

Miura Bull Run

THREE GENERATIONS OF LAMBORGHINI MIURA
TESTED BACK TO BACK *Test by Roberto Giordanelli / Photography by Michael Ward*

Lamborghini watchers will know that 2005 is the 40th anniversary of the world's most beautiful car – the Lamborghini Miura. A normal celebration is simply not enough for this icon of icons so the 40th anniversary will span 2005 and 2006, because in autumn 1965 at the Turin Motor Show, the show-stopper on the Lamborghini stand was bereft of body. It was just a rolling chassis with a spectacular mid-mounted transverse V12. Not only did it not have a bodyshell but no one had even been commissioned to design one. Nevertheless, the orders flooded in, so boss Ferruccio Lamborghini handed the design duty to Bertone. As soon as the Turin Show closed, Bertone got to work on his new commission. Their head of design and brainchild of the Miura was an astonishingly young 22-year-old Marcello Gandini. After a winter of frantic work, the March 1966 Geneva Motor Show saw the presentation of the first real Miura and the immortality of Gandini.

The Miura's chassis is a fabricated steel monocoque with hinged front and rear ends in aluminium; the huge clamshells allowing unrivalled access to the car's components. The engine and transmission unit comprise of one single casting which is mounted transversally between the driver and the rear wheels, giving a low polar moment of inertia. Centre of gravity is also low as the gearbox and differential unit nestles behind the engine rather than underneath it. Suspension all round is by double wishbone, steering is non-assisted rack and pinion and brakes are non-servo discs all round – all very racy, yet with generous luggage capacity and way ahead of the 1960s opposition.

Miura production ran from 1966-1973 and saw three distinct model types: P400, P400S and P400SV. The original 1966 Miura was rush-job and there was no time for R&D, so each model was an improvement but some up-grades were introduced mid-series. There were also a few one-offs like the 1968 Miura Roadster and the 1970 Miura Jota.

Ferruccio Lamborghini permitted test driver Bob Wallace (who wanted Lamborghini to go racing) to build the Jota – a semi-race special. This kept Wallace busy and the snorting Jota became a useful tool for frightening journalists. The original Jota was totally destroyed in a high speed crash but Lamborghini expert Piet Pulford has built a replica of that famous car. On seeing the original Jota, some Miura owners requested Jota-esque modifications to their Miura's, calling them SVJs. Ferruccio was a man on a mission. His feud with Enzo Ferrari meant that he would not rest until he had built a better car than his rival. You could justifiably argue that Lamborghini succeeded with the 350GT, 400GT, and the Islero. With the Miura there was no doubt, Lamborghini had overwhelmed Ferrari – the bull gored the horse. ➔

Lamborghini Miuras



brakes do their job well enough. With their transverse sumps, all Miuras can experience oil surge in race conditions but not on the road. While an SV is easily the quickest of the trio, using the SV as a racing car means cornering at high-g with one eye on the oil pressure gauge. A dry-sump system or an acu-sump would be a good mod for race track use.

What makes the SV so quick is its ability to carry far more speed through a corner than a P400 or an 'S'. Power delivery is innocent enough up to 3000rpm. From 5000-8000 the Miura is truly spectacular. High speed Miura nose-lift is dependant on the aerodynamic angle of attack (or rake). It only happens on Miuras with tired rear springs. Further jacked-up by its taller rear tyres, this Miura SV is rock steady at huge speeds. The top-end power-rush is accompanied by a crescendo of noise. Some SVs were offered with open trumpets, and that is what we have here. So from 2500rpm you hear that beautiful induction noise of a bygone era. The SV will reach 60mph in first gear, making it tricky to get off the line quickly. Second gear will see you banned from driving in many countries at 87mph. Third gear is good for 122mph. Fourth gear, and you pass all the German supercars restricted to 155mph. In fifth gear, 180mph is all yours. If that doesn't irritate the Health and Safety Nazis, here is a statistic. Since 1920, only 14 people have been killed at the San Fermin Pamplona Bull Run and only a few hundred injured. Next year's runs are at 08.00hrs every day from 7th-14th July 2006. See you there. 

HINT!

Bluff your way into Miura expertise with this simple Spotters Guide:

P400: No chrome surround to windscreen or side glass. Wind-up windows. Headlamp eye-lashes.

P400S: 'S' script on rear panel, electric windows, chrome surround on windscreen and side glass. Headlamp eye-lashes.

P400SV: 'SV' rear script. Wider rear body. Wider wheels and tyres. No headlamp eye-lashes. Integral reversing lamps.

CONTACTS

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