

A Decade of Design and Transition

In 1970, Lamborghini debuted the Bertone-designed Lamborghini Urraco. The 2+2 sports car originally debuted at the Geneva Auto Show to show off the new lineup of Lamborghini model vehicles. The Urraco offered a V8 powertrain with an output of 220 horsepower. The powertrain was the first V8 engine mated to a Lamborghini production car.

The body of Urraco was chosen as a way for families with children to enjoy the ride. Because of the ongoing world financial crisis going on at the time, the Lamborghini Urraco would not make it to market until 1973. During its production run from 1973 through 1979, Lamborghini made 791 Urraco models.

The oil crisis of 1973 was challenging for high-performance car sellers. With stricter emission and fuel economy standards, the Lamborghini brand suffered. During this time, Ferruccio Lamborghini sold the remaining 49% of the automaker to René Leimer, a close friend of majority shareholder Georges-Henri Rossetti.

Ferruccio later retired to his estate on the shore of Lake Trasimeno near Umbria, Italy. He would later manage several business interests and design his golf course. He would also take in his passions for both hunting and producing wines.

In 1971, Lamborghini debuted the Marcello Gandini-designed LP 500 at the Geneva Motor Show to replace Lamborghini Miura. Several years later, after redesigning its 4.97-liter V12, the car was produced as the Countach. Taking from the Italian Piedmontese word for astonishment by designer Nuccio Bertone, the Countach soon became a beaming icon of automotive posters worldwide.

The production model Countach LP 400 featured a 4.0-liter V12 developing 370 horsepower. In addition, the exterior production design offered far more aggressive styling cues than had been initially conceived by Bertone.

Large air scoops and vents at the back of the car keep the Countach powertrain cool while on the road. However, the Countach LP 400 did retain much of its sleek looks, giving it low drag at higher speeds.

The chassis was constructed of a steel space frame manually welded onto the car. The body was constructed of aluminum panels, with a fiberglass panel underneath the passenger compartment.

In 1976, Lamborghini would debut the Silhouette. Based on the Lamborghini Urraco LP300, the Silhouette offered a removable Targa roof placed in the back seat when unused. Powering the Lamborghini Silhouette was a 3.0-liter V8 developing 265 horsepower.

Because Lamborghini was not importing cars then, only a handful were sold in the United States. In total, 54 examples were produced between 1976 and 1979.

Bankruptcy and Restructure

As the 1970s wound to a close, the fortunes of Lamborghini became far direr. The situation became tenuous; the Italian court system took control of the automaker after it went bankrupt in 1978.

During this administration, entrepreneur brothers Jean-Claude and Patrick Mimran took control of the automaker in 1980 for receivership. The Lamborghini Silhouette was reworked into the Lamborghini Jalpa, becoming the entry-level car in the lineup.

Powering the Jalpa was a 3.5 liter V8 powertrain developing 255 horsepower and 225 pound-feet of torque. 410 Jalpa models were sold to customers as the entry-level Lamborghini from 1981 to 1988. The 410 cars sold made the Jalpa one of the most successful V8 Lamborghini vehicles to that point in time.

During this restructuring period, the Lamborghini Countach was sold to American customers for the first time in 1982 as the LP 500S in 1982. Two years later, the Lamborghini Countach LP 5000 Quattrovalvole debuted publicly.

The LP5000 Quattrovalvole represented an evolution of the Countach model, featuring a bored-out 5.2-liter V12 with four valves per cylinder. Quattrovalvole is Italian for four valves, hence the name. Some of the body panels were now made from Kevlar.

The powertrain also featured a fuel injection system for the American market, delivering a horsepower rating of 414 horsepower. European models used six Weber carburetors, delivering 449 horsepower and 369 pound-feet of torque.

In 1986, Lamborghini debuted the LM002, the brand's first Sport Utility Vehicle. Derived from a military project vehicle called the "Cheetah," the LM002 offered full leather trim, tinted power windows, and a premium audio system.

The Lamborghini LM002 was offered a 5.2-liter V12 with 414 horsepower and 369 pound-feet of torque. To keep you on the road for longer, the LM002 came with a 45-gallon fuel tank.

One year later, though, ownership of Lamborghini changed again, with the Chrysler Corporation purchasing the automaker from the Mimran brothers. Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca spearheaded the purchase to produce 5,000 vehicles a year and build a car that could compete with Ferrari on the road and the track.

During this time, Lamborghini ventured into the world of Grand Prix racing with the help of motorsport veteran Mauro Forghieri. Lamborghini Engineering S.p.A, as it was known, produced 3.5-liter V12 engines for both Lotus and Larrousse F1 teams beginning in 1988. Despite one podium finish at the 1990 Japanese Grand Prix, the Lamborghini F1 program was discontinued after 1993.

In January of 1990, the Gandini-designed Lamborghini Diablo debuted in Monte Carlo. At its launch, the Diablo was the fastest production car on the road, achieving a top speed of over 203 miles per hour. The performance was made possible by a 5.7-liter V12 producing 485 horsepower.

Due to the popularity of the Diablo and the emergency service and spare parts support network, Lamborghini turned a profit in 1991; however, sales of the Diablo sank. With the company losing money, Chrysler sought to end its ownership. In 1994, Indonesian holding company MegaTech bought out Lamborghini for Chrysler.

Over the next few years, Lamborghini will go through restructuring to expand the brand's offering and increase sales. With sales buoyed by the Diablo SuperVeloce model, the company split 60/40, with an Indonesian company taking a 40% ownership stake, with MegTech holding the other 60%.

A Turn to Stability

After turning a profit in 1997, Lamborghini was sold to its current owners, Volkswagen AG, in 1998. As part of a complete overhaul, Lamborghini was reworked into a holding company for licensing and marine

engine manufacturing, while a subsidiary would concentrate on designing and building a new Lamborghini Car.

In 2001, Lamborghini designed their first new car in over a decade, with the Murcielago as a replacement for the outgoing Diablo. Sporting a 6.2-liter V12, the Murcielago was good for 572 horsepower. The launch of the Murcielago coincided with a change in fortune for the company, as for the first time in many years, it finally found stability.

Over the next few years, Lamborghini would debut the smaller Lamborghini Gallardo with a V10 powertrain. In addition, Lamborghini introduced the special edition Reventon and reached a sales peak of 2,430 models in 2008.

At the turn of the decade, Lamborghini would continue to expand its portfolio with the debut of the 690-horsepower V12 Lamborghini Aventador, along with the launch of the prototype Lamborghini Veneno, a car designed as an ultimate interpretation of a racing car.

In 2016, Lamborghini would celebrate the 100th birthday of its founder, Ferruccio Lamborghini, with the Centenario. The Centenario offered a 6.5-liter with 759 horsepower, offering an all-wheel-drive derived from the Aventador. At the rear back, diffusers gave the Centenario extra downforce at high speed.

In 2017, Lamborghini would launch its first SUV since the LM002 with the Urus. It features carbon-ceramic brakes and a 4.0-liter V8 powertrain developing 641 horsepower.