, hence the mouthful of a name), conjuring 455bhp and 340lb ft of torque. The 'QV' sobriquet also has visual connotations, with wide arches and a huge rear spoiler diluting the purity of the lines originally penned by Gandini – with 'diluted' becoming 'destroyed' in the case of the US-spec models, which were fitted with an unsightly front bumper hanging from the tapered nose. However, despite the lack of changes to address the Countach's major drawbacks – low-speed manoeuvrability, lack of visibility and asthmatic air-con – buyers remained enthusiastic, their child-like grins hidden behind mirrored Ray-Bans.

A 4x4 monster which shook the world... and the ground beneath it



The Countach was by far the most eye-catching supercar at the time but, if you *really* wanted to be noticed, you'd go for the most brutal machine ever to leave Sant'Agata: the LM002. The 2.7-tonne leviathan had its roots in an ill-fated project for the army – the oil crisis meant demand for supercars had waned, while the US was in search of a vehicle with desert warfare in mind. By the time the 'Rambo Lambo' had been civilianised, the engine had not only moved from the rear to the front, but had also morphed from a lazy Chrysler V8 to the very same 5.2-litre V12 as found the Countach QV. This meant that, for many years, the LM002 was the fastest SUV in the world.

A bull for all occasions



Of course, those who could afford the luxury would have both these polar opposites in the garage: the Countach QV for boulevard showboating – including the famous reverse-parking-with-doors-up manoeuvre – and the LM002 for when the minimal ground clearance of the QV proved inadequate. But while the Countach is considered to be one of the all-time greats of supercar stardom, the relatively rare LM002 (fewer than 300 are believed to exist today) remains an acquired taste.

One for the bad boys



The LM002's unsurprising thirst made it popular in oil-rich countries, but the intimidating road presence also made it a hit with the bad boys. We're not only talking pop-culture mischief-makers such as Sly Stallone and Mike Tyson here; the likes of Muammar Qaddafi, Pablo Escobar and Uday Hussein were also known to have owned one – the latter's sequestered LM famously blown up in an explosives demonstration by U.S. soldiers unaware of the car's rarity.

Despite its laughable impracticality in today's society, it's ironic how ahead of its time the LM002 was. Rivals would have included Cayenne Turbos and AMG G-Wagons had it been produced today; onlookers barely bat an eyelid at these cars, while Lamborghini's brutal 80s beast would stop them in their tracks.

Photos: Jan Baedeker

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