

CLASSIC DRIVER

Three mythical Lamborghini Miuras reunite for the ultimate Italian job

Lead

Following last year’s Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance, three very special Lamborghini Miuras that took part in the prestigious beauty pageant descended on California’s famous 17-Mile Drive for a blast to remember. The respected Italian car historian and writer Massimo Delbo takes up the tale.



“Such a perfect day,” sang Lou Reed. Could he have been thinking about taking an early morning drive along Pebble Beach’s 17-Mile Drive with not one, nor two, but *three* Lamborghini Miuras? When Ferruccio Lamborghini founded his sports car company back in 1963, his dream was to create the ultimate Gran Turismo. After ‘practising’ with two wonderful GTs, the 350 and the 400, in 1966 he did just that, unveiling the Miura. It was the first car that prompted journalists to coin a new and far better descriptive term: supercar.



The Miura is the product of the dreams of the young men who built it, a technical team made up of guys in their late twenties, all enamoured with racing cars: Marcello Gandini, Giampaolo Dallara, Paolo Stanzani and Bob Wallace. And let’s not forget Giotto Bizzarrini, creator of the four-cam three-litre 350HP V12 engine mounted at the rear of the car. Unsurprisingly, in the following years, all these men went on to become leaders in their fields.



Making our Californian sunrise experience even more special (has an early wake-up call ever been welcomed so enthusiastically?!) was the depth of history and the fabulous condition of the three Miuras. Each one recently underwent a historically driven and meticulously performed restoration carried out by Lamborghini Polo Storico. The quality of these restorations was recognised in the Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance, where the cars performed very well in the Miura class, one taking first and another third.



While approaching the trio, it was impossible not to think what a great idea it is to have cars restored at their manufacturer's own workshops. A huge bonus, of course, is that it allows the original specifications to be checked and respected, ensuring the authenticity of the cars. On a more personal level, it's a wonderful idea because of the sheer pleasure it offers. Effectively, it recreates the thrill the original owner must have felt while going to collect the car from Sant'Agata when it was new.



All these thoughts recede as soon as the three 12-cylinder engines start to roar, emanating a full, round and powerful sound that's also sweet and musical. The loudest, by far, is the unique SVR with its open exhausts. Chassis #3781 was originally delivered in Italy on 30 November 1968 as a Miura S painted green. After passing through the hands of eight owners in six years, the car was bought by the successful German entrepreneur Heinz Straber, who wanted to use it for fast trips to Lake Garda.



Straber convinced Lamborghini to transform his Miura into a quasi-racer – painted red, of course – for use on the open roads. An extra fuel tank was installed at the front to reduce his number of fuel stops, while the straight-through exhausts were a dramatic touch that added a few bonus horsepower. A year later, having been unable to register the car in Germany, Straber sold the car to Japan, where it became the protagonist of a famous manga comic and the most popular Miura scale model of them all. If a fast and

loud Miura is what you like, then the SVR is your perfect example.



The Miura P400 resplendent in Arancio, on the other hand, is a movie star. Chassis #3586 has been recognised and certified by Polo Storico as being the very car used for the opening scene of the 1969 film *The Italian Job*. The famous 17-Mile Drive along the Pacific Ocean’s coastline is quite different from the Gran San Bernardo Pass, but the number of corners is comparable. From behind the wheel, the experience is more than likely to cause the driver to start signing extracts from *On Days Like These*!



The third and final Miura in our trio, a Rosso SV bearing the chassis number #3673, was just crowned Best in Class at the Pebble Beach Concours d’Elegance and is arguably one of the most exquisite Miuras in existence. It’s a perfect example, down to the very last detail, of how a Miura should look and drive. It was originally delivered to a South African enthusiast and today belongs to the president of the FIA Jean Todt. “Many years ago, I had the opportunity to drive a Miura,” said Todt, an avid classic car collector, “and I had long dreamed of having one. When I bought #3763, it was very sad looking and in need of a lot of attention. I couldn’t imagine a better place to have it restored than Sant’Agata Bolognese, as I wanted to realise the dream of Miura ownership in full.”



Our epic drive ends with a stop by the shore to allow the photographer Rémi Dargegen to work his magic and capture the moment. With the sound of the waves gently crashing and the gentle tick-tick of the cooling engines, it was a moment to freeze time – and one that’s bound to stay with all of us who were there that day for a very long time. Just like the memory of a beautiful dream.

Text: Massimo Delbo / Photos: Rémi Dargegen © 2020

Gallery

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